

Pastoral Perspective

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Listening — A Lost Art?

PART I

Some years ago our beloved Bishop Kearney wrote me a letter which altered the path of my priestly life. It was God's will, as I had been taught to believe, that the bishop of a diocese had the charism of discernment of what would be the best distribution of talents and personnel for the upbuilding of the Lord's Kingdom. The letter which began with the words, "I have had my eyes on you for some time," prompted some rapid reading to find out the why of his scrutiny. That letter of appointment in 1945 proved to be the beginning of a series of assignments as a teacher — which, at the time, I thought was a mission of imparting wisdom to a receptive audience whose best talent would be passivity and nonresistance to a message uttered with an aura of finality.

To prepare for the teaching mission, I submitted myself in obedience to the two-year ritual called "Graduate School of Education." At the conclusion, I was awarded a Master's Degree in education. I more properly should have received a Purple Heart for endurance. The Bible for the Course was

called 'A Dictionary of Education' with definitions of the new terminology which had emerged in the field of educational methodology. I cannot recall now any listing of the word 'dialogue' which the practical experience of subsequent years has proved to be the very heart of the teaching and learning experience.

I have in my library now another new and contemporary dictionary brought into being by the II Vatican Council. The word that receives most attention is 'dialogue' — It is presented as being at the very heart of the teaching message of the Church, and is defined as "the capacity to listen to other people and to open our hearts to one another in a spirit of charity." Dialogue is also described as the method that Christ used: "Christ Himself searched the hearts of men and led them to divine light through truly human conversation." This simply means that He listened to their utterances, was attentive to their litany of woes before He began His words of instruction.

Dialogue may be on everyone's lips today but its reality is rare, indeed. In an age that has canonized the glib tongue, the common preference seems to be the monologue. The strong fascination for the sound of one's own voice continues to prevail and that means endless oratory which means that ideas run scarce long before words are exhausted. True

dialogue is first and foremost a listening to others. It is much more difficult to listen than it is to speak. Few of us seem to realize that God has given us two ears and only one mouth as a reminder that we should listen twice as much as we speak.

The motive for our listening should be much more than plain courtesy extended to another. We should listen to be personally enriched by what someone has to say to us. To listen to another is, so to speak, to go to his school with the conviction that he has something to offer. I have yet to find anyone who could not teach me something.

Listening is tuning in to another — giving our attention to what is on his mind — sharing his concerns, his anxieties, his joys. It is an effort to put oneself in another's place — to see and hear life as he sees and hears it.

Listening requires that we be sensitively present to another — that is, that we, by gesture and appearance, show that we really care about what he has to say, that his life is important to us.

The greatest thing that we can do for others is not to communicate to them our riches, but to reveal to them their own. And this happens only when we learn the art of listening — which is at least fifty percent of dialogue.

The War in the Mid-East Pope Paul VI

Vatican City [RNS] — Pope Paul VI, expressing sadness over the "sudden outbreak of war in the Middle East," "the violent repression taking place in Chile," and "all other oppressive situations," declared he had not lost hope for rational solutions to all conflicts.

"We are suffering," he said. "We are weeping, but we are still hoping."

"We bow down at the feet of the leaders of these conflicts and beg them not to radicalize the struggle, not to let themselves be

dominated by the spirit of revenge, not to show that they are intractable when faced with formulae of honorable compromise — and to remember that even those who they call enemies are men and our brothers."

The Pope said he bases his hope on the conviction that "the common moral sense" is aroused and becomes "more alive" in the face of "violence, bloodshed, and the irrationality and inhumanity of recourse to the blindness and cruelty of murderous weapons to establish order — or rather, the

oppression of men by other men."

Alluding specifically to the fighting in the Middle East, the pontiff said: "It is true that we must all be saddened by events which seem to document the incurable passions of men and the easy regression to the old persuasion — nourished, alas, by the growth and development in arms — that major disputes have no other solution than the furious confrontation of homicidal armies."

"But," he asked, "what justice,

what peace can emerge from such a confrontation?"

"Is it not possible that a truce can suggest methods which are less unworthy of human dignity and of juridical and civil logic?"

Would a dialogue be truly sterile and impossible, when, thanks to God, we have seen so many satisfying results from dialogues in recent years?"

Pope Paul urged the faithful to pray earnestly that "the wonder of generous and peaceful sentiments" will once again come to be among all conflicting groups.

