

Advent - Surrender to Hope

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

As the social scientists continue to debate with fragile optimism the future of the global family, the Church has once again extended to all of us an open invitation to re-live the history of a people who waited expectantly for the unfolding of the world's most exciting promise. Throughout the rich, warm liturgy of Christmastide, we are immersed in the resolute hopefulness which characterizes this "season of becoming," and the celebration of yet another Advent is marked by that quality of timelessness which holds in its embrace a remote or immediate past, the vitality of the present, and the possibilities of a future yet to be.

Caught in a floodtide of easy discouragement and ready frustration, the concept of Christian hope has become something of a stranger among men to whose advantage it has always been highly recommended as the oldest secret weapon against despair. Strangely enough, this Advent world of 1971 finds itself frantically, if hopefully, searching out the identical gifts of peace and justice and unity which the ancient seers predicted would be conferred on those people of their own times who somehow could be persuaded to "climb the mountain of the Lord."

Perhaps it is with some reasonable degree

Guest Columnist

Many Catholics find differences of opinion in religious matters hard to cope with. Some talk only with those who feel as they do; some stop going to church because "the church doesn't stand for clear moral values anymore;" still others try to recede into the comfortable past which beckons with the hope of changeless security.

It appears that those who are eagerly awaiting each new day in the face of such turmoil must be the young, the revolutionaries or the laxists.

A fellow-priest said to me recently, "I sense you have come to peace with the church. You may not be completely happy about everything that is happening, but you don't appear to be having a crisis because of arguments about celibacy, liturgical reforms or current research in moral theology." What he said was true, even

of significance that we are witnessing on the part of contemporary youth an impressive revival of interest in the mystic and the prophetic. Such a trend has been marked in more recent months by the appearance on best seller lists of several books which bear titles indicating that among the subjects in current focus is prophecy. One cannot but wonder if the need to acquire such knowledge and the range of questions raised by the "now generation" might not be met quite authentically in a reflective perusal of the inspired messages left to us by such erstwhile authors as Isaias, John the Baptist, and St. Paul — men who happen also to merit the distinction of being considered foremost among the "Advent saints."

With no claim to personal powers of prediction, it is quite safe to forecast that few, if any, of the modern interpreters will ever achieve the "fulfillment quotient" of an Isaias, earliest of the three spokesmen, who dared to enliven the hopes of his audience, not only by foretelling that the sign of redemption would be "a maiden with child," but by actually naming Him "Immanuel . . . the Prince of Peace." Nor is it too probable that any like that blunt messenger, John, will so capably disturb the complacency of his listeners as to convince them that their best hopes will be realized by admitting to the inner court of their hearts "the one standing in your midst whom you know not." And finally, which of them will pick up the prophetic role of a Paul and risk his own survival by projecting the cost of discipleship as: "persecu-

tion, betrayal, shipwreck, imprisonment . . ." insisting all the while that "our identification with Christ is made possible by the redemption"?

But for all of us there is an answer! The post-Vatican Church today is at once our Isaias, our Baptist, and our St. Paul — bidding us re-discover the root message of life: that our redemption is always at hand so long as God is being borne in to us on the waves of the present and in the needs of His people. It remains for each of us to accept the challenge of Isaias to be numbered among the mountain climbers; to engage ourselves personally in a mission identical with John's, which is nothing short of proclaiming the nearness and presence of Christ to our world; and lastly, to believe with a fortitude of a St. Paul that no heart can hold out against a God become man once it is anchored securely in faith and in love.

When we shall have cultivated a Christian optimism so genuine that neither fatigue nor fear nor loneliness and darkness can deter us from participation in the full Advent mystery revealed in the Parousia — only then shall we have proven for all peoples that the hope of the coming of a Saviour lives always in the hearts of those who know how to desire. Believing that Christ is as near to us as our desire for Him is sincere and in the spirit of perennial Advent pilgrims for whom it is enough to know that we have been touched by the Incarnation — let us use to fullest advantage this glorious season of hoping.

By Msgr. William M. Roche

Peace Among Men

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though I hadn't clearly formulated the words.

As one who has lived most of his life in the "old church" I might fashion myself a motto for the new: "Pacem lux vitae perducatur." Those with a nostalgic appreciation for the good old days will doubtless applaud the changeless language, while others, feeling a certain impatience for progress, can endorse the sentiment.

Some may prefer a translation (loose, to be sure, but apt) which renders it "Grow old Gracefully." There is a saintly graciousness which can keep alive an air of expectation: that out of conflicting strains of thought there will emerge a new sense of personal identity with the spirit Jesus taught. There are plenty of men of good will in the church — more, I firmly believe, than there are malevolent artists of destruction. Our ability to listen should involve more than an impatient

pause in our defense of the past.

Or perhaps it should be translated, "Experience Is The Best Teacher." An examination of life as a mold of character presupposes growth. One learns if one looks back over past experiences in an attempt to better the future. The penetrating light of the Beatitudes puts into bold relief the successes — and failures — of the past that can renew our intentions to live a full Christian life. Since Providence doesn't infuse us at birth with all the knowledge and grace we shall ever require, we trust that our loving Father will be a constant source of all that we need, principally as He works through the others in our experience.

A final translation could be, "Profit from Past Mistakes." A good prayer for peace might say, "Lord, help me to keep an open mind; deliver me from my excesses and my weaknesses, and protect me from those who have the answers to every question, and who seek to mold You and me into their image." Amen.

Editorial

At Times It's a Funny World!

Yes, children, there still is humor in the world.

Columnist George E. Ryan of the Boston Pilot suggests that Christmas be moved to July because December is just "too cold" and "winter travel is too difficult."

Even though July would approximate the actual climate in Bethlehem when Christ was born, Ryan foresees a degree of difficulty in persuading kids to accept a "Santa Claus in swim trunks and snorkel."

There are other merits in the plan. Those street-corner Santa Clauses, so hard to keep insulated in cold Rochester, would find work more comfortable; a lot of song-writers would be back in business penning new songs to replace White Christmas and Jingle Bells.

One thought destroys the logic. Imagine

trying to get through a Rochester winter without Christmas to break it up.

From another part of the continent, Hamilton, Ont., comes a Religious News Service report of an Anglican bishop accidentally raising Russia's Premier Kosygin to the archepiscopate.

Bishop Walter Bagnall of Niagara, in talking about two important visitors to Canada, said, "And we welcome Archbishop Kosygin and Premier Ramsey to our country."

Canterbury assumedly took it in stride but it is rumored that Kosygin excused Bishop Bagnall with the admonition "that if you don't tell anybody, I won't."

Anyway he could say "Red Masses." And from the hallowed halls of George-

town University, a college in the highest tradition of Jesuit learning, comes a Religious News Service report which shows that even the blandest of foods can hurt — when you're hit by them.

Students in a pointed protest pelted kitchen workers with bread, cakes and beef potpies when they became miffed over what they called "unsanitary conditions" in the dining hall.

They claim roaches were found in food but university officials attributed the food-flings to "the pressures of a short semester" and complaints about the blandness of the diet.

It is all food for thought and it seems that one side or the other will wind up eating their words. At least that might be one way of spicing up the diet.