

'The Most Misunderstood Man of the Century'

New York — (RNS) — "Pope Paul is the most misunderstood man of the century."

This opinion was voiced recently by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, famed philosopher of Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, according to a Catholic priest friend of the rabbi, who wishes to remain anonymous.

"Like few other people," the informant told Religious News Service, "Rabbi Heschel understands the gravity of the times that makes the Pope's task unusually heavy, a superhuman one which, in all his frailty, he seeks to fulfill with conscience and devotion."

"The world may think (the Pope) aloof, but in reality he is a man of great warmth, who gives himself to his fellow-Christians and, no less, to visitors of all faiths."

These are some of the impressions Rabbi Heschel gathered during a private audience with the Pope "several weeks ago," said Dr. Heschel's friend, who added, "It was not his first audience but it is one that will long remain in his memory."

The RNS informant said the Pope opened the conversation with Rabbi Heschel by telling him how deeply impressed he was by "the spirit and beauty" of the rabbi's books, "which he thought all Catholics should read."

"You must continue to write and help young people understand religion," the informant quoted the Pope as saying.

"Rabbi Heschel thinks that this is the first time a Pope encouraged the reading of the works of a Jewish spiritual writer," the informant said, "thus spurring Christians to drink from the fountain of Judaism. Among the several topics Pope Paul and he discussed, this one is dearest to the Rabbi's heart."

The Pope focused in on the universal yearning for justice and on the two human aspirations that become stronger as man becomes better informed and better educated: "the aspiration to equality and the aspiration to participation."



The Pope and Rabbi Abraham Heschel at their recent meeting.



FR. ANDREW GREELEY
The Church 1971

Celibacy is not the issue. The NFPC may demand an immediate change. Young priest groups may march on picket lines. The news media may use celibacy as a lead for every report on the Catholic Church. But it's still not the issue.

The issue is power. If I were a member of the shadowy power elite which controls the American Church I would cheerfully let priests marry if they want. For such a decision would have no impact at all on the stranglehold I have on the Church.

A little over half the American priesthood wants to see optional celibacy, while more than three quarters of the clergy support popular nomination of bishops. Yet, this latter finding is completely ignored in media coverage while the former is the subject of obsessive reporting.

But whatever the media coverage, we ought not to make any mistake about it: the present crisis in the Church will go from bad to worse until there is a drastic change in the manner in which Church leadership is chosen. The polarization of clergy and hierarchy will only begin to diminish when the bishops are in some meaningful sense responsible to their priests and not merely to a distant bureaucracy and a clique of their peers who dominate the selection and promotion of bishops.

I am not saying that bishops ought to be responsible only to their priests, but I am saying that in addition to their responsibilities to speak for the Church universal to their own diocese they have a responsibility to speak for their own diocese to the Church universal—and this I would argue is a theological responsibility rooted in the nature of their office. But unless the priests (and people) of a diocese participate in the nomination of their leaders, there is no reason beyond the personal disposition of an individual bishop why the leader should feel any responsibility to them.

Let no one argue that popular nomination of bishops is a new and radical idea. It is the way bishops were selected for

the first eight centuries of Church history. It is the way that John Carroll, the first American bishop, was selected. The present method of selecting bishops is a modern usurpation of the power which ancient theologians such as St. Ambrose argued resided in the church of the diocese itself.

I am not taking this position because I lack respect for the members of the American hierarchy. On the contrary, most bishops I know have been generous and gracious to me. But they are caught in an impossible bind. Even if they do not want to be polarized from their clergy the structure of the organization of the American hierarchy makes this polarization inevitable unless a man goes to extraordinary lengths to prevent it — and if he does so, he runs the risk of having a fat file on him in the office of the Apostolic Delegate and being typed by the power elite as a dangerous and unreliable innovator.

In my own diocese there has been a long and foolish fight about the shape of a diocesan senate. Such a fight is a waste of time because senates have no important power and will not have it until they have some part in the process of nominating bishops.

Power is not going to be yielded easily. It is not going to turn up as a splendid surprise under a Christmas tree. It will come only when the priests of every diocese in the United States make it crystal clear that the next time a diocese falls vacant they will not serve under a man in whose nomination they have not participated.

I very much doubt that the American clergy have the guts required to take a stand. They may continue to denounce J. Edgar Hoover and praise the Berrigans, to pass resolutions about celibacy and the Third World. But they don't have the guts to face the real issue of power in the Church — any more than their leaders had the guts to protest when they were not even permitted to read the complete texts of research reports on which they had spent in excess of \$400,000.

