

# That Time of Year Again

It seems only yesterday that I was writing about the Challenge of Leisure. Now it's back to school, to work, to apply what hopefully are renewed energies for the long stretch until the next vacation break.



The mail each year at this season brings in the annual Labor Day statement of the social development department of the United States Catholic Conference — offering the workingman thoughts for personal reflection.

I present to you a summary of the 1971 Statement.

Pope Paul has reminded us recently that two human aspirations persistently surface today — the aspiration to equality and the aspiration to participation or shared responsibility.

What started in America less than two decades ago as a belated demand for elementary forms of justice has escalated into a sweeping demand for genuine equality as opposed to token concessions to minority groups. The demand began with the Black Community, the largest and longest-suffering of our

minority groups, and has spread to Spanish-speaking peoples, to aggrieved women, and to alienated college students. Some historians maintain that our nation's failure to grant participatory democracy has brought us to a hopeless impasse and they prophecy that we shall never recover our spirit.

The labor movement along with every other major institution in this country is on the defensive with regard to its record in promoting genuine color-blind equality. While sweeping condemnations of the whole movement are unfair, we have to admit some unions are practicing racial discrimination or are giving but token compliance to the law of the land.

The "preferential respect for the poorest of the poor" which Pope Paul says must characterize the mission of the Church should apply also to organized labor in the U.S.A. which has, by definition and stated purpose, made the claim to be committed to the cause of justice and equality for working people of every race and color. This calls for an all-out effort on the part of every union in the United States not only to comply with the spirit as well as the letter of the law, but to make up for lost time, to make amends for past injustices.

Pope Paul VI has observed that while

"progress has already been made in introducing, in the area of human relationships, greater justice and greater sharing of responsibilities . . . much remains to be done. Further reflection, research and experimentation must be actively pursued, unless one is to be late in meeting the legitimate aspirations of workers — aspirations which are being increasingly asserted according as their education and consciousness of their dignity and the strength of their organizations increase."

There is a responsibility which belongs to all of us in whatever occupation or profession we may happen to find ourselves. It is our prayerful hope, however, and our confident expectation that the labor movement will take the lead and show us the way to adapt our institutions to the rapidly changing needs of the times.

For the sake of the cause which labor is privileged to represent, it cannot afford to be late, nor can the rest of us afford to let it be late, in meeting the legitimate aspirations of workers in general and of the poor in particular for complete equality and for the fullest possible measure of shared responsibility and self-determination — the hallmarks of free men in a free society.

By Father John P. O'Malley

Guest Columnist

## To Share in the Priesthood of Christ:

The greatness of the priesthood is that Christ was the First Priest. Every priest shares in the priesthood of Christ. In fact he



even identifies himself with that First Priest when he utters the words of Consecration at the Mass, "This is MY Body", — he does not say, "This is the Body of Christ", — or "This is Christ's Body", — but standing there in the very place of Christ, he utters the tremendous words, "This is MY Body", — and we know it is not the Body of the priest, but of Christ.

In the ordination of the priest the Bishop says to him, "Consider what you do, imitate that which you handle." Later in the ceremony, the Bishop prays over the new priest, "Grant, we implore Thee, Almighty Father, to these Thy servants the dignity of the priesthood, renew within them the spirit of holiness, that they may keep the rank in Thy service which they have received from Thee, and by their conduct may afford a pattern of holy living." What a great life is his!

Therefore, a priest has so much to live

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up to each day as he leaves the altar having brought Christ into the world at the start of the day. Rather than LEAVING the altar, he is STARTING his path to the altar for the next day, and everything he does on that path is a preparation to stand at the altar the next day in the place of Christ. His steps to the hospital or to a home to visit a sick person, his steps around the rectory office, his steps or running on the playground with the school children, EVERY STEP is on the way to the altar, and a preparation for it.

As St. Vincent Ferrer put it, "The Blessed Virgin opens Heaven but once, the priest at every Mass". He continues, "The priest's power surpasses even Mary's power." St. Bernardine put it this way, "O-Blessed Virgin, pardon me, I do not speak against thee, but the priesthood excels even thee."

St. Francis of Assisi looked upon the priesthood as great, and felt himself unworthy of it, so that he never went beyond the diaconate. St. Benedict, the patriarch of all the Western monks, never became a priest for the same reason. St. Ignatius spent a

whole year in prayer and penance as a preparation for the celebration of his First Mass. No man is worthy of himself of the greatness of the Priesthood, as St. Paul said, "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was" (Hebr. V:4)

Your pastor offers Mass every Sunday and several other days for you. Do you ever offer your Communion for him?

Our great Pope Paul VI in his "Message to Priests" at the close of the Year of Faith said, "We are not addressing you with an encyclical or an instruction or a legal canonical decree, but rather with a simple outpouring of our heart . . . the present state of things urges the priest to deepen his faith, to realize ever more clearly to whom he belongs; with what powers he is invested, with what mission he is charged. Between him and the divine sphere there is a unique relationship, a divine delegation and trust."

Towards the end of the ordination ceremony, as at the first ordination at the Last Supper, the new priests hear those beautiful words of Christ on the lips of the bishop:

"No longer will I call you servants, but My friends."

Editorial

## Truth, Justice and Open Hearings

Father Edward Heston, just named head of the Vatican press relations department by Pope Paul, seems to take a fresh and hopeful approach to the job when he says he opposes the "secrecy and confidentiality" that has always existed in the Church.

Whether he will have enough authority to make his words deeds will become evident but he makes a logical point when he says he'll be listened to, otherwise he wouldn't have been appointed.

Admittedly there will be always circumstances when the Church, the same as any other organization, must rely on executive session for the sake of efficiency, if nothing else.

As to the upcoming bishops' synod in Rome, Father Heston says he hopes to have

direct press access to at least some of the sessions. Among the topics to be discussed will be the priesthood and world peace and justice. Four American bishops will take part.

In these days when people have become so used to finding out one way or another what is going on, the very idea of secrecy creates suspicion. So on issues as important to Catholics as the priesthood and to all men as peace and justice, it behooves the powers that be to let us all know exactly who says what and why.

In a sense, it is not analogous to compare the synod with the recent case of baseball player Alex Johnson yet in another they are directly related for Johnson's case concerned justice. Johnson claimed a teammate threatened him with a

gun, yet the team's general manager told the press that this was false; that the player was having hallucinations.

The case was heard recently at a secret hearing, and sources claim that the general manager admitted there that Johnson actually was threatened and the organization tried to hush up the incident for the "good of the team." There seem too many times when truth and justice are bruised "for the good of the team."

This case points up what confusion and harm result when people set out to keep the public in the dark — first at the time of the incident and now in secret hearings.

Therein may be a lesson for the Church, still wed to certain machinations of the past, that in the modern sphere there may be times for secrecy but that it can no longer be the rule.