

## PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

## Pentecost — No Room for Gloom or Doom

Prophets of doom seem to flourish in every age. But their audience tends to multiply when the rhythm of life changes from the security of the static to the mobility of the dynamic — especially when it changes suddenly as it has in our days signalling future shock.



There is a human temptation to prefer the voice that says, "There's bad news tonight" than to listen to the one who announced: "There's good news now." Recall (and this dates me) the voice of Gabriel Heater who was sponsored by Musterole, a product as painful as the ominous message he announced.

A Christian prophet of gloom is a contradiction — a negation of everything he professes in his commitment to the Good News (Gospel) of Jesus Christ. St. Peter said it all when he stated that a disciple of Christ should always have a ready answer for people who questioned his hopefulness. (1 Peter 3:15)

Much has been written about faith and charity but relatively little about hope — that in-between virtue that somehow seems to have been forgotten. Faced with the vast problems of cosmic proportions that scream for attention and solution and are headlined by every avenue of communication, we desperately need a theology of hope and even more so people whose lives reflect hope and give personal assurance that there is no finality in any human situation — no matter how desperate it appears to be.

The atomic nightmare of World War II seemed to trigger a universal sense of hopelessness. Despair was promoted by a theology of "the death of God," a philosophy in search of the "meaning of nothingness" and a psychology that focused on the "dimensions of human frustration." People

grew increasingly suspicious of hope which seemed to be a tranquilizer or excuse, a distraction diverting our attention away from the gravity of the reality of our problems. In 1954 the World Council of Churches chose as the theme of its convocation "Christ — the Hope of the World." The President of the Council, aware of the prevalent pessimism, admitted that this was a dangerous theme — perhaps, even a subversive topic.

But, thank God, beginning with Moltmann's "Theology of Hope" written 10 years ago, a new awareness of God's precious gift of hope has emerged. Since then several writers have focused on this theme. To me it is interesting that this happy trend coincides with a growing interest in Pentecost and the power of the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth and the spirit of all its inhabitants.

Just as the first Pentecost moved frightened disciples huddled in fear and gloom to become fearless and joyful heralds of 'good news,' so today we need a Pentecost and the fire and wind of the Spirit to replace the coleness of our gloom and to move us from our paralysis and immobility.

Hope is a dynamic reality — the Spirit's gift which makes a mockery of our weighty and gloomy statistics, our probability charts and our threatening prognostications about the future. Hope is the servant of the Spirit who is the "master of the impossible" and who draws straight even with crooked lines. Hope is the daughter of the Spirit who blows where He wills, refuses to be categorized and who overwhelms all obstacles by making them His servants.

Dan Herr, the Editor of the Critic, once asked Cardinal Suenens, the Archbishop of Brussels-Malines, Belgium, why he was a man of hope despite the confusion in the world today. His reply was "because I believe in the Holy Spirit." When asked to elaborate further on this statement, he said:

I am a man of hope — "Because I believe that God is born anew each morning, because I believe that he is creating the

world at this very moment. He did not create it at a distant and long-forgotten moment in time. It is happening now: we must, therefore, be ready to expect the unexpected from God."

The ways of Providence are by nature surprising. We are not prisoners of determinism nor of the sombre prognostications of sociologists. God is here, near us, unforeseeable and loving. I am a man of hope, not for human reasons nor from any natural optimism.

But because I believe the Holy Spirit is at work in the Church and in the world, even where His name remains unheard. I am an optimist because I believe the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Creation.

To those who welcome Him, He gives each day fresh liberty and renewed joy and trust.

The long history of the Church is filled with the wonders of the Holy Spirit.

Think only of the prophets and saints who, in times of darkness, have discovered a spring of grace and shed beams of light on our path.

I believe in the surprises of the Holy Spirit.

John XXIII came as a surprise, and the Council, too.

They were the last things we expected.

Who would dare to say that the love and imagination of God were exhausted?

To hope is a duty, not a luxury.

To hope is not to dream, but to turn dreams into reality.

Happy are those who dream dreams and are ready to pay the price to make them come true."

## Christian Joy Is Pope Paul's Theme

Washington, D.C. [RNS] — Pope Paul, urging the faithful to exercise the virtue of "Christian joy," declared that without such joy Christians cannot give effective witness to the Gospel message.

At the same time, however, he emphasized the necessity of increased efforts to foster justice and charity and peace in the world, for "without such efforts, it would be unbecoming to speak of joy."

