

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Leadership — A Gift for Others

PART II

Pomp and power may be signs of success in human enterprise but they will forever remain signs of failure in the life and work of the Church. The number of New Testament texts in which power and authority in the Church are mentioned is not extensive but enough to give us pause to meditate on our personal style of leadership.



In one episode which is mentioned in the Gospel of St. Matthew, and again by St. Luke, a dispute arose among the disciples of Christ as to who was the greatest in the group. Only Mark had the interesting note that when Jesus asked them what they were talking about, they were all silent. They knew His mind; they were ashamed to reveal their interest in the dispute. The answer of Christ was very pointed: "The one who wishes to be first among you should be the last and the servant of all." Then He strengthened His statement by bringing a little child into the group and said that if anyone wishes to be first, let him become a child because the reign of God is for children. The sharpness of this answer has not always been appreciated. Effectively what Christ was saying was that there is no first in the reign of God. If you want to be first, then become every man's servant. Return to your childhood and then you will be fit for the first place. Jesus left no room for ambition and He left no room for the exercise of dominant and repressive power.

The second saying is very interesting and applies to the same point. St. Matthew and St. Mark recall the petition of the mother of the sons of Zebedee for a first place in the kingdom for her sons. St. Matthew was so embarrassed because one of his fellow apostles had proposed this question, that, in telling the story, he places the entire blame on the mother. Mark, telling it like it was (as they say today), blamed the apostles for asking the question. Here Christ compares the government of the secular state to the condition of the Church. He speaks of the secular government in harsh terms. Great men in leadership of the nation lord it over their subjects and are guilty of tyranny. St. Luke adds, with a touch of sarcasm, that they

received the title of benefactor. Christ said it should never be so with His disciples — the first among whom should become the servant of others, as He Himself had come to be the servant of others.

The point of all the passages quoted is simply this: There is no room for power struggles within the Christian community; in fact, we have no power at all in the ordinary sense. Those who occupy the top positions have a more complete dedication of service, or should have. Service, like charity, is a word which has lost much of its gospel meaning. Jesus and His listeners caught the full force of the metaphors of child and servant which He used. The force is not so readily caught in the modern world where the title of a public servant is given to public officials who are aware of power to dominate others and are often quite jealous of it. Jesus left with His apostles and their successors the duty of arriving at a new concept of leadership corresponding to the new community of the Church which He created.

Did Jesus leave with His Church the resources to create a new kind of leadership? Has the Church created this new concept of leadership? One can scarcely doubt that Jesus left to His Church the resources to accomplish its mission. But if one looks at the New Testament for something like a manual for executives, one will not find it unless he looks at the pastoral epistles. Certainly, these epistles deal expressly with the responsibilities of leadership in the Church. All the passages pre-suppose that a Christian's leadership like the rest of his life will be motivated by the principle which motivates all Christians, and that is love. Leadership will be an act of love as much as any other act in the life of a Christian and, if you want to know what the love of the leadership is all about, read St. Paul's first letter to the people of Corinth, Chapter XIII, which I think is the most beautiful passage in all of Sacred Scripture. It delineates the attributes of love. Successful leadership in the Church is not to be measured by the usual standards of wisdom and prudence and efficiency and production. It should be measured only by those standards by which the Christian life is judged, and by the fullness with which the life of Christ flourishes in the leadership of the Church. This does not mean that we are to bypass talent or consider it not important. But it remains ineffective unless a spirit of charity governs all our activities.

Leadership of the Church is like the Christian life in another respect. The Christian life itself is not the work of man but it is the work of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Church. Successful leadership also is the work of the Spirit and not the work of man. The Spirit in the Church does not displace the human powers of intelligence and will, but these powers are helpless if the Church is left solely with its personal and organizational resources, however abundant they may be. The Spirit does not supply intelligence or judgment or courage which may be lacking. The Spirit does supply the fullness of faith, the fullness of hope and the fullness of charity which give form to leadership. Too frequently, the leaders of the Church have relied on the Spirit for what the Spirit does not give, and counted on themselves for what the Spirit does give. The leadership of the Church is corrupted at any age when it is conceived in terms of power and not in terms of love. It is corrupted when the leader refuses to think of himself as a servant who did not come to be served but rather to be a slave and to give his life for the salvation of men.

