


PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Letters From A Bishop - Beggar

PART II

My dear People,



I have always been intrigued by the statement from St. Matthew's Gospel which says that "every scribe who is learned in the Kingdom of God is like the head of the household who can bring from his storeroom both the new and the old" (Matthew 13:52). What a fine image for the Church, and what a good 'job description' for a bishop! As a householder of the faith in this diocese, who hopefully is at least becoming learned in the Kingdom of God, I am obliged to care for both the established missions and traditions of the Church and build new approaches and better means of preaching the Gospel. Since Vatican Council II, we have all become more and more aware of our responsibility to minister to the world and to the many needs of its people, to move in new directions, to assume new purposes and to evolve new service patterns. And yet, all of this should be done while attempting to maintain those traditional roles which we evaluate as having served the people well in the past and which have led them to God.

As a diocese, we will always have need to provide help to the local churches in carrying out the sacramental ministry, to provide coordination for our education programs, to foster vocations and educate our future priests, to provide the services of the Marriage Tribunal and to care for the human

needs of the poor and less fortunate. These are the "old" in our storehouse.

At the same time, Vatican II has challenged us to change and grow, to deepen the quality of life for all men. But how shall this be done? What are our priorities in doing this? What staff will carry them out? How can they be financed? All of these are giant practical questions which, even with the best of theoretical knowledge and all the light of faith, are so very difficult to answer. We cannot put new wine in old wineskins.

This was my purpose, then, in convoking the Diocesan Pastoral Council. With painful process, they arrived collectively at a tentative list of priorities for the diocese. We have now taken the items of that rather disparate list and arranged them in three general categories. Rather than separate goals, we now wish to speak of the needs of 1) Continuing Education; 2) Ministry to Youth; and 3) Broader Pastoral Services. Let me give you some insight this week into the first of these three categories.

1. Continuing Education. It is all too evident that there is a great deal that is new within the Church since Vatican II that we have not always been prepared to handle: our style of liturgical and sacramental celebration has changed considerably; there is great new insight in scripture and theological studies; parish management and administration requires more demanding skills; lay persons now share the leadership responsibility, but are often hesitant because of lack of training for this role. All of this points to perhaps our greatest need: to up-

date and continue the educative process for all Church leaders. Thus, we need to:

a) provide continued training in all areas of necessary expertise for the key Church leader — the priest. This will mean specific courses and training workshops in theology and pastoral administration; sabbaticals for extended study; and other programs to meet specialized needs and increase professionalism.

b) give specialized training for parish leaders in all areas of Church life, including pastoral assistants; religious education coordinators; parish council leaders; finance; liturgy, education and human development committee members.

c) foster the programs of spiritual renewal in the Church, such as, Marriage Encounter, Cursillo, Christian Family Movement and Adult Theological Education.

d) set up a program for selecting and educating permanent deacons who would share in the priest's ministry to the Church and expand the personnel available to the service of God's people.


e) expand family life education and consultation services.

f) provide for the religious needs and education of the elderly through education and training of professionals in institutions, special housing areas and hospitals.

Next week, I will continue to discuss with you the other important areas of concern.

Pope Addresses African, Madagascar Clergy

Pope Paul VI delivered the following address to the fourth plenary assembly of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar.



We are very happy to receive you today, coming as you do from almost all the countries and peoples of Africa and Madagascar. We are speaking to you today, for the first time in this City of Rome, after having met and greeted some of the Cardinals and Bishops of your countries during our visit in 1969 to Kampala — a visit which was similarly a source of joy to us. We must therefore express at the beginning our praise and commendation for your decision, precisely during the Holy Year — the special time of renewal and reconciliation — to come to Rome and here to treat matters of great moment. For the happy choice of this place we wish to thank each one of you, mindful as we are of the generous and fraternal hospitality which we received in Africa itself on the occasion of our visit.

We are indeed glad to recall how that journey of ours, apart from anything else, coincided with the inauguration of your Symposium, and one can say that the Association, known for brevity's sake as SECAM, came forth as the happy fruit of the collaboration of so many Pastors.