Cardinal Terence Cooke

New York [RNS] — Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York, has expressed hope that Arab and Israeli leaders will be shown "the path to true peace," in the wake of the outbreak of fighting in the Near East.

"We have reached a point in history where war is no longer an acceptable alternative for nations in order to settle

disagreements," he said.

The full text of Cardinal Cooke's statement follows:

"The tragic events of the last few days in the Near East affects the hopes and fears of men and women around the world. The Catholic Community of New York joins today with all men of goodwill in praying that God will

show Arab and Israeli leaders the path to true peace.

"We look to the responsible statesmen of the world and especially to the United Nations to establish the conditions on which the contending governments can declare an immediate cease-fire. We have reached a point in history where war is no longer an acceptable alternative

for nations in order to settle disagreements."

"Once again," Cardinal Cooke said, "we pray that, at the tables of negotiations the hard-pressed peoples of the Near East will resolve their complex problems of security and territory and work together to create an atmosphere in which men, women and children can live and work, now and for generations to come."

Cardinal John Krol

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — While recognizing the existence of "genuine grievances" of both Arabs and Jews, the president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) expressed "deep sorrow and distress" over the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East.

He pleaded and prayed for an "instant halt" not only to the war but to all guerrilla-type clashes which lead to open warfare.

Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, in a statement released at the headquarters of the NCCB here, urged that the U.S. government and other governments, "working through the United Nations," exert strong pressures to bring about an immediate cease-fire.

The cardinal said the Middle East and the world "cannot afford

the carnage, destruction and waste of another war."

"Recourse to violence prolongs suffering, deepens bitterness, and serves as a continued threat to peace, progress and stability in the Middle East and in the entire world," he observed.

The full text of Cardinal Krol's message follows:

"On behalf of the NCCB, I express deep sorrow and distress over the full-scale war which has erupted in the Middle East.

"I plead and pray for an instant halt, not only to the open war, but also to the guerrilla-type clashes which have erupted into war.

"The deep-seated enmities between the nations of this region have painfully distressed

the world for the past quarter of a century.

"We recognize the genuine grievances on the side of both the Arab nations and Israel. We respect the legitimate desires of Israel for secure boundaries, just as we respect the legitimate desires of the Arab nations to recover the land lost in the war, six years ago.

"But the 25-year history of these grievances proves beyond doubt that the grievances will not, and cannot, be resolved by terrorism, by reprisals, or by open war.

"Recourse to violence prolongs suffering, deepens bitterness, and serves as a continued threat to peace, progress and stability in the Middle East and in the entire world.

Pontiff Sees 'Happiness' In Sisters

Rome [RNS] — Pope Paul left the Vatican to pay an unannounced visit to the Rome headquarters of the Little Sisters of Jesus, a congregation of 1,050 missionary sisters who are noted for their unusual vocation, to live among nomads, from Saharan tribes to circus folk and gypsies.

After visiting a typical dwelling house, the laundry, a crafts shop, the chapel, and other buildings in the compound, the Pope spoke briefly at a meeting with the leaders of the congregation.

The Little Sisters of Jesus were founded in the Sahara desert in 1939 by a 34-year-old French woman, now known as Sister Madeleine of Jesus, following the inspiration of Brother Charles Eugene de Foucauld, a former French Army officer and explorer in Africa, who joined the Trappists in 1890 and later set up a hermitage in the Sahara among Muslim tribes.

At the close of his visit to the Sister's Mother House, Pope Paul remarked, "You seem so happy."

To which, 78-year-old Sister Madeleine of Jesus replied, "That is our trademark."

According to a spokeswoman for the Little Sisters of Jesus in Washington, D.C., members of the congregation live and labor among working-class people in the U.S. and abroad.

But the feature of their vocation that has captured the interest of the general public is their apostolate among the "wandering people" of the world, who are "outside the normal life of society, and even shunned by it."

The aim of the Sisters, in this instance, the spokeswoman said, is to demonstrate to the world's "nomads" that they "are not forgotten by everyone, that there are some people who love them enough to go and live with them and share their lives."

Among the nomads with whom the Little Sisters of Jesus have lived are the aborigines of Australia, the Bushmen of southern Africa, the pygmies of central Africa.

CARD PARTY

Horseheads — Proceeds from a card party tonight in the library of St. Mary Our Mother Church will be used to lower the parish debt. Mrs. Edna Kleeman and Mrs. Theresa Hopkins will be hostesses.