

TOWARD TOMORROW

Fr. Henry Atwell

The Holy land holds a fascination no other land can match.

Whether you view it from the vantage point of religion, history, scenic beauty, industrial development, political significance — you discover that this is a unique spot on our planet.

I had the good fortune to catch a week's glimpse of the Holy Land on a tour with 24 other people during late March, a lovely springtime there which prompted Solomon to sing about it long ago: "The winter is past, the rains are over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of pruning the vines has come, and the song of the dove is heard in our land." (Song of Songs 2: 8-12)

And I had the added good fortune to be guest for dinner with Dr. and Mrs. James Sanders at the Jerusalem apartment of Rabbi and Mrs. Abraham Karp; both couples are, of course, well known to scores of people in the Rochester area.

Rabbi Karp is on the faculty of the Hebrew University and Dr. Sanders at the recently opened Ecumenical Research Institute located near Bethlehem and established by Notre Dame University in accord with a proposal made by Pope Paul when he visited the Holy Land in 1964.

Dr. Sanders' Psalm 151 which he laboriously unrolled and restored from an ancient Dead Sea scroll is on display at the "Shrine of the Book" museum at the Hebrew University.

The Karps and the Sanders want to send greetings to their friends in Rochester.

One impression that lingers most vividly for me is the ultimate survival of mankind's better aspects — our wisdom, our faith, our works of beauty. Despite all the stupidity, cruelty, crudity — the characteristics which die, but the good do, indeed, prevail.

Nowhere did this impression strike me more vividly than at the historic "Western Wall" of Solomon's mighty Temple and at

the modern memorial called "Yad Vashem" which honors the memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Nazi holocaust.

I had first seen the famed Western Wall in 1963, the towering remnant of the ancient Temple. Since the Israeli takeover of Jerusalem in 1967, archeologists have been at work excavating to find the base of the Wall. They are already down at least 100 feet below the present ground level, about equal to the portion of the wall above ground level. Today's "ground level" is simply the accumulated rubble and rubbish of twenty centuries which needs to be cleared away to find the original ground level where Jesus himself would have walked and where he would have looked up to the majestic Temple, glittering white in the brilliant Middle East sunshine.

An exquisite mosque of blue tiles and a gold dome now stands where the Jewish Temple once stood. The mosque dates from the seventh century.

Crusaders, Turks, British, Arab, Israeli armies have battled there. The ground is saturated with blood since the days of Abraham.

But the Wall and the sanctuary remain — evidence of days when people were more anxious to build than to destroy.

Then Yad Vashem, a squat complex of buildings on the western outskirts of Jerusalem. The "sanctuary" there has the names of the Nazi deathcamps inscribed in Hebrew and English on the floor — and an eternal flame flickering off at the corner. Opposite is a similar structure with photos and grim remnants of that ghastly era when six million people were tormented and butchered simply because they were born as Jews. Yet from their ashes comes a determination that "Never again" shall Jewish people be slaves in any way, anywhere.

There are, of course, great Christian monuments too — some charming, as the "Dominus Fleuit" chapel on the Mount of Olives, others pretentious, as the huge new basilica at Nazareth. But in all these instances, it is the witness to the best in the human condition which emerges as the constant and enduring factor.



Missions the Topic

Bishop Walter P. Kellenberg of Rockville Centre, N.Y., Father Joseph F. Reinhart, director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (SPOF), Rochester, and Bishop Edward T. O'Meara, national SPOF director, trade notes at a recent SPOF meeting in Rockville Centre.

PRE-SCHOOL

The Pre-School Association of the Rochester Diocese will sponsor a workshop at Holy Family school on April 7, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Programs and techniques, children's liturgies and new religious education material will be studied.

CONGRESS PRESIDENT

Michael W. Maginn, a junior at St. John Fisher College, was recently elected president of the Student Congress for next year. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis J. Maginn of Maiden Lane, Greece.

Rome Blasts 'Recorded' Confessions

Vatican City (RNS) — The Vatican has ordered the immediate excommunication of any Catholic who breaks down the secrecy of the confessional box by tape-recording the proceedings.

The order, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, was aimed at two reporter-writers who claimed they had tape-recorded remarks of

priests made in confessionals in Italy. According to the writers, they made the recordings to gather information for use in a sex survey.

The excommunication order — issued by the congregation at the express request of Pope Paul, is one of the most severe punishments the Church can dole out to an erring Catholic.

The two Italian writers said

they "simulated" 63 confessions on such topics as premarital sex, adultery, birth control and unconventional sex practices.

The confessional hoax came to light when a national Italian magazine published excerpts from the survey.

In the Vatican order, anyone responsible for the publication of the "confession" tapes also would be excommunicated.

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PILGRIMAGE: To National Shrine of Immaculate Conception at Washington and other places of interest. May 15, 16 and 17. Call Joe Zimmer, 342-4039.

MEMORIAL Weekend to Wilmington, Delaware and touring along Longwood Gardens, 2 days in Washington, D.C. visiting the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Leaving May 25 — Returning May 28. For any information contact Mary Colavecchia, 235-8134.

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