

Editorial

Enter the DPC

"A ship is always safe in harbor but that's not what ships are made for."

When the Greek philosopher said that, he was expressing a general truth using a specific symbolism. Though it was said before the birth of Christ, its import can be applied to today's Church.

Surely it would be comfortable, particularly for the laity, to sit back amidst our Latinisms. It used to be easy, with them in charge. Though we did not understand it all, they did. And, after all, they were the Church and we were the onlookers, like fans at a ballgame. As Bishop Joseph L. Hogan expressed it, we prayed, paid, and obeyed. We also "theyed."

The Church, especially since Vatican II, has been working to erase the "they" from our religious vocabulary. The stress is on "we." We are the People of God. We are the Church. We must take our turn at the helm.

But merely saying this would amount to platitude. If we are to take a greater part in the direction of the Pilgrim Church; if we are to man the tiller as well as the oars; if we are to share the captain's role as well as the seaman's, then, number 1, we had better be prepared and, number 2, we must have the means.

For four years this diocese has been laying the foundation for the Diocesan Pastoral Council. Priests' and Sisters' councils have been formed. Parishes have set up their own individual councils. The diocese has been divided into 10 regions, each with its own conferences. A Time of Renewal nourished the idea that we all are invited to the meeting, not to sit and listen, but to take part.

So the preparation was done but what about the means for sharing the responsibility at the diocesan decision-making level? Enter the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

It has been on the boards since 1971. The paperwork has been done. The training is over. On June 13 the vessel will be launched. Admittedly, at first the voyage will be in the nature of a shakedown cruise. Bishop Hogan says it may take six months to a year for the DPC to become well-formed. The general direction is clear; the specific goals will be established by the DPC itself. In other dioceses where councils have been formed, the most-treated subjects have been the formation of parish councils, school systems, budget and finance, priorities for the diocese, constitutions and bylaws, social action, responsibilities of the laity, due process, vocations and liturgy. The obvious first task of this council will be the setting of goals.

So while we soon will have, as Bishop Hogan put it, "our most broadly-based consultative body," our other major advisory bodies, the Priests Council and the Sisters Council, will continue their important functions. Indeed they will have representatives on and liaison with the DPC. The difference provided by the DPC will be in giving laity from across the diocese room at the top — and that's where the decisions are made.

Bishop Hogan has called the establishment of the DPC "my fondest hope." Collegiality is a difficult word; sharing says it better. Seldom have we seen the man at the top willing to share his authority. The very act is the essence of leadership; it provides direction, sets the tone for the deliberations of the DPC, and lets us all know that we are the Church in fact as well as in sentiment. For those who fear that sharing of authority means its diminishing, Bishop Hogan has pointed out, "A Pastoral Council is not an independent lawmaking body; on the parliamentary model." It will work "together with the bishop, not apart from him."

His goal is shared by the fathers of the Vatican Council who said, "it is highly desirable that in each diocese a Pastoral Council be established over which the diocesan bishop, himself, will preside in which specially chosen clergy, religious and lay people will participate. The function of the council will be to investigate and to weigh matters which bear on pastoral activity, and to formulate practical conclusions regarding them."

So there is indeed movement. It is forward. The Pilgrim Church is on the move. May the wind of the Holy Spirit fill its sails and guide its course.

A Word To Priests

Editor:

A friend of mine sent me the following and I thought it would be apropos during this time of ordinations and priest anniversaries.
Father, please be a priest.
Don't try to be just "one of us."
God has asked you to be different,
So that we may get a glimpse of Him through you.
God has chosen you, and given you divine powers
To consecrate at Mass,
So as to put divine value into our offerings.
We need you there as a priest.
We need you in the confessional,
To direct us as well as to absolve us.
We need you to do those things for us
That we cannot do for ourselves.
We need you especially to be a man of prayer,
To be an example to us,
And our daily intercessor before God.
So, Father, please be and remain a Priest of God.

