

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Liturgy in the Sistine Chapel

In last week's report to you I wrote about the joyous celebration of the liturgy in the humble simplicity of the parish church of Licciana Nardi. One week later I joined with 80 United States bishops in a concelebrated Mass with Pope Paul in the magnificent setting of the Sistine Chapel beneath the splendor of Michelangelo's frescoed vaults. While the Mass and the music by the great Sistine Choir were entirely in Latin, it represented the new liturgy with altar facing the congregation and the language representing the one tongue best understood by the concelebrants. While the Holy Father speaks English adequately, he is more facile in six other languages which few of us understand. We Americans surely do not rate as linguists.



The celebration was truly unique in that it was the first time that the American hierarchy as a national body of bishops had ever celebrated the liturgy with the Pope. Our numbers represented one fourth of the entire American hierarchy. The Holy Father had returned early from his Summer residence at Castelgandolfo to be with us and remained in Rome for the opening of the fourth synod of bishops on Sept. 27.

In his message, the Pope referred to the American Church as "the Church of God in a great and modern land" and praised our people for their generous charity to the whole world. "We thank your clergy, religious and your laity for their diligent

ecclesial communion with you and with myself, and for the shared solicitude they show for their brothers and sisters in the other local churches throughout the world."

The Holy Father then reminded us bishops of the power we possess by ordination. The Gospel of the Mass had prompted this reflection for we had just listened to the Lord's admonition to His disciples: "Let the greater among you be as the least, the leaders as the servant." (Luke 22:26) "Our power," said Pope Paul, "is not a power of denomination; it is a power of service, a function destined to the ministry of the community. The bishops are constituted by the Holy Spirit to shepherd the Church of God. To shepherd — this is the decisive word. It is the true Gospel figure of the Pastor — that of goodness that is provident and strong — which demands a complete gift of self."

The Pope's introduction to the prayers of the faithful included this greeting:

"Beloved brothers and sons, our spiritual family rejoices today in the fact that the appointed Pastors of the Church of the United States are gathered here with me. May my most fervent and sincere prayer be directed to Our Father in Heaven, from whom every best gift comes, that He will shower on you in abundance the gifts of His love through His Only Begotten Son."

Then the lector prayed:

"For Pope Paul and for all the bishops of the United States, that in fulfilling faithfully their pastoral duties, they may nourish by their word, impress by their example and rule by their love the flock entrusted to them."

At the conclusion of the liturgy, the Holy Father met with us in a hall adjoining the Sistine Chapel. He seemed genuinely pleased and deeply moved when Cardinal Cooke presented him a letter signed by each of us as an expression of our common gratitude for the blessing of the liturgy and for his personal interest in our program of studies. In turn, he presented each of us a Latin text of the four Gospels as a token of his fatherly love.

We were a quiet and reflective group as we boarded the buses to take us back to the Casa Santa Maria. As we were leaving, the square in front of St. Peter's was beginning to fill rapidly. The news had traveled quickly that the Holy Father was back in Rome, and that meant that he would begin again his Sunday practice of appearing at the window of his residence to recite the Angelus at noon, to give a short homily, and to impart his apostolic blessing.

The sight of the gathering crowd reminded me of Roman days as a priest student when I would be part of a vast assembly awaiting Pope Pius XII's appearance at the window. Here at the crossroads of the Christian world, the universality of the Church and its unity with its supreme pastor and teacher is so visibly expressed. The Bernini columns reach out like arms to embrace peoples of every tongue who speak the common language of loyalty and devotion to the successor of Peter.

I will conclude this series of reflections next week with some thoughts from Assisi. It has been a pleasure to share the joy of these days with you.

vatican news

Pontiff Warns Synod Assembly

Must Shun Violence, Revolution, Colonialism

Vatican City [RNS] — Pope Paul opened the first plenary working session of the fourth

Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church with a warning that evangelical zeal must not

involve the Church in violence, revolution, or colonialism.

Addressing the 206 synodal

delegates and observers in the Vatican's modern audience hall, the pontiff urged the world's Catholic bishops and faithful not to reduce their evangelization efforts to "mere sociological or political activity and the mission of the Church" to a temporal message.

The central topic of the month-long Synod is "Evangelization in the Modern World."

"It is clear," the Pope said, "that recourse can never be had to methods which are in open conflict with the spirit of the Gospel. Neither violence nor revolution nor colonialism in any form will serve as methods of the Church's evangelical action."