The Church has no guarantee against failure in this hour of renewal, just as it has never had in any age a guarantee against corruption in her leadership. She has always had more than sufficient means to prevent it. The most important of these means is the awareness that the Church has of her identity and of her mission. She is the Body of Christ. Christ is the corporate personality of this body. In the language of St. Paul, she is the body of which Christ is the head.

The Church in the New Testament has no other head but Christ. In this body, no one is more a member than anyone else. There are different charismata, gifts which are given not for the benefit of the one who receives them but for the benefit of those for whom he ministers. It is always the same Spirit, the same divine love that moves in all the members of the Church. The body is recognized as the Church of Christ only by her unity and never by her divisions. The unity of the Church is the love which unites the members with each other and with Christ. It is not a unity of authority. Christ never authorized anyone to substitute controls for love. This is the Spirit of the Church which all of us are called to reflect in our conduct. May it ever be so in the Church of Rochester.

vatican news

Vatican Role at Helsinki Reflective of Paul VI

By Fr. Robert A. Graham
Religious News Service

Rome [RNS] — Did the Vatican cut a ridiculous figure by taking part in the 35-member Helsinki Conference on European Security and International Collaboration?

A News Analysis

Was it only feeding its ego, clinging to a privileged position while serving the cause of peace in a minimal way with a few pious proposals?

These are some of the whisperings going on, momentarily smothered by the euphoria of the monster show of European solidarity and "Peace in Our Time" staged with the benevolence of the major powers.

Did the Vatican's presence give sanction instead to an international event that could possibly go down in history as a

disastrous turning point in the history of Europe?

Call it Pope Paul's "calculated risk," if you will, but those who, month after month, year after year, read his appeals for just this kind of attempt, an agreed and honorable settlement, readily understand what happened. A moment came when the pontiff and also his listeners had enough of prophetism and turned to concrete action.

Those who have for a long time called on the Church to "dirty its hands" by direct involvement in current affairs can hardly criticize Paul VI for going to Helsinki through a delegate. He did not ask to go, but was invited. Should he have refused and then go hold hands with the other holdouts, even Hodja of Albania, to weep over the iniquity of man?

Pope Paul gave his own explanation of why the Vatican accepted the historic invitation, several years ago, after the first sessions at Helsinki. On June 22,

1973 he told the Roman cardinals that the Holy See did not want to merely second and applaud the work of others in the field of peace but to do something itself.

"Neither the awareness of our own modest means, nor discouragement from limited successes nor tenacious obstacles rising before us, will keep us from this course," declared the Pope.

There was no illusion, no thirst for prestige, but only the wish to do good. As it turned out, the last speaker on Aug. 1 to take the rostrum at Helsinki was the papal envoy, Archbishop Agostino Casaroli.

The papacy makes no bones about its legitimate stake in the religious and cultural life of Europe. The invitation accorded it with the tacit approval of the major powers is a recognition of the unique place the Catholic Church occupies, at least in European matters. In the nature of things, as the Pope recognized, papal intervention is not going to

change the balance of international politics very notably. The Helsinki declaration is over-rich in golden phrases and high sentiments. If these elements often give precedence to force put to the test, this does not detract from their intrinsic value. And sometimes they can prevail in the long run.

The existence of the Helsinki Conference to which every European state was called, including Liechtenstein and the Republic of San Marino — and the Holy See — is proof enough that even the big powers need the moral concurrence of the weak.

This concurrence can be won only on sound legal and moral principles. The small countries count on this as their bulwark, not on their power. These are the principles that Pope Paul VI has been enunciating from his window overlooking St. Peter's Square over the years. That he can now get them said by his representative in a conference of powers ought to be something of a gain.

Apart from the Vatican's small, direct contribution to the goal of the Helsinki declaration itself, what about the future of the Holy See's relationship to the Soviet Union and to the United States, after this?

For the first time, the Vatican and Moscow are joint signatories to a pledge of respect for such cultural values as religious life. To what extent this may serve as the basis for future negotiations remains to be seen, but it is a new element in their joint relations. As for the United States, with this fresh evidence before it of the real international status of the Holy See, the question of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Holy See gains clarity and even urgency.

How, in short, does America propose to give life to the Helsinki agreement if not in terms of collaboration with all the signatories? Will the United States send an ambassador to the Pope only after Moscow does?