

## PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

## Come and Fast with Us!

The usual invitations we have received in life have called us to feasts to celebrate moments of joy which we wish to share with friends because the good news is too much for one heart to bear. Like the woman in the Gospel who was so overwhelmed with the joy of her discovery of that which was lost, we call in others to celebrate our good fortune.

There are other days, too, when our hearts are burdened with grief and sorrow, which we find hard to bear alone. In no condition to send out invitations to come and share our sorrows, we welcome all who come forward to offer their sympathy and to express a willingness to shoulder our burdens.

It is in this spirit that I write this invitation to you on behalf of our brothers and sisters in our human family — the 400 million who are now threatened with starvation — and the 10 million who seem certain to die this year from hunger and malnutrition. The invitation was written last week at the Washington meeting of the National Conference of Catholic bishops. It reads as follows:

"We urge the whole Catholic Community — priests, religious and laity — to join with us in observing at least two days a week as days of fast."

This means that the bishops have already committed themselves to fast at least twice a week (the precise days left to individual choice) and are now asking the Catholic community to join them as a sign of our solidarity with the suffering members of our family. The invitation is an **exhortation** and **not legislation**. The choice is yours to make. I suggest that this Advent season, traditionally associated with penitential practices, would be a most appropriate time to respond to the invitation. I might add, too, that days of fast

are days on which we limit ourselves to **one full meal**.

The pastoral plan of action outlined by the United States Bishops offered these further recommendations:

1. **Liturgy:** The themes of life, bread, community, solidarity, and responsibility flow through the symbol and substance of the liturgical life of the Church. These can be woven into teaching, worshipping and prayer experiences which address the food crisis to the whole community. Liturgical seasons of the Church's year are especially appropriate, for example, Advent, Lent, rogation days, the Holy Year. Particularly to be encouraged are parish and diocesan programs of worship, fasting and abstinence on appointed days. The funds from such fasting would be directed toward efforts ministering to the needs of others.

2. **Lifestyle:** A major pressure on food supply is the pattern of consumption. Especially evident in our consumer-oriented way of life is the waste of food and the excessive consumption of energy. Appeals to Christian conscience of responsible stewardship highlighting the practice of days of fast and abstinence flow from the deepest roots of our biblical and ecclesiastical traditions. We urge resistance to advertising and other forms of social pressure which promote affluent and wasteful eating habits.

3. **Locating and feeding the hungry:** In this time of food scarcity, inflation, economic recession and rising unemployment, methods of pastoral care require renewal and adaptation.

First, awareness must be heightened about the condition of many members of our society, and efforts by priests, religious and laity must be intensified to locate and minister to those suffering severe hardships in our dioceses, parishes and local communities. Commanding attention, in particular, are the aged on limited fixed incomes, the working poor and the unemployed, and families and individuals on

welfare and other public assistance programs.

Second, support for increased activities must be given to such agencies as Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services, the Campaign for Human Development and others. This will enable them to intensify their efforts to provide immediate short term relief and to work for long term structural changes for human development.

## Conclusion:

In this pastoral response to the food crisis the American Catholic community is called to address a broad agenda of issues. World hunger and malnutrition present Church agencies, diocesan offices, parishes, educational systems, the bishops, priests, religious and laity, that is, the whole Church, with an opportunity to experience an essential dimension of its mission: acting on behalf of justice and participating in the transformation of the world. This should be done in the context of a broad ecumenical effort, working with other Christians, Jews, those of other faiths and all men of good will.

The goals outlined here for the Church are only a beginning. No document could possibly embrace the many activities and programs which will be required to respond to the cries of the hungry and to what Pope Paul has called this "crisis of civilization and solidarity."

At our Washington meeting Father Bryan Hehir, the Secretary of the Justice and Peace Commission of the United States Catholic Conference, issued this challenge to those of us who might be tempted to **do nothing** in the face of the present crisis: "I asked a prominent economist recently what he saw as the consequences of inaction. Should we fear a violent revolution of the hungry poor against those who live in the industrialized nations?"

