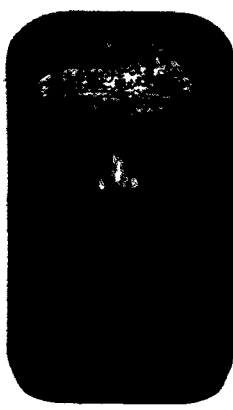


Renewal: Love in Search of Fullness

(Third in a series on "Basic Attitudes for Renewal")

Simple words, like still waters, often run deep. Some examples even occur among monosyllables. Consider, for instance, love, give, life, come.



John the Evangelist uses the first two words to describe God's radical engagement with the world: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son." (3:16) The Christian good news is not argument: "God is." Rather it is adventure: "God loves." If we recall that love is both displacement (for - others) and identification (with - oth-

ers), we can better understand how the Incarnation is both mission (by the Father) and presence (to and with men).

In the text under consideration John aptly expresses "loved" in the timeless tense: God always has, always does, and always will love the world. By the same token, "gave" is in the tense that indicates the greatness and completeness of a stated fact: once and for all God has acted in the life of Jesus at a particular time in a particular place.

Hence, the story that begins, "Once upon a time Jesus gave . . ." actually begins, "Once upon eternity God so loved . . . happily forever after."

The mystery of the divine-human encounter in Christ is briefly told: a renewing love in search of fullness. Salvation-history is not so much what man thinks of God as it is what God thinks of — and loves

in — man. In short, Chapter I in the story of human renewal is entitled: A Divine Gift.

The second set of words, live and come, occurs in one of Jesus' most memorable affirmations, also recorded by John: "I have come that they may have life in full." (Jn.10:10)

Faith perceives Jesus' coming as a victory over the two most basic barriers to the fullness of life: sin and death. Add to these: alienation, anxiety, anger, arrogance, ailments and the thousand and one other ills that human flesh is heir to. Redemption and Resurrection are two aspects of God's over-all Strategy of Renewal for the world. Both mysteries, basically one, are an invitation to man to enter into life's deepest mysteries, to experience life's fullest dimensions. Love, based on faith, unlocks the door.

The life that never ends (Resurrection) begins with a heart ready to believe (Faith), resolved to trust (Hope), ever open to change (Renewal) — a change responsive to the changeless Love of God and the changing needs of the times. In short, Chapter II in the story of human renewal is: The Human Response.

For this reason we have proclaimed a Year of Renewal for the Church of Rochester. Each of us — with no exceptions — is being asked to examine his/her actions and even more fundamentally his/her attitudes. Our purpose, our processes, our priorities must be subject to review — and where necessary to renewal — in the light of God's Word. That Word that is spirit and life is recorded in the pages of

Scriptures, is celebrated in our liturgies, and speaks to us through the circumstances of today.

The Year of Renewal is not a twelve-month period of more action and less reflection. It is not a time for speaking at the expense of listening. But it is a time in which the entire diocese must ask hard questions. Among others: Is the Church of Rochester effectively trying to "enflesh the Word and have Him dwell in our midst"? Are we ready to accept the ecstasy and the burden of God's love which enriches as it chastens, which uplifts as it humbles? Are we ready, willing, and able to accept Jesus' coming into our midst at this time — and receive the fullest measure of life that we are capable of? What has been the brand of our witness, the degree of our service, the quality of our oneness-in-Christ? How have we done what we have done? What needs to be done that has not been done? What needs to be anticipated if we are to face the future with effectiveness? Such are the questions which Renewal thrusts upon us, as individuals and as a community of faith.

Renewal is essentially a dialogue. God speaks — and also listens. Man listens — and also speaks. And the common denominator of the dialogue is — the Word.

Simple words, like still waters, often run deep. Some examples even occur in the four-letter category. Consider, for instance, Word (as in "I give you My Word. Give me yours!"), Full (as in "I give you My love in full. Will you reciprocate?"), News and Anew (as in "Let us celebrate the good news of beginning anew!")

The Slot Man

Are You Guaranteed 5 More Years?

Intriguing thought: Speaker at recent seminar on problems of the aging at Marine Midland points out that if you were born today you could expect to live until you are 70. But



if you are 65 you can expect to live until you are 80; if you are 80 you can expect to be 87, and if 85 you look forward to 90. So where's the big deal in being guaranteed only five more years? How many of the rest of us have that guarantee?

The whole point of the seminar is that there need be nothing depressing about being old. And even more important, we all should remember that in dealing with our seniors,

And if we are often guilty of stereotyping our older citizens we probably also unwittingly group all our younger citizens under one tent. That this is wrong was demonstrated to me recently by two of my children. At a mock election at school, Johanna, 7, voted for Nixon because "her friend" did. Typical, right? Then how come son John, 5, voted for "McGovern-

ment"? Because "his friend" voted for Nixon, that's why!

I often wonder if there are any other Tennessee Squires in this area besides Anthony Costello, the Courier-Journal general manager and myself. As a Squire, I've just been invited to the 14th annual Moore County Coon Hunt at Lynchburg, Tenn., and the announcement says that trophies will be given the three "top dogs." Costello feels that this automatically qualifies him for a cup but, well, I'm not sure. If there are any other Squires hereabouts, we ought to talk it over.

By Carmen Viglucci

Editorial

Opportunities in Disguise

Two golden opportunities lie just ahead for Rochester diocesans. One is the Office of Human Development collection Nov. 18-19; the other is the Thanksgiving clothing drive.

We very deliberately chose the word "opportunities" rather than responsibilities because these particular collections offer each of us the chance to be Christ-like.

There would be little reason to deny that most people today are overtaxed, oversolicited and are getting a bit over wrought. When you feel this way, think of the recent words of Mother Theresa, the saintly Indian missionary, that giving isn't really giving until it hurts. Then, you have earned the title Christian.

In last week's Courier-Journal the financial statement of the diocesan Office of Human Development appeared, a concise, informative and complete accounting of funds collected by and disbursed through both the local and national OHD offices.

One fourth of the money collected stays in the diocese and the rest goes to the national office to be used throughout the country where it is needed most. This idea is inspirational since it allows for "spreading of the wealth" whereby well-off dioceses can easily contribute to self-help projects in indigent parts of the country.

Last week's financial statement shows, however, that this diocese received back from Washington almost exactly what it contributed. And just about the entire \$100,000 collected here last year is already in action helping people help themselves.

All in all it has been an outstanding year for the Office of Human Development, what with its extraordinary efforts in helping Southern Tier residents recover from the June floods, which incidentally was quite apart from its normal operations.

Now we all have the chance to be part of such worthwhile activities, merely

by contributing money. We will have earned the gratitude of not only the less fortunate in our backyard and across the country but also spurs as a Christian. A golden opportunity.

As also is the Thanksgiving clothing collection, which is always such a success that it seldom needs much tub-thumping. This year, however, is different. Many diocesans contributed clothes to the emergency drive for flood victims. So perhaps used clothing will be somewhat scarce.

This means that we all must be particularly alert to the collections in each parish. Don't let them slip by — and try to give a little extra this year. One rule of thumb is "if you haven't worn it during the past year, you really don't need it."

However, if you want to do something extra for yourself give something to the collection that you do need. Sounds foolish but try it, you'll like it.