

Pastoral Perspective

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

The Draining of America

My personal preference in style of leadership is to reflect optimism in my messages and peace and confidence in my appearance. The prophet of doom is a role I have never envied. But there are times when the crushing weight of tragic reality erodes hope to the breaking point and shatters the dreams that stimulate us to heroic endeavors. I truly believe that the signs of the times are clearly indicating that the America we love is morally impoverished and therefore drained of the vitality she enjoyed in her youthful years when she was unashamed to express her dependence on God.



A little over ten years ago, Sign Magazine published an article which its editors advertised as one of the most important it had ever printed. The theme was the breakdown of morality in our nation and was entitled: "Why They Cheat." The human aberration that prompted that article seems insignificant today when compared with the litany of our national conduct in the 70's. How few of us would be shocked now as we were then, by a story about wholesale cheating on exams! One really wonders what could truly arouse us today to indignation at our growing decadence. The Sign article now would look to most of us like the story of a child's mischievous conduct.

our amorality has become an expected course of conduct. Our resentment has disappeared. We seem to be saying that things can't be so bad when so many and such influential people are involved in similar conduct.

The history of some countries seems to reflect alternating ages of moral rigidity and moral laxity following each other with the regularity of an historic law. But today there seems to be setting in in America a breakdown of morality itself — of the very idea of an objective distinction between good and evil. It has become a question, not so much of the multiplication of sinners, as the disappearance of sin.

These were wise words uttered by Washington in his Farewell Address:

"Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in the exclusion of religious principle."

America has surely ignored that wisdom. We are as pagan as the Roman Empire on the eve of its dissolution. It might be profitable reading for all of us to review those pages of history to understand the signs of our own times. The labels for human conduct may have changed because we have become more sophisticated; the litany of evil remains the same, but parading now under the banner of blessed liberty.

plight owes its beginnings to the secularization of education. All of our modern teaching institutions were founded under religious auspices and were able to impart moral teaching based upon our Judaeo-Christian traditions. It was a tragic day when the government decided to take over public education and further decided that good conduct would be learned apart from religious values and would be the natural by-product of enlightened intellects. The moral erosion begun then has, I firmly believe, brought us to this dark hour of our national history.


Is there any hope? I know: I have shocked people at times when I tell them that I pray for an economic depression. For we surely need some crisis that will awaken us and put us on our knees in prayerful declaration of dependence on Divine Providence.

I believe, too, that it is high time that we who still have a sense of moral values make our voices heard in righteous indignation. Home, school and church should begin to insist in season and out of season that the evils of our day are evils opposed to the traditional moral standards upon which our nation's strength rests and which have always been a part of the Judaeo-Christian spiritual tradition.

Let each of us begin to accept a personal responsibility of transmitting values by practicing the highest standards of personal morality. "God bless America, the land that I love." Yes — God bless us, but may we be found worthy of His blessing.

Public acceptance of our immorality or

I am firmly convinced that our present



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Rev. Gerald T. Connor, Director of Vocations
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