

Gentle Lamb a Disguise for Roaring Lion

Why tropical storms have been designated by feminine names, I have no clear idea. But, surely, Agnes was a misnomer.



For such a name symbolizes the gentleness of a lamb. Her true self, however, revealed a devastating force that swelled our rivers into wild turbulence, eroded our earth, shattered our bright hopes for a bountiful harvest, left countless thousands homeless, and destroyed hundreds of priceless human lives.

While the statistics of her savage fury are impressive, the reality of her destructive power is awesome. I was personally stunned and deeply grieved by what I saw firsthand this Monday past when the Gannett News Service invited me to be, for a brief three hours, an eye-witness to one area of the tragedy. Though I had seen post-World War II Europe before its reconstruction, I can admit without hesitation that the Southern Tier of this moment is a more frightening spectacle.

I visited St. Joseph's Hospital — that great witness in Elmira to the compassion and mercy of Christ. It was scarcely more than a month ago that I had shared the joy of the Sisters of St. Joseph as I presided at the dedication of their most modern Rehabilitation Center which represented the justifiable pride of the whole community of Elmira in a project brought to completion despite the economic climate of a city already financially depressed. I found

neither self-pity nor tearful despondency in Sister Margaret Adelaide and the members of the hospital staff. Her words reflected the indomitable spirit of the people of an afflicted community who are saying: "We shall rise again."

I want, above all, to lead the people of the Diocese of Rochester in an effort which will manifest a united and visible concern to keep such a spirit alive until the renovation of the Southern Tier is an accomplished fact. I have been deeply impressed and gratified with the initial response to my appeal in behalf of the suffering members of our diocesan family. The concern manifest at this moment cannot be limited to an effort that reaches the exhaustion point within a day or a week. Such spasms of apostolic energy are easily generated by immediate emotional reactions to crises. Our response must be constant and abiding.

The latest progress report of our initial organized efforts spawned and promoted largely by our Diocesan Office of Human Development is encouraging. In summary, it includes so far:

1. \$75,000 in monies collected for relief work.
2. Teams of priests, Sisters, seminarians and high school students organized and prepared to serve in all afflicted areas in cooperation with organizational efforts on the local level.
3. Twenty tons of food and clothing collected at five parish centers in

Monroe County and shipped to distribution centers in the Southern Tier.

4. Continued prayerful support from all the Churches of the Diocese.

I see a grace in the present crisis to lift us out of our selfish and narrow orbit where petty issues become magnified out of all proportion to their objective worth. For most of us in the unchallenged days that make up most of our years, even a dampening rain that spoils our picnic plans becomes a major issue and concern. What we are doing now in a moment of crisis as a family unified by common concern, we should be doing each day apart from an act of God which humbles us to accept the common denominator of our human frailty and dependency.

A fine Catholic layman from the Gannett Staff who accompanied me for a part of the tour wisely remarked: "I noticed today no divisions among our people. There were no groupings arrayed against others. There were no labels of 'conservative' versus 'liberal'. There remained only those who needed to be cared for and those who cared."

To which I said: "Amen. This is the perfect society."

Meanwhile, I challenge my people who have been spared the tragedy to continue their efforts so nobly begun with additional prayerful and financial support which will merit the name of personal sacrifice and which will bespeak the gratitude of all who have been liberated to serve our family in need.

The Slot Man

It is virtually impossible to avoid a feeling of guilt after visiting the Southern Tier communities racked by the floods. The key to this feeling is that word "visiting"



For those of us who had to work in Hornell, Canisteo, Arkport, North Hornell, Elmira, Corning, Painted Post, Riverside, the experience was staggering.

But we came home, showered, ate without worry, slept in our own clean, dry beds and life again was almost normal.

I say almost because we are haunted by the thoughts of our Southern Tier brothers and sisters wallowing in mud, sleeping in refugee centers, going to emergency centers for

coffee and sandwiches, and trying to find a decent place to rest.

Those of us who went down to the south side of Elmira last week could but shake our heads in disbelief, first from the devastation but also from the sight of people cleaning up. We wondered if this happened to our homes if we would have the heart to attempt the cleanup. There would be the possibility of simply saying good-bye and going off to start a new life elsewhere.

So many agencies, such as the Salvation Army and Red Cross, so many businesses, so many churches and so many individuals pitched in that it would be folly to try and list them. Their work is their reward.

Father Edward Foy, pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul, far from beaten, instead praised the work of others. "Particularly the nuns who organized relief efforts, so well," he said.

Father Robert Kanka maintained his mental equilibrium and good nature amid scenes at Ss. Peter and Paul and St. Joseph's Hospital that would floor most men.

We could not get to see all the pastors, many were out on relief work themselves, others simply had no livable rectory to stay at. We also were hampered in moving about. We tried to reach Immaculate Heart of Mary in Painted Post but couldn't. The town itself was in horrendous shape.

We have heard that local Rochester newspapers have been receiving telephone calls protesting "too much" flood coverage. I'm sure if you lived in those embattled towns along the Southern Tier you would feel that no coverage of this monstrosity could be "too much."

For all of us safe and sound with friends and family there can never be "too much" to hear and do about the flood.

By Carmen Viglucci

A Lingering Feeling of Guilt

Editorial

Southern Tier Residents Inspirational

The quick, flexible and powerful way the diocese responded to the challenge posed by the floods should have showed skeptics that the Church is indeed alive and well.

When parts of the Church were temporarily knocked out, the rest of the diocese sprung into action, creating a veritable lifeline into the towns racked by this natural calamity, particularly into the hardest hit, Elmira and Corning.

The official church showed the way through the Pastoral Office and the Office of Human Development but the effort was largely a people thing. The special collection June 25 met emergency needs, though obviously more money will be needed. There also were individual checks coming into various parishes.

But above and beyond such donations was the spirit of the people. Food and clothing donations were little short of spectacular and the five tractor-trailer trucks that were filled and dispatched in one day later stood above the flood waters in Corning as monuments to concerted and open-hearted effort.

Individual parish priests conducted their own drives and in some cases sped personally to the scene. Bishops Hogan, McCafferty and Hickey personally visited Elmira and Corning to reassure their flock that the diocese was indeed one in this hour of tragedy.

And the people themselves in embattled Elmira, Corning, Hornell, Canisteo and all those other inundated towns served as perhaps the greatest inspiration in the drama. Lives were lost, as

were hundreds of homes. Those fortunate enough to return home found their houses unrecognizable beneath slick mud, their life's belongings either washed away or ruined.

On their own, their task is not surmountable. Still they rolled up their sleeves and began. There was no quitting. They tried scraping the mud from rugs, floors and furniture, clearing their homes of debris, much of which just a week ago was cherished belongings, actually trying to bail out yards, pumping out basements.

The lives lost cannot be regained but from watching the people of the Southern Tier last week it is evident that the flood will eventually lose. With our help and the assistance of the Almighty the people will win.