

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

Mary — Mirror of Our Expectations

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

On March 22 of this year, Pope Paul VI wrote an "Apostolic Exhortation" to all the Catholic Bishops of the world. It addresses itself to this question: "What is the place of Mary in the life of today's post-conciliar Church?"



The Holy Father states his intent very clearly in the salutation of the letter. He has in mind to write a document directed to "the right ordering and development of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary." The body of the letter makes it equally clear that he is writing from a deep pastoral concern about excesses that have crept into Marian devotion, which call for his corrective voice. He is deeply aware, too, that the cult of Mary needs continual updating to appeal to the spiritual needs of men and women of every age.

Since it would be impossible to give an adequate summary of the lengthy letter in this column, let me concentrate on these two areas — devotional aberrations and Mary as an inspiration for today.

DEVOTIONAL ABERRATIONS BY EXCESS OR DEFECT

The Pope mentions those whose vocation is pastoral care but who have abused their position of leadership of a worshipping community by scorning all devotions of piety and, having rejected them, never do anything to replace them. He reminds them that the II Vatican Council urged that devotions should harmonize with the liturgy but not be suppressed. He cites the other extreme of the liturgists who foster a hybrid celebration, e.g., a novena service inserted into the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Portuguese Junta

Press Censorship Abolished

Lisbon (RNS) — Portugal's ruling military junta, under the leadership of Gen. Antonio de Spínola, making good on its promises to restore "civil liberties" has abolished press censorship.

The junta also has announced the appointment of new governors for Portuguese Guinea, Angola, and Mozambique, the African territories where Portugal has been fighting black liberation movements for 13 years.

Deacons Assigned

Four St. Bernard's Seminary deacons who have finished four years of theological preparation, were named to intern-assignments as special assistants in diocesan parishes by Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, according to Father Edward E. Steinkirchner, director of interns.

The appointments, effective June 26 are:

Rev. Mr. William Laird to Holy Family, Rochester; Rev. Mr. Charles Manning to Holy Ghost, Rochester; Rev. Mr. Stephen Kraus to St. Andrew, Rochester; Rev. Mr. Thomas Koester to St. Paul of the Cross, Honeoye Falls. The pastor in each parish was officially designated as the deacon's "supervisor" for the in-service training in parish work. The deacons will be ordained to the priesthood in the Spring of 1975.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan inaugurated the deacon-intern program in early 1970.

The 10 priests ordained this spring are completing their first year of internship and are awaiting assignments in June.

These conflicts loomed as key factors in creating a climate of public support for the military coup on April 26.

Mario Soares, the leader of the Socialist party, returned here from five years of exile in Paris, France, and met with Spínola, who has pledged free elections within a year. Soares is expected to play a major role in future politics.

According to the Personnel Guidelines of the Diocese, they will join the ranks of fourteen other intern priests already serving in parishes and they will serve three years as priest interns with supervising pastors. At the end of the intern period, they will be considered to have full professional status, and they will be qualified for a co-pastorate or associate-pastorate.

The deacons will perform all the duties of the ordinary assistant in the parishes with the exception of celebrating the Eucharist and the Sacraments of Penance and of the sick. They will baptize, preach, distribute Holy Communion, take Communion to the sick, witness marriages, and direct Scripture Services.

They will also be expected to assist in parish youth work, help in pre-marriage instructions, and investigations, assist in religious education programs of children and adults.

For his services the deacon will receive from the parish a basic salary plus room and board and a car allowance.

He refers explicitly to deviant attitudes of piety which have led to the lessening of authentic Marian devotion. "Vain credulity," he says, "is the substitution of reliance on merely external practices for serious commitment." **Sentimentality** is also sterile religious performance, alien to the spirit of the Gospel which demands perseverance and practical action. "We reaffirm the reprobation of the II Vatican Council of such attitudes," the Holy Father stated. "They are not in harmony with the Catholic faith and therefore they must have no place in Catholic worship."

Two years ago, Father Eamon Carroll, a Carmelite Father, and faculty member of our own Catholic University and a prominent Mariologist, was asked to comment on the status of American devotion to Mary. After a six-month tour around the country and 160 lectures on Mariology, he expressed the same pastoral concern that Pope Paul has voiced. "I would regard the chief drawback of the American Catholic attitude toward Our Lady as an overdependence on apparitions and private revelations. This has prevented for many the growth of a deeper Scriptural devotion to Our Lady. People nourished on an approach to Our Lady that has secret messages, hidden letters, apocalyptic threats, seem inclined to find the Biblical portrait of Mary somewhat less interesting or nourishing. Even when the Council's teaching is explained (the official voice of the teaching Church) it may still leave them cold." — LIGUORIAN, May 1972.

