

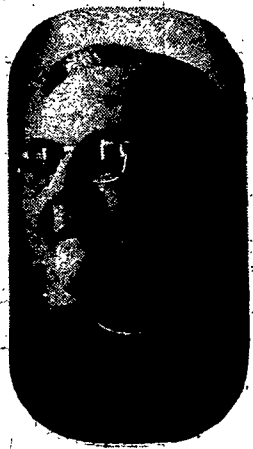
PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

The Cost of Discipleship

PART I

As I write this column, two Sundays of this Lent have already passed. And the themes of both Sunday liturgies have assured us that there is no easy path to glory — that Cross must precede Crown and that instant salvation is a horrible hoax.



His cross and follow Me, cannot be My disciple."

The great grace of Lent is that it challenges us with this very unpopular message. Nothing in us that is of flesh inclines us to welcome it, for our bodies cry out for painless experience. Moreover, we are constantly deluged with Madison Avenue appeals for discipleship to the 'good life' — which, translated, means personal comfort, pain-free existence, instant success, and miracle drugs possessing a power to get results while bypassing traditional ascetical practices.

I have witnessed another Ash Wednesday with the usual crowds seemingly finding some assurance in instant redemption through a smudge of ashes — surely the most ugly of hoaxes. I have no doubt the same ones will return on Palm Sunday waving

branches like passports to the Heavenly Jerusalem, and return on Easter to be sure that Christ the Victor knows some day that they have placed their bet on Him. (Scripture has it, "Cast their lot with the Lord.")

In 1966, Pope Paul decided that a time had come to warn the bargain hunters of the Christian Community that Lent meant much more than an I.B.M. computerization of external signs of penance. The Pharisees had such a mentality (cf. the Gospel of Ash Wednesday.) And the Lord pulled no punches in His condemnation of them. "We must approach the Kingdom of Christ through Metanoia," he said, "and only in this way which means a change of heart can we enter into the spirit of Lent. This renewal involves a painful change whereby we begin to think, judge and arrange our lives under the impulse of that holiness and charity of God which have been imparted to us in His Son."

The liturgies of the first two Sundays of Lent assure us of the validity of the Holy Father's message. The first Sunday began with a passage from the Book of Genesis. And the theme was this:

At the beginning of the Bible there is a garden with two special trees growing within it: the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. At the end of the Bible (the Book of the Apocalypse) there is another garden with a tree growing in it, the tree of life. And between the two is a desert and a tree in the form of a cross. Which is to say, the only way for me to journey from the first to the second garden is through a vast desert and a cross. The Gospel presented the temptations offered to Christ. And the lesson is this — the way of God is the way of suf-

fering love, not the way of material comforts, nor of personal reputation, nor of dominant power. Lent challenges us to opt either for our own created paradise of personal comfort or to follow the Lord Jesus — the way that leads through the desert to a cross — the way that chooses life over death.

And the liturgy of the second Sunday of Lent with the Gospel of the Transfiguration has the same message. Six days after the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi in the Messianic Mission of Christ (obviously he did not understand fully), Jesus takes Peter, James and John up Mt. Tabor to be alone. For a moment, Jesus allows them to behold His glory. Like all of us tempted to walk the glory road and bypass the pain of pilgrimage, Peter responded (the quotes are a personal translation which, I am sure, capture the mind of Peter) — "Lord, we've got a good thing going for us. Let us camp right here. Let's pitch our tents and tabernacle on Mount Pleasant."

And, suddenly, the vision of a perpetual Easter vanished. And the Lord appeared in the stark reality of His humanity. And His message, practically translated, was this: "I have harsh news for you, Peter. We have to come off the mountaintop and walk down the road to the world of reality. There is a long road ahead of us. It is a painful pilgrimage up to Jerusalem to another mountain called Calvary. And the Son of Man must suffer and die before He liberates His Easter spirit of joy upon the world."

It is the grace of Lent to bring us to a deeper appreciation of the pain of pilgrimage, of the cost of discipleship and of costly grace. I pray that such a grace will be ours.

Vatican Handled Kueng Case Moderately

By Fr. Robert A. Graham
Special Correspondent

Vatican City [RNS] — Observers in Rome and in Germany consider the Vatican's resolution of the case of Swiss-born theologian Hans Kueng as remarkably moderate.

A News Analysis

It introduces a "new style" in the procedures of the top doctrinal watchdog, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In a statement approved by Pope Paul and released Feb. 20, the congregation cited only three positions ("for now") taken by Father Kueng, which it declared to be in contradiction with the teaching of the Church.

It admonished him not to teach such doctrines in the future, reminding him that the ecclesiastical authority had confided to him the charge of teaching sacred theology in the

spirit of the teaching of the Church, and not in the spirit of opinions that undermine or put into question these teachings.

However, contrary to practice in other recent cases, Father Kueng was neither condemned nor disciplined himself.

His "Canonical Mission" was not withdrawn, nor was he asked to retract his opinions.

