


PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CLASS OF '74



It is 1974 and you, as graduates, are in the statistics. Millions of young Americans are streaming out of the high schools and colleges of our nation — four million graduating from high school alone. If I were to stop with this fact, impressive though it is for sheer strength implied, you might well accuse me of considering you "just a computer number" and such designation is what modern youth quite appropriately rejects. But I want to go well beyond that to say that, far from regarding our graduates as a mere entry on a continuum of figures, I see you as one of the few tangible reasons why I believe we can remain optimists in the face of a society and a church which seem more and more beset by a growing complexity.

To come quickly to the theme of my message: it is that of HOPE and the place of Christian hope in your task of assuming some responsibility for your own life and future. In addition, I want to dwell briefly on that same hope in its proper relation to whatever style of leadership the Class of '74 will exercise as you join forces with the larger community to which your graduation admits you.

Few of us are ever asked whether we wish to be leaders or followers. Somehow, most of us arrive at some small realization from signposts along the way of life which tell us that only those who have committed themselves to truth in their own thinking and feeling can

communicate a true word and perform the truth. It's for each of us to decide his relationship to the truth and to our service to the truth as we insert ourselves into group interaction on the problems of everyday life. You move out to a world involved in both crises and progress — where many are honestly seeking or constantly missing the truth about so many things. My question: will you be only a sympathetic watcher, or will you be resolutely set about the harder task of sharing the truth you now hold? Neither our church nor our society is built to follow, a single leader because the chances for wide leadership have been built into both. Selected or appointed leaders are effective only when they are assisted at every level by participating and contributing persons.

Let me tell you then why I remain hopeful — even in these days when the strains of contemporary crises are reflected all about us:

*Because I believe that God celebrates His Own and our existence anew every day. He did not just create us and forget us. This means that we have to ask and expect God's Providence at work in us.

*Because God's gifts to us flow from His love for us and they are always designed to effect the betterment of His children.

*I am hopeful because I know that the Holy Spirit is in the Church of the Diocese and in the world, all about us — even if there are those who do not know Him by Name or as Person.

*Because I know that the story of the Church is a long and wonderful story of leadership, filled with proofs of the Spirit. If only we can recognize as the prophets and the saints have done, even in the most hopeless of times, that the well-spring of grace made available by Christ is sufficient for all our pilgrim needs — we shall never be without hope.

*Finally, I believe that YOUTH are a gift to us from God and that you are able to help liberate us from those gloomy statistics about the state of the world.

I offer my best wishes, then, for a rewarding life — not only in the sense of personal achievement during your own short "moment in history" but more so in that timeless existence toward which we all strain forward.

In the educated kingdom of your mind there will dwell many a guest: some few chosen ones will be invited; countless others will come unbidden; for here will reside some pain or sorrow, great joy and frequent happy memories, and quite possibly even fears of what is yet to be. Remember to provide there, in some hidden cranny, a spot where fragile hope can flourish. There it will stay suspended between the poles of what has been and what is yet to be. It will enable you at all times to lift up your hearts as you come to realize your true mission — which I repeat is not to represent a cold statistic, but literally to be the embodiment in the living world of men of all the noble ideas that have been set before you. To wish you less would be to betray my own hopes for the Class of '74.

Cardinal: 'Church in No Way Supports IRA'

London [RNS] — The Roman Catholic Church "in no way" supports the Irish Republican Army, according to a statement issued here by Cardinal John Heenan, archbishop of Westminster.

His statement followed some dramatic developments in which a Catholic priest spoke at a parade for an IRA hunger-striker who died, was suspended from his duties as a parish priest, and then said he would appeal to Rome.

Cardinal Heenan's statement said, "While aware of the grievances of the minority (the Roman Catholics) in Northern Ireland during the last 50 years the Church in no way supports the IRA. The only way to peace is for true Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, to disown those who preach hatred and violence."

The events leading up to

Cardinal Heenan's statement began when Father Michael Connolly of St. Joseph's Parish in the Midlands town of Wolverhampton, came here to take part in a requiem mass at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, at Kilburn, an Irish stronghold in northwest London, for Michael Gaughan.

Mr. Gaughan was serving a seven-year sentence at Parkhurst, Isle of Wight for robbing a bank to help raise funds for the IRA and died after a 65-day hunger strike.

After the Mass, Father Connolly left the church and joined a funeral parade for Mr. Gaughan in which IRA sympathizers, in black dress, took part. He was said to have taken a microphone from a march organizer and called for "one Our Father and three Hail Marys" in Gaelic from the crowd.

"This is a fitting tribute to a great man," he was reported to have said. "The price of freedom has always been very high and Irishmen have always been prepared to pay it in the full."

