

The Godspell Story — St. Matthew's Script a Hit

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Among the pleasant challenges of my years as a Seminary professor was a course offering catalogued as Educ. 301 or the 'Psychology of Adolescence.' My background for some measure of competence included special study in the graduate school of education at Canisius College in Buffalo, and the memory of my personal growing pains which brought me to an acceptable facsimile of adulthood.

I recall particularly a section of the course which analyzed the educative value of emulation, commonly referred to as 'hero worship.' A survey of adolescents of the 1960 vintage rated Jesus Christ #3 on the popularity poll. I found it shocking to find that the Savior of mankind fared so poorly in the estimation of youth. Heroes from the world of sports and theater were admired more than Christ in a day when we were far less worried about the religious commitment of our young people than we are today.

Guest Columnist

The Sea of Galilee, where Peter and his friends made their living as fishermen, before they were called to be fishers of men, is

long and narrow, with steep hills on either side. When the wind whips up a storm, the waves have no place to go but up, and a small boat can take quite a beating. That is the scene that is pictured for us in the story of the Gospel when Our Lord was asleep in the boat, and the Apostles panicked. When they woke Him, He calmed the winds and the waves and then He chided them — "Why such cowardice, O you of little faith." Of course there is really a broader canvas that is painted here.

It is all the little storms that stir up our souls, our lives, our world, our pride, our faith and our faithfulness. It isn't hard to believe when things are going well, and re-religion is a polite, comfortable, snug blanket to wrap around ourselves.

It wasn't hard for Peter, James and John to believe on Mt. Tabor, when Christ was

I have not read or heard of any survey of the 70's to determine the popularity of Christ among adolescents. But I am sure it is safe to say that there are many evidences among them of a growing interest in Him—and this, despite their apparent alienation from organized religion. The present popularity of "Jesus Christ — Superstar" manifests such an interest in rediscovering Christ. Reviews of this presentation have left many wondering, however, what type of Jesus our youth are seeking. For Christ seems filled with sadness and an object of pity — protected by Mary Magdalene, admonished by Judas Iscariot and unsure of His own identity. And the play ends with His death with no indication of the hope of Resurrection.

A more hopeful note is set by "Godspell," a creative interpretation of St. Matthew's gospel now playing on Upper Broadway. Young and old are flocking to this inspirational presentation of the life of Christ which I was privileged to see a few months ago. I recommend it without hesitation.

The title is the old English word for Gospel — the good news. There is a contagious enthusiasm on the part of the youthful cast for the message, and the audience cannot fail

to sense their spirit. The talented author of the script, Michael Tebelak, admits that he wanted the show to be a deep religious experience. He was determined to deliver this message through the play, after a drab personal experience at an Easter Vigil Service in an Anglican Cathedral. He describes it thus: "The people seemed bored and the clergy seemed to be hurrying to get it over with. I left with the feeling that, rather than rolling the stone away from the Tomb, they were piling more on. I went home, took out a manuscript I had begun and worked it to completion in a nonstop frenzy."

There is no doubt about the Jesus of Godspell. He is human and divine. He is strong as He gently but firmly leads his disciples to an understanding of His message, a realization that is proclaimed joyfully in the closing number, "Long Live God."

Godspell has convinced me that there are hopeful signs in some of the Jesus movement. Let us not dismiss it easily as a passing fad. It could be that a popularity poll of the 70's would show Christ has regained His rightful position as the #1 Person most worthy of imitation.

By Father Alfred J. Horr

Faith Makes Us Whole

Father Horr is pastor of St. Mary Magdalen, Wolcott.

transfigured, "Lord it is good for us to be here," were Peter's first words on that occasion. He could have said the same on Calvary, but he stood too far off and was afraid. Peter needed his faith more than ever before in his life, and it failed him, or rather, he failed it.

This same thing is happening to a lot of good folk these days. There is a crisis of Faith. We seem to be losing our Faith. It is just not as real or pertinent, or sure as it was a few years ago. Everything seems to have changed, and things that mattered most in life are cast in doubt. We keep saying — "Why doesn't the Pope speak out and end, once and for all, the controversies and the far-out theological speculations on every aspect of truth and morality?" Why doesn't somebody do something? Lord, help us. We're sinking.

We don't need miracles to calm all the troubles of the world. Faith isn't the solution for all the downs and natural ills our flesh is heir to. There are miracles in answer to prayer. I've seen them; you've experienced them. But this isn't God's normal way of

dealing with us. It isn't the essence of Faith to look to God to change what we don't like in our lives.

Christianity is no promise of taking all the crosses out of our lives. Quite the contrary. Our Lord asks us to take up our cross and follow Him; sometimes up the hill of Calvary. Faith doesn't do away with difficulties, it shows us how to bear them; it helps us to see into and around them.

We have to look to God to find ourselves. Are we losing our Faith? Or is it that we are failing it? A little bit of doubt, a little bit of darkness, a splinter of the Cross, a bit of a storm, and a few waves — and we panic — grow cold — toss in the towel.

All we have to do is practice our faith more fully, more consciously, more personally — make it real — make it live — make it really yours. You can't do that by sitting back and waiting for a miracle, or a word from Rome. You do it by your own praying, by raising your mind and heart to God, to ask for the blessings you need in your life. If you do, you'll become conscious of the blessings you already have from Him, and you can see the fulness of Faith and how Faith makes us whole. The more stormy times become, the more we need to look for the Lord.

Editorial

Nixon Peace Plan Worth Considering

The heads of six Churches in Massachusetts, as well as 12 other churchmen, including the head of the Boston Catholic Archdiocese's ecumenical commission, very recently issued an open letter asking all 1972 candidates for the presidency to "declare their intentions and plans" for ending the Indochina war.

Released by the Massachusetts Council of Churches, the letter also urged voters to support only "those candidates who can be trusted to end the war now."

The letter also charged that the United States lacks a "plan" to end the war and "seems to nurture the hope that somehow the war can be won." It accused the administration of intransigence.

Ironically, what the framers of that letter could never know is that the government has had indeed a plan that had been presented secretly (there's that word again)

to Hanoi and which President Nixon revealed last week.

Regardless of its merits, and indeed the plan is not without them, it is now evident that the administration has been trying to solve this dilemma troubling all Americans. What is surprising about the facts spelled out by the President is Hanoi's demand that we (the United States) overthrow the government of South Vietnam.

Obviously this implies that Hanoi's major hangup on proposals to end the war rests on some sort of political situation in Saigon. We, as the President stated, have gone the extra mile; we have agreed to a new presidential election based on two compromising points, that President Thieu resign a month before the new election and that all political forces in South Vietnam, including the National Liberation Front, take part in the elections.

The whole proposal is destined to win favor among other nations and to put North Vietnam on the spot if it refuses to pursue its potential.

The conflict has produced so many troublesome and tortuous ramifications that it is difficult for objectivity on anyone's part at this time. Still it is fair to give a much-criticized administration an E for effort, whether its methods are totally sound.

A cynical view may prove that the administration is sincere in its desire to achieve peace in Indochina. We are hesitant to inject it but it must be remembered that this is a presidential election year. President Nixon, an astute politician, has no doubt anticipated such letters as that of the Massachusetts churchmen, and is displaying oneupmanship to would-be heirs to the crown.