This unexpectedly restrained reaction by the Holy See to the controversial writings of Father Kueng, who is on the theological faculty of the State University of Tuebingen in Land Wuerttemberg-Bande, is attributed to the strong intervention of the German, and also Austrian, bishops. They are said to have convinced the Holy Father to adopt the procedure eventually followed.

If the handling of Father Kueng personally was restrained, the doctrinal position was firm and represented an affirmation by the Congregation of its right and duty to defend Catholic doctrines. The new Vatican document rejected,

as contradicting the teaching of the First and Second Vatican Councils, the opinion according to which the dogma of faith in the infallibility of the Church is cast into doubt or reduced to a kind of basic "indefectibility" of the Church in truth, that is, envisaging the possibility of error on the part of the Church, on tenets that the Church teaching authority holds definitively.

The second position of Father Kueng which came under criticism and was also declared in contradiction with the teaching of the Church in his opinion on the teaching authority of the Church (the Magisterium). Father Kueng does not, according to the congregations' view, adhere to the genuine concept of the authentic teaching authority according to which the bishops are, in the Church, authentic teachers, that is, teachers endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach to the people committed them the faith they must believe and put into practice.

The third of the points which the congregation limited itself to

in declaring incompatibility with Catholic teaching, concerned Father Kueng's view that a baptized person, though not ordained could, in cases of necessity, consecrate the Eucharist. This, said the Vatican organ, was already condemned by the Fourth Lateran Council and also by Vatican II.

These views were expressed in two books of the Tuebingen theologian, "The Church" and "Infallibility? An Inquiry." No mention was made in the declaration of Father Kueng's most recent book, regarded as equally controversial, "To Be A Christian."

The declaration does not, however, affect only the author. The congregation laid upon the bishops of Germany and elsewhere, if indicated, the duty to see that the said opinions are not sustained in the theological faculties, seminaries, or institutes for religious or sacerdotal formation.

It said, "Priests, preachers of the Gospel, teachers and catechists, have the duty to

profess faithfully the doctrine of the Church on these problems and to expound them to others." Theologians were urged to deepen and clarify the mystery of the Church and other mysteries of faith in obedience to that same faith and to the true edification of the Church.

The declaration said the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "ends, for the moment, the action of the congregation on this problem."

"Will it prove enough, in the long run, for the 'authentic teachers,' simply to admonish the controversial writer and professor not to teach the aforesaid doctrines any longer? The congregation and especially the German and Austrian bishops are hoping that the unprecedented restraint of the Holy See will help towards a calming and a clarification of the atmosphere.

The Pope is evidently ready to take the gamble in the interest of peace in the Church, while trying not to be remiss in his duty as custodian of orthodoxy.

Kueng Sees Censure Admission of Failure

Tuebingen, West Germany [RNS] — Swiss theologian Hans Kueng has called a Vatican censure of him "a public admission" of the "failure" of its "secret inquisitorial proceedings against me."

Father Kueng, a professor at the Ecumenical Institute of the University of Tuebingen, was replying in a statement to a declaration issued Feb. 20 by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, the supreme tribunal on matters of faith and morals, which has been investigating the controversial theologian for more than five years.

The declaration in Latin, issued

with the approval of Pope Paul, asserted that some of Father Kueng's theological opinions were "opposed to the doctrine of the Catholic Church which ought to be held by all the faithful." It admonished him "not to continue to teach such opinions."

In his statement, the 47-year-old theologian said he would not tolerate "being prevented from pursuing my theological service to my fellow man."

He added, however, that he was prepared "again and again to review critically both the method and content" of his theology.

The Vatican probe of Father Kueng, who had served as an

expert for bishops participating in the Second Vatican Council, focused on opinions expressed in two of his books, "The Church" and "Infallibility? An Inquiry."

Stirring widest debate was his questioning of the dogma of the "infallibility" of the Church, and, in particular, of papal infallibility.

The doctrine of papal infallibility, "defined" by the First Vatican Council in 1870 and "confirmed" by Vatican II in its "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (1964) holds that the Pope cannot err or teach error when he speaks "ex cathedra" ("from the throne" of St. Peter), i.e., "as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful,"

and "proclaims by a definitive act some doctrine of faith or morals."

Father Kueng, using scriptural, historical, and philosophical arguments, has contended that the concept of propositional infallibility is "meaningless." "How can you prove that you are infallible," he has argued. "You must already be infallible to do that."

Since, he believes, some Popes and General Councils in the past have taught conflicting doctrines, he has urged all Christian Churches to adopt a broader concept of "indefectibility" — the conviction, inspired by faith, that the Holy Spirit will preserve the essential saving truth of Jesus

Christ through the Church, "despite all the errors of individuals," of professors of theology, of members of the laity, but also of pastors, of bishops, and indeed also of Popes.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in its Feb. 20 declaration, said: "The opinion (of Father Kueng) which doubts the very dogma of the infallibility of the Church... Which the Church magisterium (teaching authority) teaches us — in a definitive manner — to believe, contradicts the doctrine defined by Vatican I and confirmed by Vatican II."