12,000-Word Letter

Rights of Man Stressed In Pope Paul Message

FROM NEWS SERVICES

Vatican City — All of the hopes and joys, the fears and sorrows confronting man in the latter half of the 20th century are considered by Pope Paul VI in the 12,000-word Apostolic Letter released last week.

The Pope focuses in on the universal yearning for justice and on the two human aspirations that become stronger as man becomes better informed and better educated: "the aspiration to equality and the aspiration to participation."

The Pope hails these aspirations as "two forms of man's dignity and freedom" and discusses in detail the obstacles to their achievement.

In the discussion, Pope Paul stresses that there is no universal solution because of the differing circumstances of men. He insists, however, that the church can offer universal principles to guide man in his quest and can contribute to formulating specific courses of action on the local level and in particular situations.

He urged today's Christians "to invent new forms of modern democracy" to provide the rights of man.

The entire letter, issued to coincide with the 80th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's pioneering social encyclical Rerum Novarum, is written in a tone of optimism and contains no condemnations.

There are warnings, however, of excesses such as in the misuse of strikes by unions and of acceptance by Christians of ideologies contrary to their faith such as Marxism.

The Pope also cautions man against looking toward "utopia" as a "convenient excuse" for escaping "concrete tasks in order to take refuge in an imaginary world." At the same time, he admits that none of the established social systems fully satisfy man's aspiration and that the quest for a more ideal system of society can meet the "Christian appeal."

Pope Paul says he wrote the letter in order to extend the social teachings of his predecessors "to the new needs of a changing world." As the most travelled Pope in history, he refers to his first hand viewing of those needs stating, "We have gone into the crowds and have heard their appeals, their cries of hope."

"Under these circumstances," the Pope continues, "we have seen in a new perspective the grave problems of our time. These problems, of course, are particular to each part of the world, but at the same time they are common to all mankind, which is questioning itself about its future and about the tendency and meaning of the changes taking place."

"Flagrant inequalities exist in the economic, cultural and political development of the nations: while some regions are heavily industrialized, others are still at the agricultural stage; while some countries enjoy prosperity, others are struggling against starvation; while some peoples have a high standard of culture, others are still engaged in eliminating illiteracy."

"From all sides," the Pope says, "there rises a yearning for more justice and a desire for a better guaranteed peace in mutual respect among individuals and peoples."

The Vatican had planned to release the text on May 14, to coincide with the 80th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical Rerum Novarum, called the first of the great social encyclicals. However, the Italian press broke the story on May 12.

Informed observers throughout the world stressed the importance of the papal document. It was compared in scope as well as in subject with Rerum Novarum, and in the U.S. Msgr. George C. Higgins, director of the U.S. Catholic Conference's division for urban life, described it as "a pastoral letter of the highest caliber."

Pope Paul said the Christian must assume a political and social obligation in the society in which he lives to combat the evils he finds.

The Pope said Christians must be concerned with:

- Problems of urbanization and crowded suburbs;
 - Social, religious and political discrimination;
 - Crime waves, eroticism and the use of drugs;
 - The ferment of youth;
 - The emancipation of women and the rights of workers;
 - The need of tackling new problems with bright new ideas.
- Some of the old ideas the

Pope criticized for not really solving social issues were Marxism, free-wheeling laissez-faire capitalism and some forms of socialism. He said that Marxism pre-supposes atheism, preaches a dialectic of violence and denies the transcendental.

The Pope insisted that the Christian community with a new form of democracy can provide the right to equality and involvement for every man.

"It is for the Christian communities to discern, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the bishops concerned and in dialogue with other Christian brothers and with all men of good will, the options and commitments to be adopted in order to work out those social, political and economic transformations that are considered necessary," the Pope said.

The letter concluded with a pressing appeal for implementation by men everywhere of these papal suggestions for a new order in the world.

Pope Paul's letter is a call to action for Christians to involve themselves in the solution of the many social problems that exist in the world.

He recalled his encyclical Populorum Progressio, in which he urged laymen to "take up as their own proper task the renewal of the temporal order."

And he repeated that encyclical's statement that it is the role of the laity, "without waiting passively for orders and directives, to take the initiative freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live."

The Pope said the purpose of his letter is to "extend the teaching" of his predecessors in order to respond to "the new needs of a changing world."

Men today, he explained, demand "a greater sharing in responsibility and in decision-making." This demand becomes more evident, he added, as a sense of freedom develops and as man "becomes more aware of how, in a world facing an uncertain future, the choice of today already conditions the life of tomorrow."

In the economic, social and political sphere, the Pope said, there must be "a reasonable sharing in responsibility and in decisions must be established and strengthened."