

Pastoral Perspective

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

The Year of the Lord — 1974

As I write this column the desk calendar before me is new and fresh and unmarked. The date is January 1, 1974. After each date in the calendar, a blank space is provided to become the record of my personal use of my allotted days. A New Year's greeting from a priest friend lies open in front of the calendar and offers this challenge: "A New Year is being given us untouched, full of things that have never been. Thank you, Lord. Help us fill each day with joy and peace."



A friend once remarked, "I can no longer wish people a 'Happy New Year' when I think of what they seek to make them happy." Though the remark seems cynical, it offers a clue to the real value of the beginning of a year. It is a day for serious reflection on our life's goals, for reevaluating our reasons for doing the things we do and living the lives that we live, and for checking on our personal pursuit of happiness.

To wish anyone a Happy New Year is, indeed, a hollow ritual unless the greeting is accompanied by our personal resolve to so sanctify 1974 that each day will unfold as time worthy of the Lord's blessing of happiness.

What is the divine formula for happiness, and what is the grace of moments given to us as we proclaim a New Year of the Lord? Jesus' formula for happiness has these essential ingredients: a recognition that God is our common Father; a conviction that if we ever feel abandoned, it is not of His will but ours; that the unity of the human family calls all of us to be brothers and sisters, and that the expression of our love for each other is the revelation of His love.

The Christmas story tells us that the shepherds were given angelic direction to the location of Christ's birth. St. Luke assures us that they found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in a manger. Jesus was found in need of Mary for nourishment and warmth, and of Joseph for the protection of His life. Mary and Joseph were in need of each other for comfort, support and encouragement. And in this family portrait of mutual dependence, the shepherds discovered the meaning of new life in Jesus Christ. And we make the same discovery once we realize that happiness is found in our expression of love for one another. And once this discovery is made, the Year of the Lord becomes the reality of our life that it was meant to be.

New Year's Day was once regarded as an occasion for resolving disputes, healing enmities and effecting reconciliation. If we welcome the Prince of Peace, we are forced

to recognize that happiness consists in forgiving trespasses, resolving disputes, effecting reconciliations and enriching friendships.

The New Year offers us the grace of precious moments to effect this reconciliation and to find the Lord who is the unique source of happiness and peace among men. 1974 is a great gift of the Lord to each of us, and its greatest value is the opportunity it gives us to abandon the paths of pretense and synthetic happiness, to lay aside masks of merriment which we use to hide our emptiness, and to seek Him who alone gives peace and joy to the restless heart.

Perhaps our present energy crisis will slow us down enough to make us more reflective on how we have been using His gift of days and years — that precious commodity of time. A great spiritual writer once commented on its value: "He who is so liberal in all of His other gifts to us, shows us by the wise economy of His Providence how careful we should be in the management of time. He never gives us two moments together."

May this be a blessed year for all of you and may you write on every blank page of your '74 diary or calendar plans and events, words and deeds that spell Happy New Year.

vatican news

Peace World's Most Urgent Need, Pope Says

Rome [RNS] — Pope Paul, in a New Year homily on peace, declared that the urgent need for world peace takes precedence over energy and economic crises.

"Price increases and driving bans are nothing compared with the need to silence forever the nightmare, the fear of war," he told a congregation of 1,500 in St. Anthony's church in the Tuscolana district, a lower-middle class neighborhood on Rome's southeast outskirts.

The pontiff celebrated Mass there on the morning of Jan. 1 to mark the seventh annual Vatican-sponsored World Day of Peace, an observance introduced by him on Jan. 1, 1968.

The Pope exhorted all to be aware of the "tremendous urgency" of peace, "because the very survival of humanity depended on peace."

"Daily and domestic interests

Pope Warns Against Making a God of Man

Vatican City [RNS] — Pope Paul warned in his Christmas Day message against a humanism that "exalts man as 'man's god,'" insisting that mankind is in need of salvation and a Savior.

The pontiff spoke from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica shortly after noon. Some 50,000 persons filled St. Peter's Square.

