

### THE OPEN WINDOW



Fr. Louis Hohman

Dear Father Hohman,

I read recently in some periodical or newspaper [I can't remember which] that the Church in this country had annulled 7,000 marriages this year as compared with only one tenth that number a year or two ago. I also have read in Time magazine that some theologians are talking about allowing divorce in the Catholic Church. I know there have been a lot of changes in the Church in the last few years, but if this one comes about, many, many people will be shocked and angry. I for one will be because I married a divorced man many years ago and I have been "ex-communicated" all this time. I do go to Mass and have raised my children Catholic, but have felt like an outsider. Is this for real or just a lot of talk?

Wondering, P. J.

Dear P. J.,

This is one of those questions I wish I could answer face to face rather than in a couple hundred words in this column. The things you speak of are happening and they are the result of growth processes in the Church's approach to the whole question of marriage. I am not about to predict that the Church will change her attitudes toward divorce but the question is one

for legitimate study and thought. One of the problems here is the deep-rooted conviction on the part of most of us who are middle-aged or older that the Church cannot grow in wisdom and knowledge because it already has reached full growth. But Vatican II made it plain that we are a pilgrim Church which, while it cannot be untrue to the basic teachings of Christ, can advance and change in its degree of wisdom and understanding about those truths. In this case we are asking some important questions: Jesus said, "What God has joined, let no man tear apart." That is the truth from which we cannot deviate. But we can legitimately ask the question, "What has God joined?" It is a matter of common experience that many marriages, including Catholic ones before a priest and two witnesses, are definitely not "joined by God" because the parties very plainly were not capable of making a valid commitment to each other. They were either acting without true freedom, or were mentally ill, or simply not mature enough to know what they were really doing. To say that God joins such couples when they are not even capable of joining themselves is silly.

Experts in this field are asking other questions, too. "What constitutes a marriage which God ratifies? Is the recitation of the vows enough? Or is the attempt to live the commitment based on the ability of the couple to do so required? Was Jesus expressing an ideal toward which all must strive to the best of their ability or was he making a flat statement about every legal (in the eyes of the Church) marriage? I don't know where the present studies will take us, but I believe the Holy Spirit will protect the Church in leading us to the fullness of truth.

And please don't feel cheated. If you are sincere in where you are now (and many are) then you can trust yourself to the merciful God who knows infinitely more than we do.

# Thanksgiving Mass Theme 'Bread for Life of World'

A special Thanksgiving Mass will be celebrated at 9:30 a.m. tomorrow, Nov. 28 at St. Michael's Church.

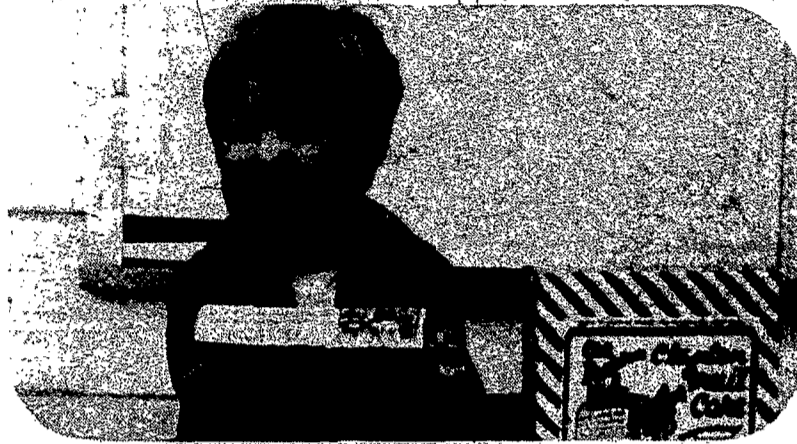
Bishop Joseph L. Hogan will celebrate the liturgy whose theme is Bread for the Life of the World. Participants are asked to bring bread, which will be included in the presentation of the gifts, blessed during the Mass and redistributed at random after Communion.

The diocesan liturgy office, which is planning the event, noted "The world crisis of starving people presses upon us, and we earnestly seek to raise greater sensitivity to this issue, not by creating an overwhelming sense of guilt for disproportionate wealth among nations, but to evoke deep concern that will discover new ways of sharing among peoples."

The theme is further spelled out in the office's opening statement for the rites:

"As we gather in thanksgiving we are very aware of all that we have been given. Without God's gifts we are very poor people, but with him we can do all good things. As we celebrate this eucharist and receive the bread that Christ has given for the life of the world, let us be especially mindful of the millions of his people who are starving for want of bread — and for want of love."

The liturgy office has also asked that today, Nov. 27, be observed as a day of fasting, with money ordinarily spent on a day's meals given to programs relieving world hunger.



Yum!

Mark Sanderson of 16 Pine Hill Dr., Pittsford, obviously thinks fruitcakes are "super". The Notre Dame Women's Organization is selling the light or dark cakes to aid the scholarship fund of the local Notre Dame Association. Contact persons for the cakes are Mrs. Thomas Murray, 94 Seaford Dr., and Mrs. John McCrank, 140 Edgerton St.

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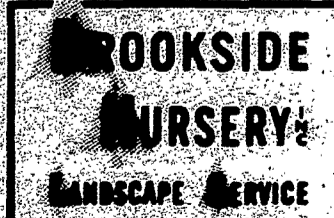
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