

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

# Jubilee Year — Time for Deeds not Words

A theology of reconciliation which has been my theme for the last five columns falls far short of my prayerful hope in writing



these reflections unless it results in deeds that heal the wounds that afflict us. If the grace of the Holy Year developed in us some renewed attitudes about God, myself, my fellowman and nature, that would be good but not enough. St. James reminds us that there is a vast difference between notional knowledge that affects only our mind, and practical knowledge that is productive of good deeds. "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only." (James 1:22) And St. John offers the same exhortation: "Little children let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:18)

The Nov. 23, 1973 issue of the National Catholic Reporter carried some practical suggestions for a worthy celebration of the Holy Year written by the prominent ecumenist, Lukas Vischer. His three suggestions are based on the three prescriptions of the ancient Jewish Year of Jubilee found in Chapter 25 of the Book of Leviticus. The Lord's directions to His chosen people focus on ecology, justice and freedom.

**Ecology:** The Lord made it clear to His people that they were stewards accountable for their use of the earth. "The land is mine," he said, "for you are strangers and sojourners with me." Lev. 25:23. The jubilee year prescription called for a resting of the earth with no crops to be planted. What does this say to us today who waste, pillage and pollute so prodigally that the earth we have treated as our slave threatens to destroy us? We need to do more than change our consumer mentality. We must cut down on waste and on our thoughtless and careless squandering of the fruits of the earth which belong to all men. For many of us this means eating and drinking less,

ceasing to hoard for an improbable future, sharing our stored clothing with the poor, touching nature with greater reverence, working to restore the uncounted acres we have defoliated by war, polluting only when it makes some measure of sense and always with fear and trembling.

**Justice:** And the Lord said to His people, "In this year of Jubilee each of you shall return to his property." Lev. 25:13. The message of this prescription, according to Dr. Vischer, is this: "Those who have gone into debt and have had to sell their land shall have their land returned to them by the fiftieth year. As the land and all that it may produce is God's property, mankind should share it equally. The property should not be united in a few hands but should be the benefit of the community."

What does this say to us Americans? Reconciliation calls us to new attitudes towards the hundreds of millions in the world who do not live humanly. We have a possessive grasp on this earth and its fruits way out of proportion to our population. "If the world were a global village of 100 residents, 6 would be American. And these 6 would have half the village's entire income, and the other 94 would exist on the other half." (IFCO News — November-December 1973) Such a situation calls for action. As a Church we had better check on our investment and the social consequences of our financial securities. How is our money being invested by corporations? Are we members by stockholdings in powerful enterprises that by policy promote death, drain the resources of underdeveloped nations, support racist governments? As individuals do we check on the effects of our purchasing habits? Do we listen to informed people who tell us what is involved in buying a certain brand of lettuce and grapes? Do we tend to qualify as "way out" those who dare to speak from pulpit and picket line about social injustices? Have we ever checked on the level of our Christian commitment? Are we cozy or uncomfortable about the personal demands of the Gospel? It better be the latter.

And the Lord said in the third prescription for a Jubilee Year: "The slave shall be released, he and his children with him." Lev. 25:54. And what does this mean to Catholic America? I find much oppression in our country which we hail as "the land of the free." There is slavery in the monotonous toil of the human cogs in our assembly lines — and slavery for those who have no work to do — and slavery for one of every twenty who each day feels the pains of hunger — slavery for those exiled from our society because they could not in conscience support our involvement in war.

A Jubilee Year of Reconciliation calls each of us to search for some form of personal involvement to right the wrongs of our society and to make America worthy of the Lord's blessing. The Book of Isaiah says much when it records the challenge of the Lord:

"Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And bring the homeless poor into your house; When you see the naked, to cover him, And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, And your healing shall spring up speedily; Your righteousness shall go before you, The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say: "Here I am." Is. 54:4-9

Reconciliation has arrived and Jubilee has been a worthy celebration only when the Lord says to us and to our society: "Here I am."

## Pro-Life Forces Win in Massachusetts

**Boston [RNS]** — In a victory for anti-abortion forces, the Massachusetts legislature overrode Gov. Francis Sargent's veto of a bill to regulate abortion in the state. The vote was nearly unanimous — 197-13 in the House and 30-3 in the Senate.

The veto of the bill filed by Rep. William Delahunt of Quincy on behalf of Massachusetts Citizens for Life came shortly before the adjournment of the legislature. The governor said he objected to the bill's "dubious constitutionality."

