

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Roman Reflections

PART II

Last week's reflections focused on the blessings of the academic program that is being offered to the bishops of the United States for our prayerful reflection. I would like to report to you now on some of the spiritual experiences that have been so meaningful to me in these days in Rome. Thanks to the goodness and ability of Msgr. Richard Burns, I have been able to celebrate the Eucharist at famous altars and shrines. He speaks like a native with appropriate words and gestures. And his years in Rome have helped to open doors for me.

You have all been remembered at these holy places:

(1) The altar of the tomb of St. Peter in the crypt beneath the main altar of the basilica.

(2) The altar of St. Pius X in St. Peter's Basilica. The great patron of Christian education and of youth has always been a personal favorite. I remember here especially fathers and mothers who bear the prime responsibility for the religious education of their children, all our catechists, all those who are in the apostolate of youth, and our religious education staff at the Pastoral Center.

(3) The altar of the Chair of Peter where we bishops concelebrated the liturgy with Cardinal Cooke as the main celebrant. This was one of the requirements for our 'ad limina' visit, which I explained to you before leaving for Rome.

(4) The Marian altar at St. Mary Major's Basilica. In this chapel, the late Pope Pius XII celebrated his first mass as a priest.

(5) The tomb of John XXIII in the crypt below the main altar of St. Peter's. The memory of John is much alive in the hearts of the people. Fresh flowers in abundance surround his tomb each day. I prayed here that the spirit of renewal which he brought to the Church might always be evident in the Diocese of Rochester.

(6) In the Catacombs of St. Callistus, along the old Appian Way. I offered mass at the Crypt of the Popes where many early Popes who suffered martyrdom were once buried.

(7) In the Catacombs of St. Priscilla in the city of Rome, where many an early Christian worshipped in secret because of the continual persecutions of the pagan emperors.

As I write this report, I look forward to Saturday, Sept. 21, to the 'ad limina' visit to St. Paul's Basilica outside the walls of ancient Rome. Here we shall concelebrate the liturgy with Cardinal Medeiros of Boston presiding. On Wednesday the 25th, we shall leave for Assisi for our last days of study and a concelebrated liturgy at the tomb of another personal friend, St. Francis.

On days when I have not been at the altars previously mentioned, I have joined my brother bishops for the liturgy in the beautiful Chapel of our Blessed Mother here at the Casa Santa Maria, which dates back to the XVI Century. Here again, each day I carry your intentions to the altar.

Let me share with you now the moving experience of my audience with Pope Paul. The Sept. 12 edition of the Osservatore Romano carried the following items of information: "The Holy Father received in audience Joseph Lloyd Hogan, Bishop of Rochester."

Audiences are held on Wednesdays at 10 a.m., at Castelgandolfo, the summer residence of the Holy Father, in a special audience hall that accomodates some 10,000. It was filled to capacity on Sept. 11, when I led a group of 25 Rochester pilgrims to receive the blessing of Pope Paul. Thanks again to arrangements made by Msgr. Burns, I was seated on stage to the right of the Holy Father. Promptly at 10 a.m., he arrived and was greeted by the enthusiastic cheers and applause of the assembly. He addressed the group in six languages, encouraging us to remain strong in the faith in this world of rapid change which often leaves no place for religious values. He asked the four bishops on stage to join with him on the final blessing. Then he spoke to each of us individually. He sends his greetings and best



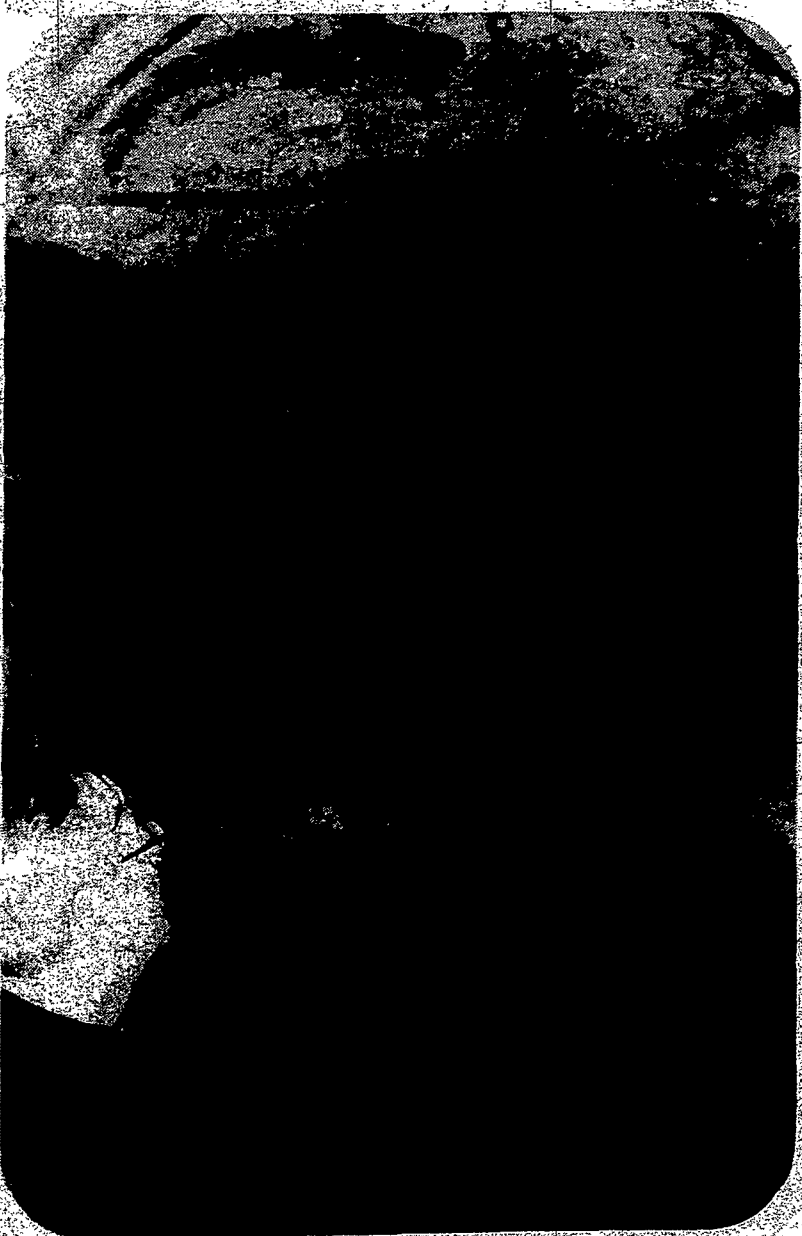
Photo by Anthony J. Costello

Bishop Hogan says Mass in the Greek Chapel in the Catacombs of St. Priscilla. Attending are Msgr. Richard K. Burns, pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Rochester, and Sister Maria Joseph, one of the Benedictine nuns who take care of the catacombs. She said that the Greek Chapel is the oldest Christian chapel in Rome and thus "the cradle of Christianity."

wishes to the people of Rochester, and his apostolic blessing. He asked also for our prayers for him.

Before the month is over (Sept. 26, I believe), Pope Paul will celebrate his 77th birthday. There have been many rumors about his health. But I saw nothing that day that would indicate illness. His voice was animated and his movements agile and he exudes a personal warmth that the camera never seems to capture.

I hope many of you will have an opportunity during the Holy Year to make a pilgrimage to Rome to experience in person the blessing I have attempted to describe.



Above, Sister Maria Joseph points out one of the interesting frescoes in the catacombs of St. Priscilla. At left, the bishop admires the "Orante" a fresco which according to some, represents an early wedding scene.