

Bishops' Region II Meeting, 'a Teachable Moment'

By Sister Michael Lappetito, RSM

The term "Magisterium of the Church" and the saying "a teachable moment" are two current expressions made popular in today's Church through frequent usage. Briefly, dogmatic theology has defined the magisterium as the Church Teaching. This is commonly understood as the authoritative responsibility of the college of Bishops to proclaim, defend and preserve the Faith as embodied in the person of Jesus Christ, the Father's self-communication and self-revelation.

The less commonly understood aspect of the magisterium is the Believing Church's responsibility. The Believing Church is made up of the believing Christian Community. Although the Believing Church learns and accepts the teaching, magisterium, nonetheless, the Believing Church, the Christian Faith community, can and must be consulted by the magisterium.

Doctrine cannot be formulated apart from the living faith of the believing Church.

Religious educators have coined the saying "a teachable

NCD Analysis

A critique of the ninth and final chapter of the National Catechetical Directory will appear in next week's *Courier-Journal*. The previous eight chapters have been analyzed by diocesan officials in a series of articles.

"moment" to emphasize the fact that there are many opportune moments within a person's experience which provide powerful, on-the-spot lesson plans. Faith has much to say to the circumstances of daily life. The death of a pet provokes profound questions from children. The parish that shares in the preparation of a deacon's ordination to priesthood learns much about the meaning of priesthood.

The New York State Region II bishop's meeting on the National Catechetical Directory (NCD) was the occasion of a happy marriage between magisterium and religious education. The teachable moment was the warm, cordial, receptive but honest interaction and dialogue which took place between the Church Teaching, our bishops, and the Believing Church, the faithful Christian community.

The memory that will last beyond the event for many of the

participants was the experience that neither bishops, theologians, priests, parents or educators are in a position to give clear, practical directives to all the newly emerging questions.

A memory that will last beyond the event was the overt willingness to cooperate and search together for some answers.

The careful listening, the nuanced explanations, and the thoughtful deliberations which took place throughout the four-day meeting often appeared in the bishop's final written report submitted to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Executive Committee and the Directory Committee. The bishops and the faithful were in accord on many areas of concern.

All those interested in religious education will be delighted to know that the bishops requested a more concise document, written for the popular audience. Further, they requested that unclear, technical and obtuse theological language be excised from the text. Emphasis was placed on the quality of the document. Practically speaking, this means that the established time line for the publication date be re-evaluated and that a delay be encouraged.

The bishops, acknowledging that revelation was the subject of the longest and most detailed discussion among the groups, formulated a series of strong recommendations. They requested that the NCD committee engage a group of theologians to submit studies dealing with the concepts of biblical and on-going revelation, delineating more precisely how the two concepts are not incompatible. A clearer definition of revelation from the deposit of faith was another theological concept which warranted serious consideration in their estimation.

Chapter Five in the proposed NCD deals with the principal elements of the Christian message. It was affirmed that a

doctrinal statement is essential to any catechetical directory. The Bishops stated that care should be taken to insure that the basic teachings are authentic in doctrine and contemporary in method. However, they expressed serious reservations about the language used in the text. They suggested that it be reworded to reflect more meaningful terms and in a more suitable style. The Bishops also pointed out that the organic whole of the content of the Roman Catholic faith should be respected but that references be included relative to the stages of development at which a

person is ready for the presentation of respective doctrines.

There were many, many other salient and highly significant points included in the Bishops' approximately 20-page written report that cannot be recorded within the scope of this article. The overriding memory of the four day meeting is that we had the sense of the Spirit working through the collected wisdom of the assembly of Bishops, and delegates. The consultation process, local, statewide and national, has reaffirmed the value of collegiality.

Capitol Letters

While leading opposition to the Bartlett Amendment that would have denied use of federal funds for abortions in a Public Health Service authorization bill, Senator Edward Kennedy surfaced as one of the political forces who maintain abortion on demand paid for with our tax dollars.

He also joins the ranks of politicians who talk out of both sides of their mouths on this controversial value-of-human-life issue. To say "Personally I am against abortion — but" and to proceed with acts that encourage abortion on demand is sophistry calculated to win pro-life votes and women's lib endorsement.

This is a trend among some political aspirants and the elected which can only be reversed by

the electorate. Please recognize the importance of your brief, cogent, polite, frequent letters on behalf of the unborn and the just use of tax monies.

Write Senators Buckley, Dewey Bartlett, and John Pastore encouraging their efforts to protect the unborn and to prevent use of tax monies for abortion.

You might want to request from Sen. Buckley a copy of the U.S. Senate Congressional Record of the Kennedy-Buckley-Bartlett debate over the above amendment.

