



The Seven Last Words

- † "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."
- † "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."
- † "Woman, behold thy son! Behold thy Mother!"
- † "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?"
- † "I thirst."
- † "It is finished."
- † "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Self-Denial: A Positive Act

My dear People,

On this Ash Wednesday I wish to express the hope that this year we may rediscover Lent as a time of penance and self-denial. A few years ago many of us seemed convinced that we had outgrown such practices in our lives. As a consequence, Lent came to have less and less significance for us.

But today, in 1974, self-denial comes knocking at our door once again and asks to be recognized, not as the negative thing we once said it was, but as something very positive. Self-denial is not a sadistic glorification of pain. It is not saying something must be good because it hurts. Rather, self-denial is a symbolic gesture whereby we say something that we need to say to ourselves and to the world. It is a gesture whereby we take a stand, whereby we make a decision about life and its priorities and express that decision in action.

Self-denial is an act of radical doubt, whereby we dare to call into question the basic presupposition by which so many of us lead our lives — namely that pain and suffering are to be avoided at all costs. Self-denial is a way of raising doubts about the pleasure-principle that bombards us from the television commercials and the travel ads. Self-denial has as its purpose to make us uncomfortable with the pleasure-principle that so often dominates our lives. It is a way of knowing that we are being deceived when people tell us that all we need to make us happy is a week's stay at a fashionable resort. Self-denial is a way of saying that man does not live by bread alone and then by giving up bread once in a while to prove that we mean what we say.

There is another positive aspect to self-denial in our world of 1974. We live in a world where a minority of human beings can pursue their own pleasure almost without limit, while a majority pay for it with their lives. In such a situation **self-denial becomes an act of imagination**. It is an act whereby we who are not poor try to discover the world that is poor and identify with it. By denying ourselves through choice some of the things we desire, we can **imagine** what it is like to be denied without choice the things that one needs for daily sustenance.

By denying ourselves we can say to the poor of the world: "We can never be poor as you are poor (we belong to the affluent minority), but by our self-denial we can at least stand with you and even discover the poverties that afflict us (the poverty of our spirit, the poverty of our insight, the poverty of our love) and come to the realization that we are all one people — all of us in need of liberation." Self-denial is our way of discovering the poor and including them in our world and ourselves in theirs.

I hope that Lent 1974 will help you and me to become freed from the things that enslave our spirit. Because I hope for that, I also hope that Lent for you and me will include the discipline of self-denial. May our sacrifices during Lent be a discovery that man does not live by bread alone. May it also be a discovery of our solidarity with men, women and children who have no bread at all to live by.

With a blessing, I remain

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Joseph P. Meyer
Bishop of Rochester

Two Series: CICP and Teen Drinkers

Higher educational costs have all schools more finance-conscious than in the past. But what about parochial schools in hard-pressed areas? How are they faring? In this edition, staffer Pat Petraske begins a two-part look at programs devised by the Council of Inner City Parishes. Page 20.

Are teens aware of the dangers of alcohol? A recent program given to a religion class at Bishop Kearney High School by Raymond A. Selke, director of the National Council on Alcoholism in Rochester, points out some of them. The program is one of the ways community agencies concerned with alcohol education inform groups about alcohol. Part 2 of Sharon Darnieder's series, "Teenage Drinkers: Our Future Alcoholics?" is on Page 21.