


PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

Catholic Schools of Rochester — The Spirit of McQuaid

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan



Almost a quarter of a century ago I presented a thesis to the faculty of the Graduate School of Canisius College in Buffalo as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts. Accepted or not (and it was, thank God), I wrote it as a personal investment of time and energy in the exploration of the depths of commitment of the pioneer bishop of Rochester to the cause of Catholic education. My moderator told me that there had to be something original in my dissertation to gain acceptance by the college faculty. For he and all others in the educational field were well aware that a three-volume work had already been written by Dr. Frederick Zwielerlein of St. Bernard's Seminary faculty about the life of Bishop McQuaid (a collector's item now). And though sensing the exhaustive research of a Zwielerlein, a Teutonic digger of gems worthy of exposure and of items some might consider best left buried, I hardly dared to enlarge on the work of my former teacher in a thesis entitled, "A Historical Study of Bishop McQuaid's Outstanding Contribution Toward Catholic Education in the Diocese of Rochester."

In the course of my exploration I came up-

on untapped riches in his theories and ideas for teacher training and in his unique plans for a Catholic College at Cornell University. Truly, he was a man ages ahead of his time. Church historians write of him as a pioneer bishop who came to Rochester in 1868 and labored until his death in 1909 to make this area a model of the Church's commitment to Christian education. The Catholic school system that is ours in this diocese today is largely due to the inspiration of our first bishop, whose credo, "The School before the Church," prompted generous sacrifices from his people.

As the sixth successor of Bishop McQuaid, I have inherited days of crisis for our Catholic Schools. The problem is not unique to the local scene. It is evident in every diocese of this country and it is a deep concern for every American bishop. To those who may question the depth of our commitment to the apostolate of Catholic schools, let me say that the American bishops issued a joint Pastoral Letter (To Teach as Jesus Did) in November 1972 and stated clearly:

"Of the educational programs available to the Catholic Community, Catholic Schools afford the fullest and best opportunity to realize the threefold purpose of Christian education among children and young people." — par. 101.

"We are well aware of the problems which now face the Catholic School System in the United States. We also wish our position to be clear. For our part, as bishops, we reaffirm our conviction that Catholic Schools which realize the threefold purpose of Christian education — to teach doctrine, to build community, and to serve — are the most effective means available to the Church for the education of children and young people who thus may grow into manhood according to the mature measure of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13) We call upon all members of the Catholic community to do everything in their power to maintain and strengthen Catholic schools which embrace the threefold purpose of Catholic education." — par. 115

As we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, I reaffirm my personal dedication to the apostolate of the Catholic School and pledge the best efforts of my office to insure that in this diocese they will be worthy of the uniqueness which we bishops have claimed for them. And I pay special tribute to the dedicated teachers who labor so generously in the redemptive mission of building His Kingdom in the minds and hearts of our young people. May the Lord's richest blessings be theirs!

Mindszenty Removed

Vatican City [RNS] — Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty, exiled Hungarian Roman Catholic Primate, has been removed as head of the Archdiocese of Esztergom, the Vatican announced on Feb. 5.

According to the announcement, Pope Paul, "after having exchanged lengthy correspondence" with the 82-year-old cardinal "on the pastoral problems of the Archdiocese of Esztergom" had decided to declare the See "vacant," and had appointed Bishop Laszlo Lekai, 63, as "apostolic administrator" of the archdiocese.

(An apostolic administrator is usually a bishop appointed to administer an ecclesiastical jurisdiction temporarily.)

The new head of the Esztergom see was apostolic administrator of Veszprem.

The Vatican released the text of a letter of Pope Paul to Cardinal Mindszenty, dated Jan. 30, which said in part:

"The exercise of your pastoral ministry was carried out in very difficult times, full of anxiety and responsibility.

"Our memory has been deeply impressed by the recollection of you when you were the target of

Cardinal Did Not Comply

Vatican City [RNS] — The Vatican has confirmed that exiled Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty did not voluntarily resign his archbishop's office or his title as Roman Catholic Primate of Hungary.

At the same time, the Vatican insisted that there had been an extensive exchange of letters between Pope Paul and the cardinal on the question of his resignation.

In his first statement since Pope Paul removed him as head of the Archdiocese of Esztergom, in which Church primacy in Hungary is vested, the cardinal said he had not resigned either from his archbishop's office or from his title as Primate of Hungary.

