

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

A Desert Experience with Brother Priests

I pen these reflections at the end of the first day of our Annual Priests' Retreat. The example of our Great High Priest has set the pattern and the inspiration for these precious moments removed from the pressing demands of daily duties. As He summoned His first disciples to come apart to discern more clearly His Father's Will, so He offers the same invitation to His priests today. And every conscientious priest senses the need to say 'Yes' to that invitation — to be renewed in spirit regularly lest he become overwhelmed by the disease of 'Spiritual Aridity.' It would be so easy to succumb to the temptation to consider these days a waste of time when there is so much to be done. But the activism of the 'go-go' ministry leads to the inevitable identity crisis and a power failure as we become separated from Him who is the unique source of our priestly energy. True priestly ministry is rooted in faith. As Pope Paul VI has observed "Only faith can tell us who we are and what we should be." This is the power in depth that all disciples of the Lord need and it does not come easily. We priests have to work at it and 70 of us are working at it this week at Becket Hall.



Most Reverend Joseph McKinney, the Auxiliary Bishop of Grand Rapids, Michigan, is with us to direct our reflections. He wisely suggested that we could profit best in these days by beginning with an acknowledgment of our own sinfulness, our need to open our hearts to the healing power of the Merciful Lord, and to express our desire to be forgiven and to forgive.

While this meditation applies especially to priests who are by ordination empowered to absolve sinners, it is also of great significance to all Christians who by vocation are called to be witnesses of Christ's merciful healing through forgiveness. I am pleased to share it with you now.

THE MEDITATION

We need forgiveness and we need to forgive. We must all admit to a **common fault**: we have failed to love enough. As we have sinned against God and one another, so it is fitting that together we ask forgiveness and extend forgiveness.

Pope Extends 'Norms' for Marriage Courts

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — Pope Paul has approved the extension of the 23 so-called "American norms" for U.S. Roman Catholic diocesan marriage courts which were implemented in 1970 to speed up marriage annulment processes.

Aside from a few technical conditions, the Pope's approval — transmitted through Cardinal Jean Villot, Vatican Secretary of State — said the norms will remain in force until the new order of matrimonial court procedure is promulgated for the Latin Church.

Last February, a group of U.S. bishops met with Pope Paul to urge an extension of the norms. Their action followed a 1973 decision by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) to appeal for an additional extension. After a three-year experimental period from 1970 to 1973, the Pope granted a one-year extension which would have expired June 20, 1974.

The Pope's approval was transmitted to Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, president of the NCCB, and included a call for "better-staffed and better-equipped tribunals (diocesan marriage courts) which can

assist those "not so well endowed

The letter also said that only in case of "serious necessity" should the dispensation from the prescribed appeal of the "defender of the bond" (the advocate against annulment) be employed, and it urged "major seats of learning" to hold institutes "for preparing and teaching those who are to serve as tribunal judges and personnel."

The American procedural norms were initially developed in the Canon Law Society of America (CLSA) and the bishops' Committee for Canonical Affairs in 1968. Under the Church's universal procedural law, two-thirds of the U.S. diocesan marriage tribunals had been averaging about two decisions a year.

After approval by the NCCB in 1969, the procedures were submitted to the Vatican. After further revision, the Vatican approved the American procedure on a three-year experimental basis, beginning July 1, 1970.

Although Pope Paul's 1971 papal directive, "Causas

(Together we prayed) — Lord Jesus Christ, we believe that you are here with us. We rejoice in your presence but we also feel sad because we have sinned against you and against one another. Too often we have forgotten your presence, ignored your laws and advice. We know also that in neglecting or hurting each other we have offended you. Give us the grace to really hear your revealed word so that we may be turned more completely to you and be healed.

(Then we listened to God's Word as found in Jonah 3:1-10)

God reminded the people of Nineveh of their sin and guilt. The people listened to His Call to repentance through Jonah, the prophet, and the whole city abandoned its foolish ways and opened itself to God's forgiveness.