The Synod members, who include 143 bishops, 17 cardinals from the Roman Curia (the central administrative arm of the Church), 14 Patriarchs and Metropolitans of Eastern Rite Churches, and 10 superiors general of male religious orders, are to discuss the experiences of evangelization — bringing the Gospel to the world — through Oct. 7.

From then until Oct. 16, they are to take up the "theology" of evangelization. The remainder of the Synod, which is scheduled to end Oct. 26, is to be devoted principally to drawing up concrete pastoral proposals for effective evangelization.

Pope Paul told the Synod fathers that "in these turbulent times" bishops must face with courage "the ocean of incredulity, indifference, and hostility" confronting the Church.

"Let us not be paralyzed by fear," he affirmed, exhorting the delegates to spread the Gospel to all parts of the world, "irrespective of geographical, racial, historical, or nationalistic prejudices."

He added that "non-Christian religions" could no longer be considered as "rivals" to Roman Catholicism or "as obstacles to Christian evangelism."

The Pope said that the "duty" imposed on the Church by the mandate of Christ to "go into the whole world and proclaim the good news (gospel) to all creation" meant that the Church also had to face the problem of the relations between evangelization and the "full development of man."

"In this regard" he declared, "the peoples of the world are awaiting help from the Church although, by its nature, promotion of human social development is not the Church's primary goal."

Following the Pope's address, Cardinal Franz Koenig of Vienna, Austria, one of the synod presidents, conveyed the best wishes of the assembly to the pontiff on his 77th birthday (Sept. 26).

Turning to the cardinal, the Pope replied in Latin, "Senectus ipsa est morbus" — "old age itself is illness." The quotation is from I Promessi Sposi or The Betrothed, the 19th Century romantic novel by Alessandro Manzoni. In the book, an old priest uses the phrase to the young couple of the title.

Synod Document Critique

Vatican City [RNS] — Considerable discussion at the Synod of Bishops centered here on the problems of Africa and Latin America as the bishops continued to discuss the theme of Evangelization in all its diversity.

At a Vatican-sponsored press conference, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, gave a report on the theological aspects of the Synod.

Following the presentation of the Polish churchman's viewpoint, namely that one has a responsibility to approach the word of God in one's role as a servant of God, Archbishop Angelo Fernandes of New Delhi, India, presented the view that development of sound social relationships should precede the more traditional preaching of the Gospel.

Archbishop Fernandes commented on what he regarded as the weaknesses of the Synod's working document as follows:

The theology of the Second Vatican Council of the Church as the primordial sacrament is obscured and reduced to preaching and the administration of the sacraments. The Church as sign and symbol of intimate union of men with God and of the unity of the human race does not stand out to advantage. The old

ecclesiology rears its head again, he held.

It is small wonder then, the Indian prelate said, that the notion of evangelization is highly restricted to the preaching of the Word, witnessing by life and the administration of the sacraments.

One of the points that came through quite clearly on the floor of the Synod was the necessity of integrating interreligious dialogue into the very notion of evangelization.

The prelate claimed that the synod's document overemphasized the eschatological (end of time) dimension of salvation.

He said this precluded the widespread thrust of men for fullness of life here and now from findings its rightful place within the overall economy of salvation.

By the same token, the concept of conversion remains ambiguous. It seems to limit the notion to conversion to the church rather than place the emphasis on conversion to God for all men alike, Christian and otherwise, and that too as a never-ending process, he said.

Thus the document appears to be unduly Church-centered rather than on him who is the Gospel, Jesus Christ the Lord, the Indian churchman said.

What is just as distressing, he held, is the almost complete neglect of the ecumenical dimension.

Statements in the Synod have shown, however, the growing awareness of the presence of the mystery of the Church also in the other ecclesial communions, he said.

Perhaps the most fatal omission, the archbishop stated, is the absence of the theology of the Local Church which, in point of fact, has become the focal point of the voice of the witnessing Church in the Synod.

In the process, striking concepts that are emerging in a rather pronounced fashion in the Synod, like pluriformity in the Church, diversification of ministries and charisms and the place of basic communities have all fallen by the wayside.

Hopefully, the Indian prelate said, the Fathers of the Synod will go beyond the working paper to a broader and really challenging perspective and thus, with a sense of mission, reach out to the multitudes that consciously or unconsciously are waiting to encounter the Lord.

Archbishop Hyacinthe Thiandoum of Dakar, Senegal, also spoke along lines similar to those of Archbishop Fernandes.