"The decision was made by the Holy See alone," the 81-year-old prelate said.

growing attacks against your very person.

"You know that all of us in the Church are closely united in offering these sentiments and we ask Christ to give you guidance and the eternal reward due His pastors."

A Budapest Radio report said that the Hungarian government had been "consulted" on the new Vatican appointments, and had agreed to them before the formal announcement.

Cardinal Mindszenty's arrival in Rome in 1971, at the behest of Pope Paul, marked a major step forward in the Vatican's "Eastern" policy and its bid to establish a dialogue and a modus vivendi with the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

For the prelate himself, his leaving Hungary marked what he called "the heaviest cross of my life." His leaving also marked the end of some 22 years of close confinement and isolation from the rest of the world.

The cardinal, who once described himself as "a shipwreck of Hungarian liberty," went — as bishop — to Prime Minister Szalsi in 1944 and protested Hungary's continued participation in World War II as an ally of Germany. The prime minister had him arrested.

A Vatican press office statement issued Feb. 8 agreed that Pope Paul had made the decision, but only after "a repeated exchange of personal letters."

"It is correct," said the Vatican statement, "and a communique made public on the same day does not conceal, that the Pope, after having privately made known his thoughts to the venerable Archbishop through a repeated exchange of personal letters, did not wish to burden the Archbishop with a decision which he did not feel able to make."

"But it was a decision," it added, "that His Holiness, after prolonged, mature and serious reflection deemed in conscience that he must and should take upon himself."

He remained in prison until he was freed by the conquering Russians.

However, as archbishop of Esztergom and primate of Hungary, he soon became the principal leader as well as a symbol of opposition to the Russians and later to the Hungarian Communist authorities.

He attacked land reform programs that deprived the Church of most of its holdings, battled with government authorities over control of education and in general maintained a steady stream of outspoken criticism against the new society being constructed on Marxist principles.

Finally the authorities had had enough. The cardinal was arrested on the day after Christmas in 1948 and charged with "treason, espionage, and blackmarketeering in foreign currency."

The eyes of the world were on the trial, and though Cardinal Mindszenty, after some 29 days of interrogation, "confessed," it seemed to most Western observers that he was either drugged or by some other means "brainwashed." He was jailed for life. Little was heard of the imprisoned prelate until the abortive Hungarian uprising of October 1956, when "Freedom Fighters" released him from prison.

His freedom was short-lived. Fears of Hungarian defection from the Warsaw Pact brought the Russians in, the reform government of Imre Nagy was crushed, and Cardinal Mindszenty sought refuge in the U.S. Embassy in Budapest.

And there he remained for 15 years, a lonely, secluded figure in an upperfloor suite of the Embassy overlooking Budapest's "Freedom Square." The passage of time brought a gradual improvement in relations between the Vatican and East European Communist governments.

The thaw was accelerated by the ascension to the papacy of Pope Paul VI, who said he felt a grave responsibility to "save what can be saved" of the Catholic Church in Communist lands.



CARDINAL MINDSZENTY

Talks between the Vatican and the regime of Janos Kadar of Hungary began in 1962 and, in 1964, an agreement was reached over the appointment of new bishops and the filling of long-vacant dioceses in the country. At the same time, the Kadar government made it clear that the major stumbling block to further progress was the presence of Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary.

Pope Paul, through intermediaries, made frequent efforts to persuade the cardinal to leave his asylum and come to Rome. Parallel efforts were made by the Kadar regime to lure the cardinal from his refuge by offering him safe conduct abroad in exchange for a promise never to return.

Cardinal Mindszenty, however, refused to budge, except on his own terms. These were that he be fully "rehabilitated" and cleared of the 1949 charges, and that he

should re-emerge as a free man and head of the Church in Hungary, playing his normal role in matters of succession and securing its future, prior to his own voluntary retirement.

At last, substituting pressure for persuasion, Pope Paul prevailed on the aging cardinal to sacrifice his principles "for the good of the Church." Shortly after his arrival in Rome, he took up residence in Vienna, some 50 miles from Hungary, at an institution established by a previous Archbishop of Esztergom as a home and seminary for Hungarian priests.

He made a 15-day tour of Canada and the U.S. last September. Last November, he went to South Africa for a short visit as guest of the country's Hungarian community. He has said that, despite objections by the Hungarian government, he plans to publish his long-awaited memoirs in 1974.