And I must say that the cult of Mary that is based on the hope of guaranteed predestination, of instant security, immunized from the reality of the demands of the commitment that her Son assured us as the sole path to glory, leaves me cold. I am deeply grateful to Pope Paul for his express explosion of the myth of a Marian sentimental journey to our heavenly abode.

MARY AS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE 70's

This portion of the document gained the attention of the secular press who interpreted it as an official admission that the "Women's Lib" movement had gained Pope Paul's recognition. What the Holy Father was really saying was that some of today's devotional literature on Mary offers little interest to people who see her as completely out of touch with our life style. Life at Nazareth seemed too restricted to allow Mary to identify with the wide horizons that are open to women today. The Pope insists that some writings about Mary present a distortion of the Gospel image of Mary — who should be a woman for all seasons — a mirror of the expectations of men and women of today just as much as she has been in ages past.

"The Virgin Mary has always been proposed to the faithful by the Church as an example to be imitated not precisely in the type of life she led, and much less for the socio-cultural background in which she lived, and which today, scarcely exists anywhere. She is held up as an example to the faithful rather for the way in which . . . she fully and responsibly accepted the will of God, because she heard the word of God and acted on it and because charity and a spirit of service were the driving force of her actions. She is worthy of imitation because she was the first and most perfect of Christ's disciples." Par. 35

"This," Pope Paul adds, "has a permanent and universal exemplary value." Indeed, Mary is the woman for all seasons and for all people. I am personally grateful for the Holy Father's pastoral concern to free her image of distortions. His pastoral letter reflects the spirit and hope of St. Ambrose of the 4th Century:

"May the heart of Mary be in each Christian to proclaim the greatness of the Lord; may her spirit be in everyone to exult in God."

Bishops Urge Help For Stricken Nations

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Over the past several months, news reports have followed news reports concerning the ever-worsening situation of famine and critical human need in many of the developing nations of the world. A disastrous combination of circumstances, some natural and some man-made, has brought the grim specter of starvation to literally millions of our brothers and sisters in God's human family.

The areas under the shadow of this mounting holocaust of hunger stretch around the earth. There are almost a billion people in the forty or so poorest nations of the world which are the hardest hit. This belt of agricultural disaster touches the six nations of the Sahel, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Uganda and Zaire.

The most ominous note of all is that this spiral of starvation is even now accelerating rapidly, and as Secretary General Kurt Waldheim of the United Nations said recently, "the fate of millions of people may well depend, within the next few months, on what is done or not done now." Drought, combined with the soaring prices of food and fertilizer, has reduced food resources to an amazingly low

level in these countries. The need for financial assistance, for food and fertilizer has never been greater than it is today among these impoverished people.

The truth is that both food and fertilizer are available in the United States and the other food-exporting nations to a degree that could help to solve the present problem of hunger in this emergency for these many millions of God's children — this could be done with a small sacrifice, simply through that use of moderation in consumption which is the mark of a healthy society and the tradition of our Judeo-Christian culture. Not only charity but justice demands that it must be done by a sharing of resources with our brothers and sisters in such dire need.

We urge the officials of our nation, both in the Administration and the Congress, to give immediate attention to this critical problem, and to the need for an overall program of human development which could prevent such calamities in the future.

As a nation which is so richly blessed by God, we must not allow our preoccupation with our fiscal and political problems at home to cause us to turn our backs on a growing tragedy of world-wide magnitude which we can help avert with such a small sacrifice in food and fertilizer supplies. We know that in this catastrophic situation the people of the United States will not fail in their own tradition of generous response to the poor and hungry.

Cardinal Terence Cooke
and the Bishops of
New York State

Candidacy Rite Held

The Rite of Candidacy was recently celebrated for seven men from St. Bernard's Seminary, who expect to work as priests in the Rochester Diocese.

Auxiliary Bishop John E. McCafferty was the presiding prelate for the April 25 rites. The seven are Robert C. Doell, John F. Gagnier, Gerard A. Giehl, Christopher E. Linsler, Robert K. Malone, James Peters and Leo J. Reinhardt.

In the same rites three seminarians from the Diocese of Providence expressed their candidacy. They are Paul R. Grenon, Timothy K. Lemlin and Daniel O'Shea.