The fact that we ourselves were present plainly and clearly demonstrated the very close links of communion and shared responsibility between the Pope and the Bishops of the whole of Africa. We gladly then address you today: we had, moreover, already put forward certain norms and suggestions for pastoral activity and we wish to repeat them now, in order to apply them to the great question of evangelization, which is the subject of your close study in these days. For, as you concentrate upon the spirit of interior renewal — a renewal to be drawn from the sources of faith — at the tombs of the blessed Apostles who planted the Church with their blood, and as you profess and confirm your perfect communion with the Apostolic See, you are endeavouring to meditate on and rightly to evaluate the postulates and needs which the task of evangelization calls for in the vast continent entrusted to your care.

Therefore the principal note that must mark your meeting is faith. We speak of faith with all its abundant meaning: the faith whereby every Bishop must live and to which he must bear witness; the faith which it is his

task to awaken, to teach and constantly to foster in his people, committing to them with great diligence both its doctrinal and its moral fullness; the faith which, by its dynamic power, causes Christians to come together to form one living community, which unites them and at the same time makes them apostles of the Gospel.

All these things are seriously recommended to us by the Church of the Second Vatican Council and they seem to us to be clearly declared by your coming to Rome and by your deliberations: namely, that you wish to become and to be more aware of the priority of faith and of the principal exigencies that stem from its proclamation. Despite the multiplicity and the difficulty of the questions that must be studied by you, the pastors of Africa, questions regarding the lack of human and economic progress, excessive inequality between social classes, illiteracy, poverty and the dearth of personnel and of material resources, and so forth, yet faith must ever remain the form and the thread running through your activity, and the supreme guideline of every social initiative undertaken by the Church. For faith alone can distinguish the nature and, one might say, the essence of the salvific mission proper to the Church of God, a mission that cannot be reduced to the merely temporal order.

Great indeed is the burden that is imposed upon you, the members of the Episcopate in Africa, and in great part the first generation of autochthonous Pastors who, coming forth from among your peoples, must undertake the task entrusted to you of opening up the right path for succeeding generations.

This in fact is the reason why, for some years now, and especially in this present Symposium, you have been asking yourselves serious questions; and we, as in our duty, have lovingly and earnestly encouraged you to perform this task. How can the Word of God, the teaching of the Church and the postulates of faith be made easily accessible, clear and persuasive to the many and varied peoples of Africa and Madagascar? Does the Church in Africa retain a certain Christian religious form that was brought in from outside and which makes her as it were a stranger and pilgrim among her peoples? Should new and more suitable means be sought, in theology and in pastoral practice, which with prudence and wisdom will translate into their way of life and perfect the worthy teachings proper to the very ancient cultural traditions of your peoples?

In the first place, in this matter there must be neither hesitation nor undue haste. The Christian faith, a few decades after being brought to your lands, has produced its own episcopate, stirred up very large numbers of priestly and religious vocations, and begotten com-

munities of the faithful outstanding in piety and generosity. It has likewise brought forth wonderful teachers of our religion, and finally has led humble followers of Christ even to martyrdom. Do not these things reveal and manifest that the true nature of Christianity exists in your regions?

The way is open therefore for evaluating more deeply the elements of religion, provided that all those affecting the very nature of the Christian faith be safeguarded. The main considerations are as follows:

a) When there is question of the Christian faith, it is always to be understood as being the identical, essential, constitutional patrimony professed by the authentic and authoritative tradition of the one true Church.

b) Both the traditions of the individual peoples and the philosophical principles upon which they are based must also be investigated, in order to distinguish the elements that are in harmony with the Christian religion and which may therefore be adopted by sacred theology.

c) There must in no way be admitted that "autonomy" of research which falls outside the communion of the Church (cf. our recent Letter to the Rector of the Catholic University of Louvain).

Provision must therefore be made to ensure that zeal for the renewal of theology in accordance with the manner of African thinking does not impede or slow down the immense effort being made for the correct formation of the Christian communities now flourishing. It will be fitting if, at this time, the laity of Africa, through interior knowledge of themselves and of the Christian religion, are trained in such a way that their whole lives, both private and public, may lead to the harmonization of faith with life itself.

It is well known that in some places the Church in Africa runs the risk of the fidelity of her sons and daughters being subjected to dangers and struggles and to being tempted by false teachings. Indeed, Christian faith must become something interior, like a personal possession of each individual.

Finally, we have the certain hope that you, Venerable Brothers, having increased by this Assembly your desire and zeal for greater ecclesial communion in shared responsibility, will make every effort to maintain the wonderful work being done for the evangelization of Africa and that you will also multiply that work — as you stated last year at the closing of the Synod of Bishops.