(Then we prayed 'Forgive us, O Lord' in response to this confession of personal guilt)

For our weak and unenthusiastic faith

For neglecting to communicate with you in prayer

For the routine and thoughtless worship we have sometimes offered at Mass

For our irreverent and profane use of your name and for our broken promises

For the injuries we have inflicted on our families, friends and co-workers

For not listening to others, and being insensitive to their unspoken needs

For neglecting the sick, the poor, and those in need

For our sarcasm and cynicism, insults and gossip

For our irreverence to others in thought, look or action

For bigotry and prejudice, refusing courtesy, forgiveness and friendship

For feeling superior to others

For careless and reckless driving

For overeating and drinking

Matrimoniales," reordered some facets of Church procedural law on marriage annulments, it did not nullify provisions of the American norms where the two documents addressed the same question.

In fact, the U.S. bishops canonical committee in 1972 reported that the papal directive was "clearly inadequate to solve the pressing problems of our American tribunals, namely, trying to give a just decision to worthy cases in a reasonable amount of time."

While most of the 23 American norms deal with relatively minor points involving court procedures and functions of court personnel, a few offer a substantial change in emphasis on speeding up the handling of marriage cases. Among the major American norms are:

— The provision that for "grave reason" a case may be handled by one judge, instead of a panel of three to five judges. This is especially appropriate in cases where the situation is clear-cut.

— The provision which broadens options available in choosing an original diocesan court to hear a marriage case.

— The provision that when the original court grants an annulment, the "defender of the bond" need not appeal the ruling to a second court if he deems it unnecessary or superfluous.

Catholic Church teaching holds that a validly consummated marriage of baptized persons is indissoluble. However, a decree of nullity can be granted if an apparently valid marriage was actually invalid from the beginning.

Requests for annulments are handled by the tribunals and the system provides for appeals from the original court. When there is a conflict between the original and appeals courts, the case can be referred to the Roman Rota — the Vatican court of final recourse.

In the letter extending the norms, Cardinal Villot said that the Pope established a number of minor conditions to be met in implementing the American norms.

One such condition requires that the president of the NCCB send the Vatican a report on the cases proposed by each diocesan tribunal in the U.S., as well as by a single judge, and the number of

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

For the bad example we have given to each other and especially to children

For our jealousy, envy and sad-heartedness at the good fortune of others

For our unjustified and exaggerated anger

For our spiritual laziness

For our failure to take positive action to make our community a better place for everyone to live

A Gospel passage (Mark 5:25-34) then called to mind the healing power of Christ extended to a woman of faith who reached out to touch but the hem of His garment. We prayed, then, for faith like hers as we cried out, "Heal us, Lord, and draw us closer to you. Heal us, your priests, so we may better represent your goodness and love as we use Your power to heal men's spirits."

Then we exchanged the Sign of Christ's peace with our brothers and during an hour of silence confessed our sins in private and received through priestly absolution the healing mercy of the Lord's forgiveness.

In gratitude we concluded our Communal Celebration of Penance as we prayed:

Father, we praise you because your Spirit has made us cry out for forgiveness; we thank you that forgiveness is ours by the power of Jesus' death and resurrection.

We thank you for opening our ears to hear your word which always calls us to go beyond ourselves and our petty interests.

We praise you because you continually call us forth from the Egypt of self-destruction into the kingdom of your truth and freedom."

I thank God for these days in the presence of Jesus — to be able to touch the hem of his garment — to be healed and renewed in spirit — to recognize that He is the Lord from whom all the power of my priesthood derives its strength and validity. Seventy of us are in the desert praying for you and thanking Him for your prayers which accompany us as we strive to be worthy priests.

cases that have been executed without appeal.

Bishop Bernard Flanagan of Worcester, Mass., chairman of the bishops' canonical affairs committee, has already begun to develop procedures for complying with the Pope's condition.

The Pope also has instructed the NCCB to set up a small committee of experts to handle requests from local bishops for special permissions to use "one judge" tribunals when appropriate and to dispense the defender of the bond from mandatory appeals.

'EXORCIST' PANEL

The film and book, *The Exorcist*, will be the subject of a panel discussion at Temple B'rith Kodesh, 2131 Elmwood, at 7:30 tonight, June 19. Panelists will include Father William O'Malley of McQuaid Jesuit High School, Dr. Rita Underberg, a child psychologist at the University of Rochester Medical Center, Ric Wanetik, director of Rochester Shakespeare Theatre, and Rabbi Judea B. Miller of B'rith Kodesh. There is no admission charge and the public is invited.