

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L Hogan

Let's Raise Our Voices!

Part II
[Farm Worker Week,
May 4-10, 1975]

Jesus said to them: "This is what the Kingdom of God is like. It is like what happens when a man casts seed upon the earth. He sleeps and he wakes night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows — and he does not know how it does it. The earth produces fruit with help from no one, first the shoot, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. When the time allows it, immediately he dispatches the sickle, for the time to harvest has come."

Matthew, Chap. IV

This parable, as recorded by the Evangelist Saint Matthew, is intended for our spiritual instruction. The lesson it is meant to impart is that, in the building of God's Kingdom on earth, we are unprofitable servants who can do nothing without His help.



We know too — and farmers and farm workers know it best of all — that even in the realm of nature we are dependent on God's bounty for the food which we need to sustain us. The farmer "sleeps and he wakes night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows — and he does not know how it does it. The earth produces fruit with help from no one. . . . Yes and no. The harvest depends, of course, upon the bounty of God, the Creator of the universe, but, under God, the earth produces fruit only with the help of human ingenuity and human labor.

In this, the wealthiest and most bounteous nation in the world, the men and women who provide this labor and thus make it possible for the earth to produce its fruits are struggling against tremendous odds to achieve the right to self-determination, the right to be represented by a union of their own choice — a right which has long since been guaranteed to their fellow workers in every other major industry.

Their non-violent struggle to achieve this legitimate goal has been going on for more than a decade, and the end of the struggle is not yet in sight.

In an effort to help the farm workers achieve their basic right of self-determination, the major religious groups in the United States — Catholic, Protestant and Jewish — are participating in Farm Worker Week, May 4-10.

The continuing support which the churches and synagogues are giving to the farm workers has led to the charge that they

are prejudiced against the other parties involved in the farm labor dispute. Nothing could be further from the truth. The numerous church organizations involved in this dispute have nothing against the other parties. Their sole purpose, as indicated above, is to help the farm workers of this nation achieve the right to organize into a union of their own choosing. Once this right has been effectively guaranteed, the religious organizations involved in the current dispute will do everything they possibly can, in a spirit of reconciliation, to promote a constructive working relationship between the United Farm Workers Union and the growers on the one hand, and, on the other hand, between the UFW and a rival union which had laid claim to UFW's jurisdiction. The history of labor relations in this country makes it abundantly clear, however, that this kind of relationship, which is long overdue in the agricultural industry, cannot be established until the workers themselves are granted the right to self-determination and have acquired enough economic power to enable them to bargain as equals with their employers.

In defending the UFW, then, we are conscious of the fact — as one experienced writer has put it — that choosing up sides as between "good guys" and "bad guys" avoids the basic issue in the current agricultural labor crisis. **The basic issue is that farm workers have a right to organize into a union of their own choosing and that no other union and no group of growers should be permitted to interfere with the untrammelled exercise of this right.**

It should come as no surprise to anyone, at this late date, that church groups are supporting the farm workers in their struggle to achieve this legitimate goal. If the churches were to walk away from this struggle and were to desert the farm workers in their hour of need, they would rightly be accused of having violated their own principles of justice and equity. In the case of the Catholic Church, these principles, as they relate to the subject of trade unionism and collective bargaining, were restated, as follows, by the Second Vatican Council:

Among the basic rights of the human person must be counted the right of freely founding labor unions. These unions should be truly able to represent the workers and to contribute to the proper arrangement of economic life. Another such right is that of taking part freely in the activity of these unions without risk of reprisal. Through this sort of orderly participation, joined with an ongoing formation in economic and social matters, all will grow day by day in the awareness of their own function and responsibility. Thus they will be brought to feel that according to their own proper capacities and aptitudes they are associates in the whole task of economic and social development and in the attainment of the universal common good.

When, however, socio-economic disputes arise, efforts must be made to come to a peaceful settlement. Recourse must always be had above all to sincere discussion between the parties. Even in present-day circumstances, however, the strike can still be a necessary, though ultimate, means for the defense of the workers' own rights and the fulfillment of their just demands. As soon as possible, however, ways should be sought to resume negotiations and the discussion of reconciliation.