The papal message is addressed to the bishops, clergy, and faithful world over in an Apostolic Exhortation on Christian Joy dated May 9 and made public at the Vatican on May 16.

Touching on the "permanent frailty" of human happiness, because of man's "finiteness and sin," Pope Paul said that the security and pleasures provided by today's technological society did not constitute Christian joy properly speaking.

Rather, he said, "it is by becoming more present to God, by turning away from sin, that man can truly enter into spiritual joy. Without doubt 'flesh and blood' are incapable of this. But Revelation can open up this possibility and grace can bring about this return."

"Christian joy," the pontiff continued, "is essentially a sharing in the joy that is in the heart of the glorified Christ." The

secret of Christ's joy, he explained, is to be found in Christ's relationship with the Father, and Christian believers can share in that joy by following the "hard path" of the Gospel beatitudes, "just as Jesus knew the joy of his Resurrection through his sacrifice on the Cross."

"This," said the Pope, "is the paradox of the Christian condition — neither trials nor sufferings have been eliminated from this world, but they take on a new meaning in the certainty of sharing in the redemption wrought by the Lord and in his glory."

"This is why the Christian, though subject to the difficulties of human life, is not reduced to groping for the way; nor does the Christian see in death the end of hope."

Pope Paul discussed the "universality" of the call to Christian joy, pointing out that it is addressed to families and children; to the suffering and aged; to those "whose burdens, in a fast changing world, too often prevent them from evoking daily joy;" and those "who live beyond the visible sphere of the People of God."

Referring to this category of people, the Pope said: "By bringing their lives into harmony with the innermost appeal of their conscience, which is the echo of God's voice, they are on the road to joy."

The pontiff addressed a special

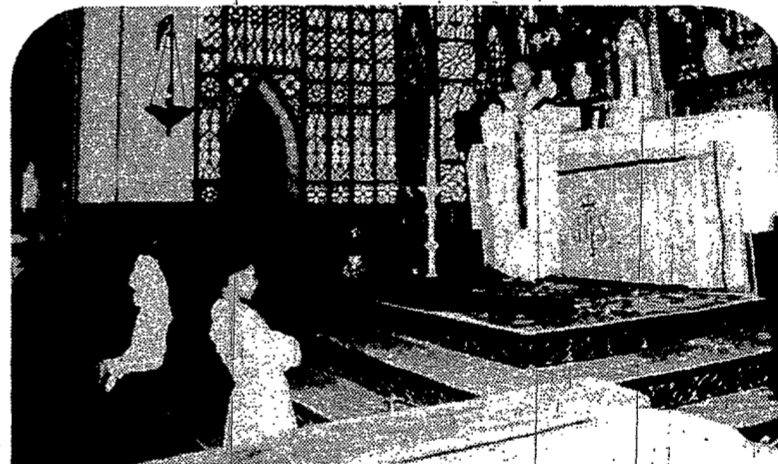
appeal to youth. "Considered only from the viewpoint of age," he said, "youth is a short-lived thing. . . . But this is not true in what concerns the spiritual meaning of this moment of grace: youth lived in the proper way."

Indeed, he insisted, there is a correspondence between "the yearning of young people" and the dynamism of the Holy Spirit "from whom the Church ceaselessly receives her own youthfulness, her substantial fidelity to herself, and her living creativity."

Expressing full confidence in youth, Pope Paul declared: "Youth will not fail the Church if within the Church there are enough older people able to understand it, to love it, to guide it, and to open up to it a future by passing on to it . . . the Truth which endures."

Linking Christian joy to celebration of the Church's current Holy Year, the Pope described Holy Year pilgrimages as symbols of "the spiritual journey toward God, toward the Pentecostal renewal needed by mankind and the Church."

Pope Paul concluded his Apostolic Exhortation on Christian Joy with an appeal to Christians so to live that Christian communities may be centers of love and optimism "rather than of destructive criticism," and to celebrate faithfully the Sunday Eucharist "as the sign and source" of Christian joy.



### Catholics in Hanoi

A North Vietnamese bishop celebrates a 4:30 a.m. Sunday Mass in the Hanoi cathedral as two altar boys kneel in front of the altar [top photo]. Below, two young women kneel at prayer while old and young members of the congregation sit in the next pew. According to a dispatch by Daniel De Luce of The Associated Press,

which these photos accompanied, North Vietnam has 800,000 to 1 million Roman Catholics, and half of them are under the age of 30. These young people were born into the faith after the start of Ho Chi Minh's revolution in the early 1940s. All priests and nuns are Vietnamese, De Luce reports. [RNS]