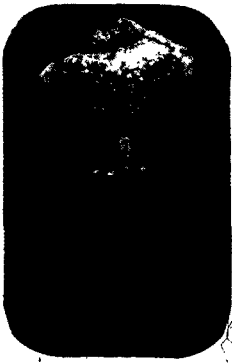


'Of Such Is the Kingdom of Heaven'

I had a whole new world opened to me a few years ago and I shall be ever indebted to the priest friend who first introduced me to this portion of the Lord's Kingdom come among us. Father Charles Bauer, of happy memory, had first discovered its peace and joy, love and simplicity and invited me to share his experiences. I write about this world of my favorite people. Society has labeled them "handicapped" because of their low rating on the 'human efficiency' scale. I recommend to all who take seriously our Year of Renewal to become better acquainted with the Lord's special children at Bosco House and at our new and beautiful Holy Childhood School on Buffalo Road. I truly believe that they have been providentially placed in the center of our diocesan headquarters to instruct us daily in the meaning of His Kingdom. For theirs is that unique wisdom which comes only to those who are close to the Lord. I thought last week as I listened to the Conference of Concern for the Unborn: "if the anti-life forces that abound in our society today had their philosophy accepted by the parents



of these children, not one of them would have been born. Thank God for good people who reverence all life unselectively."

Jean Vanier, a French psychologist who has worked with the mentally retarded for several years, writes of the blessings the children have brought to his life: "They have taught me more about the Gospel and even about human relations than all the great psychological and philosophical concepts; or, rather, they have allowed me to catch a glimpse of what should be true theology, true philosophy and true psychology. More than this, I have discovered Jesus in them — Jesus radiating goodness, Jesus the mirror of purity, Jesus meek and humble, and sometimes Jesus suffering and in agony. They have brought me much joy and peace." (Eruption to Hope — pg. 46)

It has been one of the great graces of my life to have met the Lord in the hearts of the handicapped. I feel that when they say the name of Jesus they know of Whom they speak. Perhaps it is because they are not involved in forming ideas about the nature of Christ and of His role in history, that they are more open to simply receive His Presence. We who would dabble in the-

ology often wind up with minds cluttered with abstractions and with hearts devoid of a personal love about Him of Whom we seem to know so much. We are not poor enough in spirit to long for His friendship. We are too often tempted to seek our strength primarily in our own capacities.

The handicapped have much to tell us not only about our relationship to the Lord but also about our human relationships. They possess a refreshing openness and honesty with people. We tend to hide our real selves behind a wall of timidity, hardness, and hypocrisy in our quest for social esteem. The retarded have nothing to lose and feel no need to 'put on' another personality.

I want to thank these precious children for all the blessings they bring to my life each day, for their noontime daily prayer for me and the renewal of the diocese, for their thoughtful letters of gratitude for their new school. Above all, I want to assure them and their dedicated teachers of my abiding love.

St. Paul said it all when he wrote: "God has chosen what the world holds weak, so as to shame the strong." (1 Cor. - 27.)

The Slot Man

Flood Relief Funds Low

By Carmen Viglucci

There has been some talk that money isn't that important in flood recovery efforts in the Southern Tier.



"Don't believe it," says Frank Patterson of the Catholic Family Center, who is coordinating diocesan flood relief in Elmira.

"We're short of money — now," the youngish Patterson (29) stresses.

Using aid from the Bishop's Southern Tier Flood Relief Fund, Patterson's office orders materials individuals need to restore their homes, bills the people, then, when paid, sends receipts to the homeowners to use as SBA receipts.

But the flood recovery operation is a big one and Patterson needs the help of individual parishes and high schools to assist

in Operation Rebuild, the diocesan plan by which groups adopt a damaged home and rebuild it.

Patterson, a Lutheran who has been with Catholic Family Center for about five years, points out that relief efforts are ecumenical in more ways than one. Not only are there other religious groups working under the same "umbrella" (Recovery Action Committee) as the Office of Human Development, but there also are individual Protestant congregations joining in the diocesan Operation Rebuild.

"Naturally most of our help has come from Catholic churches," says Patterson, "but we also have had houses rebuilt by Methodist, Church of Christ, and Presbyterian churches . . ."

As if to accentuate his point, a telephone call interrupted — from a Presbyterian church wanting to help.

As for the future, Patterson says recovery officials have been worrying about the psychological impact on the flood victims.

"For a while, it seemed to be materializing, then it kind of faded," Patterson said. "However, winter will probably have a bad effect. Winter will tell psychologically.

Patterson isn't sure how long his present mission with Human Development will take and when he will return to social case work.

"It's hectic and really different, but I kind of like it."

"Some people from Texas who worked on a bad flood down there told me it took them two years to restore their town," he said.

Let's hope that continued and increased help from all diocesans will get the job done quicker for our Southern residents.

Editorial

Respect for Life . . . in All Spheres

Although the abortion question is in itself crucial it also is, when viewed in another light, symptomatic of a greater social blight — the lack of respect for life in many phases of our modern world.

This humanitarian failing flits before our vision of the world in different ways — from the wholesale slaughter of warfare to the slaying of a professor on a city's streets.

There are those who pose the question: Why get worked up over the killing of a single man when thousands are slain by the war. Conversely, many feel: You'll always have wars but when one man loses his life to a street criminal, something should be done about it.

There are people who say: Why make

a big fuss about abortion, when our nation is involved in slaughter in Indochina? Conversely there are those who criticize antiwar activists for not devoting their energies instead to ending the killing of abortion-on-demand.

What all of this connotes is that people are sapping their effort and argumentation by internecine haggling while what should be the main area of concern, the lack of respect for life and thus by extension, for each other, continues to gain momentum.

At least one diocese, Richmond, Va., has stretched Respect for Life week into Respect for Life Year.

It would be wise for all diocesans to incorporate the feeling of respect for life

—all life—into their personal observance of the Year of Renewal.

After all it is eminently possible to be opposed to the Indochina killings and also to abortion on demand — not only possible but logical.

Likewise it is possible not only to bemoan the wholesale slayings of confrontations in such places as Munich, Syria, Pakistan but also to feel pain at the murder of a single person. Not only possible, but logical.

Until consistent moral sentiment pervades all our judgments we will be perhaps doomed to fighting uphill battles in separate camps.