The final vote to override came on the eve of adjournment and was considered a "stunning defeat" for the Republican governor who is seeking reelection.

House Speaker David M. Bartley led the move to override the veto in the House, declaring that he was "honestly outraged at the callous way in which the governor sought to dismiss the issue."

In the Senate, Sen. William X. Wall of Lawrence stated that "we are dealing with God's property and, as legislators, we have no right to take a life."

Joan Tuttle, executive director of the Massachusetts Civil Liberties Union, said after the veto was overridden that "we're definitely going to court as soon as we can find a plaintiff."

The bill was originally approved by the legislature in a 28-1 Senate vote and had been ex-

tensively revised to bring in into conformity with the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court ruling on abortion.

Under the bill, women would be required to obtain the services and approval of a physician for an abortion during the first 24 weeks of pregnancy. And abortions after the 24th week would be permitted only to save the life of the mother and avoid grave impairment of her physical and mental health.

Another provision stipulated that abortions after the 13th week had to be performed at a hospital. Minors would be required to have parental approval for an abortion.

In addition, the bill provided that no procedure designed to destroy the life of the unborn fetus or injure it could be used, unless all available procedures would create a greater risk of death or serious harm.

The bill also called for life-support equipment in the room where an abortion is permitted and that physicians must keep records on abortions performed after the 24th week of pregnancy.

The Committee to Defend Abortion Rights denounced the overriding of the veto as "a direct attack on a woman's right to obtain safe and legal abortions." The committee added:

It is not the right of any government, church or hospital to decide whether or not a woman may bear children. On Jan. 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme

Court ruled that abortion is a personal decision to be made between a woman and her doctor. We intend to maintain this historic decision."

Sen. Edward Burke of Framingham had urged the Senate to sustain the governor's veto, pointing out that "much of this bill is completely superfluous." He noted that the state's Public Health Council had already promulgated regulations governing abortions according to Supreme Court guidelines.

On the other hand, Roy

Scarpato, chairman of the Massachusetts Citizens for Life, which supported the bill, said he was not "overly enthusiastic" about the final version of the measure. But he said the legislation was "better than no protection at all."

He also expressed the belief that the legislation would serve as a "stepping stone" towards constitutional amendments in coming years.

Earlier, the Massachusetts Civil Liberties Union urged Gov. Sargent to seek further amend-

ments to the bill, particularly the removal of the threat of criminal liability for abortions performed before the 24th week and the elimination of parental consent during that time.

The CLU contended that placing these provisions under a criminal statute would "permit prosecutors to second-guess the medical judgment of qualified physicians."

Additional opposition to the redrafted bill came from the National Organization for Women (NOW) and from the Women's Lobby.

## Pontiff Stresses Tradition

**Castelgandolfo [RNS]** — Warning that "innovation" is not always synonymous with "progress," Pope Paul reaffirmed the importance of Christian historical tradition.

He pointed out that the Revelation of God through Jesus Christ is rooted in an "historical past which is the seed of the future," adding that "fidelity to the tradition of the Church therefore gives the believer the sense of the old and the new which allows him to grow in knowledge."

Terming modern intolerance of tradition "largely an instinctive phenomenon of youth," the Pope said during his general audience Aug. 7 that the particular characteristics of the phenomenon can be attributed to a "broader social cross-section."

Today, he said, progress is often evaluated in terms of conquest, the development of new knowledge, and action toward a desirable but limited goal. And when, for example, innovation takes the form of "certain degrading artistic expressions" or "certain licentious customs," it is no longer authentic progress "but rather obvious regression."

Noting the "intrinsic insufficiency" of worldly pursuits and recalling the "decisive and immutable" value of the Christian faith, Pope Paul said: "We are salutarily supported by tradition, the tradition which refers to the redemptive work of Christ."

"Together with Sacred Scriptures, Christian tradition is a constituent of revelation and is an authentic and binding tran-

smision (of doctrine) with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, through the Magisterium of the Church."

The Pope stressed that tradition is "distinct from simple habits, customs styles, transient and changing forms of human lives."

He said that "true tradition," in the Christian sense, is "an irreplaceable patrimony, nourishment, resource and vital coherence." He added that it provides "a special charisma to the church Magisterium which guarantees in decisive moments the assistance of the Holy Spirit."

The aim of tradition in the Church, he said, is to "guard and interpret the doctrine of faith and to specify how it should be applied to life as it is lived."