

Memories of Spring at the Sheraton-Chevrolet

The annual Spring meeting of more than 200 U.S. Catholic bishops concluded early Thursday afternoon in Detroit after three



days of discussion, debate, and meetings within meetings—with no formal statements issued on the agenda issues — The Ministerial Priesthood and World Justice.

The general sessions were in the Grand Ballroom of the Sheraton-Cadillac Hotel and the daily regional meetings in various conference rooms of the same location. The sessions were long, exhausting and often frustrating. The success of my voting record for representatives of the Roman Synod was a dismal .167.

A rare moment of relief was offered by a brother bishop of the New York Province who

has a delightful sense of humor. After a frustrating experience at breakfast one morning where the service was most inadequate he suggested the hotel should change its name to the Sheraton-Chevrolet. Since Cadillac has entered the American vocabulary as a synonym for excellence (deservedly or not), I thought his remark had some merit not only about the location but also as an image of the meeting itself where performance did not match expectations. (This is not an evaluation of GM products.)

In defense of performance, however, may I say that expectations were beyond reason. Unlike most conferences of bishops assembled to consider problems facing the Church in America and concluding with formal documents about the moral issues at stake, this meeting was intended to be solely a preparation—an input—for our American bishops who will represent us at the Synod in Rome on Sept. 30.

We were challenged to give them an honest reflection of our thoughts on the two themes to be discussed at that meeting—both of which merit much more thoughtful and prayerful analysis than time allowed. My personal frustration must be shared by my brother bishops for we all suffered from a lack of adequate preparation for the conference.

Our best efforts resulted in an acceptance of a summary report—a compilation of the main thoughts emerging from the daily regional conferences held each afternoon. These will serve as initial suggestions and recommendations for our Roman delegates. We have been invited to submit further observations to the Secretariate of the Conference before the Synod convenes. I shall use this column for the new few weeks to present issues of great concern for the Church which occupied our attention at Detroit.

Guest Columnist

Mary's Advice: 'Do What He Tells You'

by Fr. William Trott

When a bishop at the Second Vatican Council asked David DuPlessis, the only Pentecostal representative there, what his



thoughts were regarding Mary, he was told, "She's the Mother of my Lord!" Brother David continued to tell the bishop that he begins each day with the final words uttered by Mary in Sacred Scripture, "Do whatever He tells you." (cf. John 2, 5). As we begin this month of May, we might do well to ask ourselves what place we have for Mary in our daily life.

It might be helpful in answering such a question to take note how closely Mary was united to God all through her life. In Sacred Scripture we always find her in the presence of Jesus or His Spirit. As the Vatican Council states in the Decree on the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, "This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation was manifested from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to His death."

The very first time we meet Mary in the Gospel is in the presence of the Spirit Who brought about the conception of Jesus in her

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womb at the Annunciation. Luke goes on to tell us that Mary, pregnant with the Lord, "set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judea . . . and greeted Elizabeth," her cousin. At the sound of Mary's word and the presence of Jesus, "Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" and hailed Mary as the most blessed of all women "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

Mary's intimate association with God became visible as she brought forth his first born and showed her infant, Jesus, the Son of God, to both the shepherds and the magi. Again we find Mary with Jesus as she presented Him to the Father in the temple, when Simeon foretold of that time when, with her Son on Calvary, her heart would be pierced by a cruel sword. Her union with Him was so intense that her separation from Him for three days in Jerusalem at age 12 was a very real prelude to the separation that took place for three days while His body was in the tomb.

At Cana we find her telling her Son that the wedding couple had no more wine; with utmost confidence she turns to the servants and tells them, "Do whatever He tells you." And we see water changing into wine. At Calvary we find Mary again with her Son. Only because of her intimate union with Him can she remain at Calvary to see blood flow with water from the body of her Son, a mother's living death.

As Mary continued her pilgrimage of faith on this earth without the physical presence of her Son, she was sustained by His Spirit who continued to overshadow her. It is in the Acts of the Apostles that we find her gathered with the apostles and early Christians prayerfully seeking for them the Holy Spirit Who was promised by her Son.

During her month of May, let us take time to make a more important place in our daily life for Mary, the mother of Jesus and our mother. We can be assured that with her in our life there will come a more intimate union with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Then we will be enabled to follow the advice Mary gives to each of us who call her blessed: "Do whatever He tells you." It was her living fulfillment of these words that led her Son, Jesus, to say of her, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it."

Editorial

Legislative Pressure Having Its Effect

In a manner of speaking, Gov. Rockefeller lost another of his personal arguments against the Parent Aid Bill when Maryland recently passed the same type legislation.

Our governor had expressed trepidation about "being the first" to have such a bill approved in his state. If that distinction would have been "dubious", it is no longer of concern. Illinois also is considering parent aid to save its private schools.

At any rate, the New York bill (Speno-Lerner) is making progress, although time is getting short. Despite Constance Cook's negative vote, it was voted favorably out

of her Education Committee and as of press time was in the Ways and Means Committee. It has also reached the Senate Finance Committee.

The Donovan Bill which would restore the rights of the unborn is still in the Health Committee but such action as undertaken by the diocese and the Right to Life Committee last week which accounted for more than 50,000 letters to legislators will have an effect.

The avalanche of mail reaching the 1971 Legislature has been unprecedented. Assembly Speaker Perry B. Duryea's staff is still going through the 419 cartons of letters to his office on Parent Aid. But note

well — he has become the only member of the state leadership who has moved to support the bill and significantly in a letter to a Catholic high school student.

Although many Catholics find legislative pressure, political activity and unofficial lobbying distasteful, if not demeaning, such tactics are necessary.

The concerted statewide effort in these fields is having its effect and if not fully satisfying yet, just think where parent-aid and abortion repeal would be if our legislators didn't know the opinions of the thousands upon thousands of people of all persuasions who favor these concepts.

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