

Pastoral Council—My Fondest Hope

PART III Regional Pluralism

According to an older ecclesiology each local church was seen as a mere replica of all the others. The role of the bishop was to implement for his diocese the regulations that came from Rome. Vatican II gives a more pluralistic view of the unity of the Church. The Constitution on the Church, 13, teaches that the abilities, resources and customs of people are to be fostered so that every local Church may be able to make its unique contribution to the whole. The Decree on Ecumenism teaches that the heritage handed down from the apostles has been received in different ways, so that from the very beginning the Church has had a distinct development in East and West, thanks to the variety of natural gifts and conditions of life (Decree on Ecumenism 14). Far from being an obstacle to unity "such diversity



of customs and observances only adds to (the Church's) comeliness and contributes greatly to carrying out her mission." (Decree on Ecumenism 16)

This principle of pluriformity obtains not only between East and West, but all over the world. "From the beginning of her history (the Church) has learned to express the message of Christ with the help of the ideas and terminology of various peoples . . . Her purpose has been to adapt the gospel to the grasp of all . . . (Through an accommodated preaching of the gospel) each nation develops the ability to express Christ's message in its own way. At the same time a living exchange is fostered between the Church and the diverse cultures of peoples." (Constitution on Church in Modern World 44; cf. Decree on Missionary Activity 22 and Constitution on Liturgy 37)

From texts such as these one may infer that Catholicism should be realized in ways specially suited to the ethnic composition and the political, social, and cultural traditions of each nation and region. The Church in each place should assume forms that can flourish locally so as best to carry out its mission according to the gospel. The

American Church, on this principle, might be encouraged to develop procedures and forms of canon law that would take advantage of the best features of the common law tradition.

In the complex task of adapting the structure and life of the Church to local situations, clergy and laity must work together. Bishops and clergy "must rely on those who live in the world, are versed in different institutions and specialties . . . With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire people of God, especially the pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish, and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine Word. (Constitution on Church in Modern World 44)

My second contention, then, is that pastoral councils are a suitable agency for discerning what adaptations are needed for a national, regional or local church to adjust to the needs and opportunities of a particular place and time, and thus better to make its own distinctive contribution to the universal Church.

(to be continued)

The Slot Man

By Carmen Viglucchi

Shall the Twain Ever Meet?

If you hang around downtown very much you hear a lot of bad things said about people who live in suburbia. I'm here to tell you, as a suburbanite, that they just aren't true.

Just the other day there was this guy in a bar who was saying, "All those people in suburbia ever do is have cocktail parties."

"Popycock," I retorted. "We have beer parties as well and I know some people who on rare occasions even venture into the city to hit night spots."

"Well, that may be," he admitted, "but I still think all suburbanites are conservatives."

"I take it you are a liberal," I said.

"You bet your life," he said. "But I'm a real liberal. I live it and breathe it. Most city people are that way."

"But there are liberals in suburbia, too," I said.

"Nah," he said, "A couple of years ago I was to one of those suburban cocktail

parties and all they talked about was crabgrass, how good their schools were and vacations."

"Things have changed mightily since then," I rejoined. Now we discuss important issues such as the war (we're against it), busing (we're for it), racism (we're against it), low-income housing (we're for it though we admit there's a problem where it should be) and ecology (we're for it)."

"So wait a minute," the guy practically snapped. "You say you're for ecology. So what do you do about it?"

"Well," I shot back, "We decided that each family, with certain exceptions, should be limited to one car to cut down on pollution."

"And just who are the exceptions?"

"Well," I had to admit, "people who live in suburbia really do need two cars, just to get around."

"Uh, huh," he muttered triumphantly as he quaffed his drink and ordered

another. "How about racism? What do you people out there do about that?"

"Many of us go down into the inner city on a regular basis to help those poor unfortunates. In fact, one lady who lives very near me, has a unique and exemplary class which has gained some publicity in the suburban press. She teaches ghettoites how to pour."

"Booze?" he asked.

"No, of course not. Tea. Sounds a little way out, I know, still it may be prophetic."

"Incidentally," I said, "you seem to be a solid citizen. I am in charge of setting up a joint committee on general problems which will be made up of both suburbanites and city dwellers. Would you care to serve on it?"

"What night you going to meet?" he asked.

"Wednesdays."

"Can't," he said, finishing his second drink, "That's my bowling night."

Editorial

In Albany, the Pen Is Mightier Than the Word

One sweep of the pen by one man has doomed the State of New York to at least one more year as the "abortion capital of the world" despite the fact that a majority of the legislators in the state voted for repeal of abortion on demand.

Regardless of Gov. Rockefeller's veto, pro-abortion forces have been dealt a sobering setback, True they are still ahead in the war, largely through the obstinacy of one man, but that battle has taken on a new complexion.

For the first time since this state suffered the ignominy of becoming the abortion capital of the world, there is good news emanating from New York for anti-abortionists across the nation.

"Absolutely astounding," was how

one State Catholic Committee official in Albany termed the Legislature's repeal of liberalized abortion. And he was referring merely to the fact that abortion was forced into floor debate. The repeal was something else.

Few observers had given the dogged determination of Sen. James Donovan and of Assemblyman Edward Crawford much of a chance this election year.

Some legislators cried "politics" as the repealer moved relentlessly through the halls of the Legislature. Perhaps — but they might have added "populist politics" for not too many legislators cherished the thought of having to take a stand on abortion this year. But a grass-roots movement among the people forced the issue.

Make no mistake about it. Though the

Church's hierarchy had openly opposed abortion on demand the legislative victory is the result of persistent, dogged determination by people, of all religious persuasions, who led and carried the fight to Albany.

All concerned in the anti-abortion struggle can take bows in the knowledge of a job well fought. They know that by no means is the job over but a torch has been lit to remind pro-abortionists and pro-enthanasians that they will not have an easy time of it.

So let the news spread across the nation and let it hit home in Washington where the issue looms as a national issue for the Congress and as a judicial one for the Supreme Court. The conscience of the Empire State is astir and must be reckoned with.