— Your People

Father Dominic Mockevicius, chaplain, Craig Developmental Center

Bishop's Letter 'Disappointed'

Editor:

I am deeply disappointed with Bishop Hogan's letter to the Diocese of Rochester concerning the United Community Chest Fund Raising Drive. Following the letter is a list of services provided with money obtained from the Chest. One of these is Alternatives to Abortion. However, the money donated to the Chest is also distributed to the YWCA and Planned Parenthood, both of which support abortion on demand.

Instead of promoting these two organizations (which is done through funding the Chest) they should be denounced for what they do. Catholics in the diocese should be made aware of the complete list of the names of the organizations that are supported by the Chest. Many Catholics might find they do not wish to contribute to a number of them. Nor is it necessary to give through the Chest. It takes only a few moments to write and mail, a check to the Catholic charity of your choice.

To passively and/or actively support the Chest is to undeniably support abortion on demand. Do we have to sell our souls to subsidize the slaughter of innocents in order to "enrich" life?

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"I'VE ALWAYS LIKED THAT SCRIPTURE QUOTE — 'MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE'..."

Of Faith And Miracles

Editor:

... the Church has been losing members at the rate of 250,000 a year and is securing fewer converts now than at any time in its history."

So ran "a survey conducted by a Catholic sociologist" and reported in the Courier-Journal of 4/30/75.

Today's figures match the total number of souls lost to the Church in this country during the 18th century. Then the reason for the loss of faith was "the lack of clergy and the absence of anything but the most rudimentary church organization."

What prompted many Catholic immigrants of that day was the evidence that America was essentially a Protestant country. To conform to the dominant religion of the United States was both wise and necessary. Catholicism was a foreign import, unassimilable, if not hostile to the American way of life.

The arrival of thousands of Irish Catholic immigrants before and after the Civil War checked this catastrophic apostasy from the Faith.

What can be done today, in the last quarter of this century to win back the lost ones? I believe the following words from Eugene Joly's book, "What Is Faith?" can help. (pp. 133-135, The Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism; Hawthorne Books, 1958)

"Why is it that today not only does this argument from miracles (Christ's miracles) seem to make no appeal to unbelievers but Christians themselves are ready to say: 'I believe, not because of the miracles which the Christian tradition alleges, but in spite of them.' This dislike of miracles is due partly to the spirit of critical inquiry, partly to religious feeling — partly to the former, because people fear that the supposedly miraculous is due to trickery or ignorance (so many natural phenomena were attributed to gods or demons which are explained today by science), partly to the latter, because faith and an encounter with the living God seem not to be in the same order as miracles.

"If it is true that a miracle is a sign wrought by God to attract our attention, its profound meaning cannot be understood except by one who sets himself to listen."

Faith will not exist if God's wonders, his miracles, are not seen as part of His plan to give and to sustain us in the Faith.

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Refugee Aid Announced

Editor:

The Director of Catholic Family Center also wears, periodically, another hat. He is also the Director of the Diocesan Resettlement Committee. After World War II, during the Hungarian Uprising, and again during the Cuban Crisis, as well as during other smaller emergencies, Catholic Family Center has been called on to assist in resettling refugees.

The United States Catholic Conference again requests that we serve as a local resource to help find homes for Vietnamese Refugees. Other local groups, through their national offices, are also engaged in this humanitarian effort.

Catholic Family Center will receive requests from the three camps for checking out sponsors living in this area before refugees are sent. We will also receive information from local people or groups who are willing to serve as sponsors of individuals or families. Primary needs are homes and jobs. If anyone is interested in helping, please call Catholic Family Center, 546-7220, between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Miss Boella is the supervisor handling requests.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference have issued a strong plea for support of this opportunity for loving service to others on the part of Americans.

Sincerely,
James M. Maloney, ACSW
Executive Director

Father Kung ... Nothing New

Editor:

If Father Kung is right on papal infallibility, so was Father Dollinger, the Old Catholic Church, and the Polish National Catholic Church — and every group which fought Pius IX!

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They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced, with names and addresses. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.