Father Connolly, 44, is a fervent Irish nationalist from County Tipperary, and reports of his presence at the requiem and actions afterwards were published throughout Britain. They came to the attention of Archbishop George Patrick Dwyer of Birmingham, in whose archdiocese Wolverhampton lies, and he wrote to Father Connolly:

"Two years ago I gave you a final warning that intemperate utterances on Irish affairs were causing distress and well-founded anger to many people, both Irish and English. You gave me a verbal apology and a written promise of silence for the future. You broke this in tragic circumstances last weekend (at Kilburn).

"I am therefore relieving you of your duties as parish priest and of all diocesan duties until further notice. A priest must speak words of peace and reconciliation. Your actions can only foment bitterness and division."

Father Connolly, who had returned to Wolverhampton, noted that Mr. Gaughan was his cousin and at one time his next-door neighbor. He said he went to the funeral in that capacity.

The next day Father Connolly held a press conference at which he read a 1,000-word statement. He reiterated that Mr. Gaughan was his cousin and said:

"In the Catholic tradition those who die for their conscience, whether they are right or wrong, are deemed to be great men. I have now been convicted of speaking well of the dead, and my bishop, due to pressure from the world of journalism, has been forced to suspend me.

"If what I said is against the teaching of the Catholic Church, and is proved in an ecclesiastical court where I have a right to defend myself, I accept the decision of the bishop. If, however, what I have said is not against the teaching of my Church, but only against the present mood of the press or the present policy of the government, I cannot accept this decision. Like St. Paul before me, I appeal to Rome."

The story received Page One treatment in Roman Catholic newspapers. The mass-circulating Universe published an editorial which was headlined "The Shame of Kilburn: The Church Brought Into Disrepute." It said:

"Even though the parish clergy (of Kilburn) were in no way responsible for what took place, the foot-stamping and parading of the men in black representing the IRA (which is not banned in Britain) and the presence of an Irish priest (Connolly) who delivered an emotional oration, without any authority, the incident has brought great scandal on the Church.

"Those responsible for the disgraceful scenes at Kilburn took full advantage of the Church's compassion for the dead and callously turned it to their own selfish ends. . . . Sadly, there are some people, including a small though highly emotional number of Irish priests who are prepared to defy diocesan authority and take the law into their own hands."

Cardinal Heenan stated that Father William O'Brien, superior at the Sacred Heart Church at Kilburn, had little choice about allowing a Requiem Mass to be celebrated in his church for Mr. Gaughan.

Similarly, Father O'Brien could not refuse funeral rites to a Catholic who, according to the medical evidence at the inquest, died of pneumonia.

Celibacy Discussed In Vatican Document

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — Candidates for the priesthood must be "allowed to develop human emotional maturity" while practicing a life of continence "as an expression of apostolic love," says a newly-issued Vatican document entitled "A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy."

A celibate person who is emotionally and spiritually mature does not feel hemmed in by "canonical legislation extrinsic to his life" or view celibacy as "some kind of taxation that has to be paid to the Lord," it says.

The guide was issued by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, and is being published in the United States by the U.S. Catholic Conference Publications Office.

It is intended primarily for bishops and others responsible for training candidates for the priesthood, and has been sent to bishops throughout the world.

The guidelines originated with a call made by Pope Paul in his 1967 encyclical, "On Priestly Celibacy," expressing a desire that instructions be issued to help those engaged in preparing future priests for a life of sacerdotal celibacy, according to Cardinal Gabriel Garrone, prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education.

Numerous experts were consulted in preparation of the document, he said, and copies were submitted in advance to Episcopal Conferences for their suggestions.

The 1971 Synod of Bishops, the guide recalls, stated that "celibacy, as a gift from God, cannot be kept unless the candidate is properly prepared for it."

While some historical reasons cited to support priestly celibacy may no longer be valid, says the guide, the connection between celibacy and the priesthood

nonetheless remains "a living reality in the Church."

"Priestly celibacy, like the priesthood itself, is a consecration to God on behalf of the people whom priests are sent to serve," it says.

Formation in celibacy, the guidelines affirm, must be adapted to differing civilizations and historical periods, and also to the conditions of local Churches.

"Since these can differ considerably from one to another," the document says, "their members' psychological and sociological outlooks will differ accordingly and they will bear witness to the Gospel in different ways."

"Seminary training must, therefore, reflect the kind of education which is suited to local Church life," it says, adding that the training must always be in accordance with "the norms

established by the Bishops' Conferences."

The guide calls on local Churches to re-examine their spiritual needs, their style of life and the efficiency of their seminaries in providing a solid education in the world of today.

It also says that the family and the parish, as well as the seminary, bear responsibility for training men to live a consecrated single life.

But an increasing burden is placed on seminarians themselves, it says, because "the duty of fully bringing their vocations to realization rests basically on them."

In an introduction to the guide, Cardinal Garrone says, "Education for celibacy is motivated and regulated, before everything else, by the love of Christ which is at the bottom of this commitment. Without a deep love of Christ, sacerdotal celibacy loses all meaning."