We are not only hopeful but confident that this will happen. Our reason for saying this is that we have faith in the good sense and good judgment of the American people and their determination, on the eve of the nation's Bicentennial, to stand up for the principle of liberty and justice for all — the basic principle of our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution.

"Americans," as one historian of the farm labor movement has phrased it, "are sometimes tolerant of unfairness for long periods of time. They are capable of selfishness, prejudice, and other human failings. But the value system of the United States stresses the very qualities called for by the farm labor movement: freedom of association, self-determination, fair play. It is always to the advantage of any social movement if, rather than demanding a whole new set of social values, it asks society simply to live up to those which it already professes."

That is precisely what the disadvantaged field workers who have been struggling so long and so hard to build up the UFW are asking our society to do: live up to those values which it already professes. They are asking for nothing more than that, and they will settle for nothing less — nor will the American people, now that the issues involved in the current farm labor crisis have become a matter of general knowledge.

P.S. Some local facts for our reflection:

1. 15,000 to 17,000 migrant laborers come to New York State each June and remain until mid-November.
2. 1,500 of them are in our Wayne County. There also are farm workers in Yates, Steuben, Ontario, Livingston, and Monroe counties.
3. \$3,120 would be their maximum yearly gross income — if work were steadily available for an eight-hour day, five days per week for every week of the year.
4. Housing conditions have called for much needed constant investigation. Usually these investigations follow some disaster because of unsafe or unsanitary conditions.

Dictionaries, encyclopedias, thesauruses, etc.

The penchant began some 10 or 15 years ago when I first began tackling the New York Times Sunday Crossword and discovered that without the unabridged edition of the Random House Dictionary or some equally heavy tome in my lap I never got beyond the clues for a three-letter beverage, i.e. ade, tea, ale, etc.

Doing crosswords and looking up words is very educational, to say nothing of being very broadening as any crossword fan (short form of fanatic) will tell you. Such a hobby also gives you limitless opportunities to show your stuff in polite company.

For example, when my parents

came home from a Caribbean cruise and were telling us about the early bird breakfast served on the sixth deck I was able to reply pertly: "Too bad it wasn't on the orlop (the lowermost of four or more decks above the space at the bottom of the hull), and you wouldn't have had to exert yourselves so."

And when my husband and I passed a hillside dotted with sheep it gave me the chance to ask nonchalantly: "Did you see that funny-looking ram? It looked more like an aoudad (a wild sheep of Northern Africa also called Barbary sheep) than the American variety."

Of course a dictionary is just the first of many aids for a puzzle devotee (buff, enthusiast). I added encyclopedias, book

digests, atlases, gazettes and my favorite reference work of all, Bartlett's Quotations.

And when the crosswords proved either too difficult to complete or too easy to require research I cast aside the puzzles and continued reading.

Poring over a Bartlett's is a little like attending a smorgasbord, too much richness and variety for one sitting. But a combination of greed and curiosity usually get the better of me in both situations. The mental indigestion one gets from too many quotable quotes however is by far the more rewarding. And the "feast" usually gives the partaker something to share with others such as the following one of my favorite stories and the origin of a popular phrase:

John Dennis, a 17th Century dramatist had written a play, "Appius and Virginia," for which he had invented a new species of thunder. The play, however, was coldly received and had a short run. Some time later Dennis attended a showing of "Macbeth" and heard his own sound effects put in use. He was irate: "See how the rascals use me! They will not let my play run and yet they steal my thunder!"

WATCH OUT FOR SOL

The sun is a very fine fellow in small doses. Too much could lead to skin cancer, says the American Cancer Society. Take precaution while in the sun; use lotions, wide hats and umbrellas. See your physician promptly when a sore does not heal.

ALL IN THE FAMILY



Sarah Child

Some people read mysteries for relaxation. Others like browsing through cookbooks or back copies of Popular Mechanics.

I like reference books myself.