Let Sen. Kennedy know your objections to his position. U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510.

—Compiled by Jean Sweeney

Life, Liberty and Law



Nancy Murphy

On Oct. 3, 1973 Dr. Kenneth C. Edelin, a black physician who was then the chief resident in Ob. Gyn. at Boston City Hospital, performed an abortion on a young black woman. It was legal. The woman had requested it. Yet the doctor was later charged in law and brought to trial.

A jury found him guilty of manslaughter. What happened?

The young woman had entered the Obstetrical Department of the hospital in late September 1973 for the purposes of abortion. She agreed to participate first in a study involving amniocentesis (a technique which taps the fluid in the amniotic sac). Subsequently, arrangements were made for a saline infusion abortion. It was scheduled for Oct. 2 and was to take place in the hospital's three-bed Saline Unit which had been set up by Dr. Edelin, which he and Dr. James Penza directed.

Dr. Edelin examined the woman. He estimated the gestational age to be 22 weeks, but he did not write this notation in the record. Contrary to hospital procedure he wrote nothing at all about the gestation in the pre-operative report. A medical student and an Ob. Gyn. resident, Dr. Enrique Geminez-Jaimeno, examined the woman. Both noted the gestation to be 24 weeks.

Dr. Hugh R. Hiltrop, a board-certified Ob. Gyn., also examined her and, though his measurements indicated a gestational age of 26 to 27 weeks, he curiously noted an estimate of 20 weeks when he testified later for the defence.

But the Saline Infusion attempts to abort were unsuccessful. Normally during this procedure a large No. 18 gauge needle is inserted through the abdominal wall directly into the sac containing the amniotic fluid which surrounds and nourishes the baby. A measured amount of the fluid is withdrawn and is then replaced with the same measure of toxic saline solution. Within 12 to 7 hours the mother delivers a dead baby.

However when the syringe attached to the inserted needle withdraws blood and not amniotic fluid, the doctor has what is referred to as a 'bloody tap.' He will not then attempt to infuse the saline solution for fear of introducing it into the maternal circulatory system. Saline within the mother carries the likelihood of serious damage to her central nervous system, blood and/or brain. It could kill her. On Oct. 2, Dr. Edelin repeatedly drew bloody taps.

Correctly suspecting an anterior placenta, he inserted the needle at other points of the abdomen, again resulting in bloody taps. The following morning, Dr. Penza attempted the saline approach and he too failed. Because of the bloody taps, neither physician refused saline.

The approach was abandoned in favor of a hysterotomy for the purposes of abortion. And the Edelin surgical team was thus prepared. If the intention of the surgery had been hysterotomy for the purposes of cesarean section and the birth of a live baby, the team would have included a pediatrician.

Dr. Edelin performed the surgery in keeping with a procedure for hysterotomy abortion as described within the pages of the medical text *Operative Obstetrics* by Douglas & Strome, the surgeon 1) opens the abdomen, 2) incises the uterus, 3) separates the entire gestational sac and 4) removes the entire sac intact. However when Dr. Edelin went in, he caused the membranes of the sac to rupture, thus allowing air to penetrate the area surrounding the baby.

During this time, he seemed to hesitate for three to five minutes trying, he said later, to get a good 'two-finger' grip on the baby's head.

When he finally lifted the baby from the sac he may have placed two fingers over the cardiac area to determine whether the infant was dead; he then passed it on to the basin. The lifting procedure took a couple of seconds and he returned his attention to the mother.

Neglecting to write an immediate post-operative report as is required by hospital procedure, Dr. Edelin dictated a brief note some 10 weeks later and placed the gestational age at 20 weeks.

Shortly thereafter his name was placed before a Grand Jury and Dr. Edelin was charged with manslaughter.



WALD EBERHARD

Pediatricians Join Hospital

Elmira — Two pediatricians have joined the Pediatric Health Care Associates of St. Joseph's Hospital.

Michael K. Wald, M.D., graduate of Harvard College and Tufts School of Medicine served his internship and residency in pediatrics at Babies and Children's Hospital at the University Hospital of Cleveland. He was the recipient of a Fellowship in pediatric metabolism while there.

For the past five years, Dr. Wald has been in pediatric practice with the Kaiser-Permanent Health Group in Cleveland.

Dr. S. Jan Eberhard, M.D. has rejoined Pediatric Health Care Associates. During the past year he was in private pediatric practice in Parma, Ohio.

Dr. Eberhard graduated from Western Reserve University and attained his M.D. from Wake Forest University, N.C. He served as chief of preventive medicine at Kirk Army Hospital, Aberdeen, Md.

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