"No," he replied, "the real threat is that we would watch them starve on Color TV"

## vatican news

## Women's Year Has Pope's Support, Official Says

**United Nations [RNS]** — The United Nations' top woman official and director of the 1975 International Women's Year (IWY) praised Pope Paul for his "full support" of the IWY observance, expressed to her during a special private audience at the Vatican recently.

Mrs. Helvi Sipila, who is associate general secretary of the

U.N. for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, said the pontiff not only granted her a special audience on short notice but also prepared a statement in support of the IWY, which he read. She had been in Rome attending the World Food Conference.

In the Pope's statement, Mrs. Sipila observed, the pontiff

mentioned the theme of the international year, "Equality, Development and Peace," and declared that such ideals are not foreign to "the most lively interests of the Church." He added that "equality can only be found in the dignity of the human person, man and woman, in their filial relationship with God, of whom they are the visible image."

Reached for comment in New York concerning the papal statement, Mrs. Sipila, a native of Finland, said she was "tremendously impressed by the Pope. Furthermore, it is wonderful for the IWY to have the full support of His Holiness, the spiritual leader of some 500 million Catholics."

In his message relating to the IWY, Pope Paul said that "in the contemporary effort to promote the advancement of women in society, the Church as already recognized a sign of the times and has seen in it a call of the Spirit."

He noted that a study commission on women set up by the Vatican according to the wishes of the 1971 bishops' Synod has a "mandate" to study, "in a comparison of the aspirations of today's world and the enlightening doctrine of the Church, the full participation of women in the community life of the Church and society."

While observing that the equality of woman is found in her basic human dignity, the Pope said "this does not exclude the distinction, in unity, and the specific contribution of woman to the full development of society, according to her proper and personal vocation."

"In this way, the woman of today will be able to become more conscious of her rights and duties, and will be able to contribute not only to the elevation of herself but also to a qualitative progress of human social life in development and peace."

Pope Paul declared that "since the fundamental and life-giving call of human society remains the family, according to the very plan of God, woman will preserve and develop principally in the family community, in full co-

responsibility with man, her task of welcoming, giving and raising life in a growing development of its potential powers."

The Pontiff held up the figure of the Blessed Virgin to "all those collaborating in the preparation of the International Women's Year" to strengthen the "dignity and mission of woman . . ." He said she "can be considered the mirror of expectations of the men and women of our time," offering a "perfect model of the disciple of the Lord . . ."

The Pope went on to say that with the "bright vision" (of Mary) before our eyes, "he would pray that the IWY undertaking will be a harmonious and profitable venture, upon which we invoke the intercession of the Mother of God and the fullness of divine blessings."

## Pope Addresses Newsmen

**London [RNS]** — Pope Paul, in a message to Roman Catholic newspaper editors and publishers meeting here, said "the driving force" of journalism should be concern for "the integral growth" of persons and nations.

The papal message, sent through Cardinal Jean Villot, Vatican Secretary of State, was read at the opening session of an assembly of the International Catholic Union of the Press.

The Paris-based organization coordinates and represents at the international level the activities of Catholic federations or associations in the field of press and information.

Referring to the theme of the parley, "Ethics of Journalism," the Pope drew attention to the "human right of information." "The primary function of journalism is to serve that right for the common good," he said.

## Pope Urges Faithful Remember God's Care

**Vatican City [RNS]** — Pope Paul has urged the faithful always and everywhere to give thanks to God for His "providential and paternal" care.

Speaking to a crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square for his customary Sunday-noon address and blessing, the pontiff noted that the day was Italy's "Thanksgiving Day."

"Let us give thanks to God," he said, "in the realization that God is ever present even when weariness, suffering, want, and the adversity of elements and events seem to hide him from us."

He exhorted his audience to be mindful always that God, "provident and paternal" is the source of all good.

"Is the world beautiful?" he asked. "Let us thank God. Is nature bountiful? Let us thank God."

The Pope noted that many persons point to the accomplishments of man in work, science, art, and technology, and name man himself as the benefactor.

"But," he said, "we must never forget that man only discovers the laws and the riches of nature; he does not create them. He studies and uses things and powers he did not create."

The Pope said that all human achievements are, at base, the outcome of "man's dialogue with the transcendent Creator," and that every human work incarnates a divine idea.