At the end of his address in Italian, he said a few words of Christmas greetings in 12 languages, and gave the traditional blessing "Urbi et Orbi" ("To the City of Rome and the World").

"Today," said the Pope, "many people substitute anthropology for theology," remarking that many saw in Christianity a human value that was acceptable to all, but "do not see the Divine truth that gives this human value its

which today disturb ordinary daily family life — such as inflation, the shortage of consumer goods, the bans on driving — are indeed nothing in the face of this urgency."

"We all know," he went on, "that peace is an extremely important theme. It is not superfluous or ornamental in the life of peoples. It is substantial. It deals with life itself; even more than the physical safety of populations, of their honor, of their name, of their history."

Pope Paul referred to the "tremendous dangers" deriving from the development of science and technology, which, he said, posed a threat to peace.

"These are wonderful developments," he added, "if placed at the service of people, but catastrophic and heavy with threats if turned against the life of man."

Noting that the world "has

reason for being and its infinite worth."

Pope Paul rejected the "humanism of modern culture and sociology," charging that it falsely asserted that man was his own absolute cause — "man and nothing else." He said that such an assumption "will deafen us with the triumphant cry of the superman," and delude the world "by authorizing it to undertake the conquest and use of unlimited material power."

On the contrary, said the pontiff, Christians regard man as "not perfect" as a being "essentially in need of restoration and rehabilitation, lacking the fullness of perfection and happiness."

"Man is incomplete," he added. "He has an inner need of salvation. In a word, he has a need for a Savior — Jesus Christ."

apparently achieved a form of balance of power," the pontiff asserted. "This is a balance based on force, that poses one fear against another, and creates a widespread aura of distrust that poisons human life."

Criticizing those who say they can do nothing for peace on the ground that responsibility rests solely with the world's political leaders, the Pope said that the personal convictions of individuals, "especially if they are unanimous," can weigh on "the decisions of those leaders responsible for making the decisions."

Bringing the matter down to the individual, personal level, the pontiff exhorted everyone "to forgive offenses and adopt a peaceful attitude."

Scorning the "eye-for-an-eye" mentality, he said: "All this pseudo-justice that some of us seek to pursue in vendettas or feuds, seeking to settle accounts by suppressing and oppressing our adversaries — is the mania and psychology ours? Do we share it? Do we deplore it sufficiently? Do we not see the disgust and indignity of thinking and acting in this way?"

Pope Paul then spoke of the need of "witnesses" to goodness "even in the midst of injustice," citing the examples of Blessed Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish Franciscan priest who heroically offered his life in place of a fellow prisoner in the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz, and of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian apostle of non-violence, who suffered a violent death.

The pontiff concluded his homily with an urgent appeal to the faithful to practice "goodness" which, he said, is "not weakness or cowardice, but strength" and to "spread it in one's own family, in one's own community, and throughout the world."

At the offertory of the Mass, the Pope was presented with gifts

for the Eucharistic meal symbolizing peace — an olive branch, some ears of corn, and two white doves.

Later, in a brief address at noon to a crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square, Pope Paul expressed the wish that 1974 "may be for the whole world a year of peace in justice and liberty."

"May the year which has begun

today be good for this city, for our local church, for this country, for Europe, for the entire world," he said, and added:

"One wish predominates today — a day dedicated to peace — that the New Year may enable us all to enjoy its maintenance in justice and in liberty, and to see again its restoration in those places where it is still artificial, or unstable, or compromised."



Pontiff Meets Emperor

Pope Paul VI shakes hands with Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia after four African leaders met with the pontiff in an "unofficial" audience to discuss aspects of the Middle East crisis. The private meeting involved, in addition to the Pope and the Ethiopian emperor, Gen. Jaafar Mohammed Nimeiri of the Sudan, Vice President James Greene of Liberia and Foreign Minister Vernon Mwaanga of Zambia. The leaders reportedly agreed that a "special status" for Jerusalem should be discussed at the Geneva peace talks. During the meeting, the Pope addressed himself directly to the participation of the Vatican in the Geneva peace conference and to the problems of Palestinian refugees and the African nations in general. [RNS]