

Pastoral Perspective

By Joseph L. Hogan

'Dedicate Yourselves to Thankfulness'

St. Paul used the words that suggested the title for this column in writing to the Colossians, and the theme of his pastoral advice was: **Grateful people manifest an awareness of God's presence in their lives.** The second reading in our new Thanksgiving Day liturgy incorporates this wise observation and injunction to the people of Colossae who were struggling to be worthy to bear the name of Christ Whose life was a litany of Thanksgiving to His Heavenly Father.

Long before our American Thanksgiving Day was given special recognition by the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, we were celebrating gratitude in every liturgy with the exhortation of the Preface: "let us give thanks to the Lord Our God" and with the clear response, "it is right and just." It was, perhaps, because the early Christians called the liturgy 'Eucharist' (Thanksgiving) that there seemed to be no great urgency to have a unique thanksgiving celebration. But I must admit — that I am pleased that the Church has given the day special recognition. For we, unfortunately, need to be reminded in season and out of season that most of us live at the wide end of the cornucopia which spills over with the abundance of God's harvest. And the more we stand to benefit, the more we seem to take our blessings for granted with no sense of responsibility for our stewardship.

So often we become lost in dreams and plans designed as some form of self-promotion that gratitude escapes us. Christ discovered this in His experience recorded in the Gospel story of the ten lepers. "The other nine" never returned to say "thanks." They have to be the most wretched of men because, saved by the miraculous from the lot of outcasts of society, they immediately forget that miracles should be beyond their daily expectations.

Someone once observed that there are three degrees of ingratitude. I suppose the grace of Thanksgiving is to discern which one is our personal great temptation. The first

degree includes those who have some appreciation of a favor received, but never think of doing the same for another. Degree #2 involves those who never return favors, and, who have forgotten that 'thank you' is part of our vocabulary. Parents and educators must surely know how difficult it is to instill the 'thank you' habit. On the lowest rung of the ladder of ingratitude are those who are never willing to admit that they have ever received a favor from anyone.

Thanksgiving has always been a special day for me. Thirty years ago when I was beginning my priesthood, I asked my kind old pastor for permission to make the day an occasion for a worthy religious celebration. We changed the Mass schedule to allow for a 9 a.m. liturgy and the Church was packed. This grass roots response, I am sure, has led to the decision to make Thanksgiving Day a **holysday** — for that is what holiday originally meant.

Four years ago, Thanksgiving Day became even more a day of special personal significance for that was the eve of my day of ordination as the seventh Bishop of Rochester. How can I ever forget the warm encouragement and support of the good people of St. Margaret Mary's parish who assembled to say, "Farewell and God's blessings be with you."

I ask you to join me today in this, my personal litany of gratitude:

LORD JESUS, I thank You for these great blessings in my life:

humbly am I grateful for —
my parents and family
my dearest friends
for my health and vocation
for my Faith
the clothes on my body
the home I can call my own;

FOR — others my age are homeless
or without parents or friends
or are ill, crippled, jobless,
or poor and hungry
and worse — without Faith or
purpose in life:
BUT FOR YOUR GRACE, O LORD,
I WOULD BE ONE OF THEM.

I THANK YOU FOR THE LAST TIME I BEHELD:

a glorious sunset
a baby's smile
a deep-red rose
a friend's face
the sun rising at each new day —
BECAUSE I AM NOT BLIND:

ACCEPT MY ABIDING GRATITUDE FOR THE LAST TIME I HEARD:

a child's laughter
my favorite song
a compliment
church bells
singing birds—
BECAUSE I AM NOT DEAF.

THANKS FOR THE LAST TIME I FELT:

a warm handshake
a child's hug
a balmy wind in my face —
BECAUSE I AM NOT ILL OR ISOLATED.

THANK YOU, DEAR LORD, SO SENSITIVE YOURSELF TO GRATITUDE AND INGRATITUDE, FOR:

the times I failed to thank You
the times I forgot to thank You
for life itself, and for all
blessings — **GREAT AND SMALL.**

LET ME BE SO GRATEFUL HENCEFORTH,

that my life will be a "thanks-living"
daily sensitive to these little things
that make life worth living.

LET ME NEVER BE SO BUSY PLANNING THE FUTURE OR REGRETTING THE PAST

that I fail to accept the now moments
of sharing and struggling that are at
the very heart of life.

AND FINALLY, LORD — I, JOSEPH, CALLED TO LEADERSHIP IN YOUR CHURCH, THANK YOU:

for the opportunity to serve your people
for Your Holy Spirit Who breathed on
me the fullness of Your Priesthood
for voices that have affirmed me when
in doubt
for voices that have been near me to
correct
for voices lifted in prayer
on my behalf each day.

AMEN.

vatican news

Historic First

Pope Greets Polish Legate

Vatican City [RNS] — Pope Paul VI received Polish Foreign Minister Stefan Olszowski at a special hour-long audience here Nov. 12.

Vatican Presses Unity in Europe

Vatican City [RNS] — The Vatican's ongoing concern for the progressive achievement of a "united Europe" was reaffirmed here by Pope Paul at a private meeting with Cornelius Berkhouver, president of the European Parliament, on Nov. 9.

The 142-member Parliament is an organ of the European Economic Community (EEC), also known as the Common Market.

Describing "the great undertaking of European unity" as "a work of patience and a work requiring a unity of boldness and realism," the Pope said the Holy See was genuinely concerned with fulfillment of "this noble hope."

This concern, he explained, stemmed from "special love of the peoples of Europe," and from realization of the "special role of

Europe" in the community of nations.

It marked the first time an official Polish government representative had met with Pope since Communists came to power in post-World War II Poland.

The pontiff said he was convinced that it is "only through complete collaboration" that the peoples of Europe can solve economic and social problems on the continent, as well as the "human problems" posed by technological progress, commercial exchanges, and migration.

Alluding to what he called the "special role" of Europe, Pope Paul said European solidarity, in work, research, and formulation of laws "would also have an importance for underdeveloped countries that looked to Europe for guidance in a wide variety of matters, including regard for the rights of man and concern for universal peace."

power in post-World War II Poland.

Archbishop Agostino Casaroli, secretary of the Vatican's Council for Public Affairs of the Church, and Kazimierz Sidor, Polish Ambassador to Italy, attended the meeting.

According to a Vatican communique, the talks dealt with "several essential problems of the international scene," and "matters which interest public opinion, especially the European situation."

The communique said that Olszowski "described to his Holiness the Polish point of view on important questions of European politics," noting that "much consideration was given to the activities of the Holy See in promoting the easing of tension and the winning of peace in the world."

It said that Pope Paul, in turn, expressed his best wishes to the people of Poland, and, recalling his visit to Poland in 1923, "showed his interest in the life, progress, and development of the country."



Polish Foreign Minister Stefan Olszowski (left) and Pope Paul VI exchange gifts during a special hour-long audience.

"His Holiness" the communique added, "also displayed his concern for the Catholic community in Poland," speaking about some of the questions "which are dear to the heart of the Church in Poland," and expressing the hope that these problems "can be resolved in a satisfactory manner."

(Polish bishops have recently criticized government plans for reform of education in the

country, scoring what they called the "official atheist campaign" in Poland and its hostility to religion.)

The Vatican communique said that Olszowski expressed his government's appreciation for the support of Polish Catholics "in the risks of building up the nation," and reaffirmed the government's goodwill "in seeking furtherance in normalization of Church-State relations."