

Stella Maris — Ave!

[Thoughts from a homily preached April 25, 1976 on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Camp Stella Maris on Conesus Lake.]

In a diocese like Rochester whose beginnings date back 108 years, a bishop enjoys the privilege of presiding at a variety of anniversary celebrations. There are Silver, Golden, Diamond and Centennial festivities to recall the Lord's years of favor to His priests, Religious, married couples and to institutions — all of whom have spelled years of blessing to the Church through a record of fidelity in the service of His Kingdom.

A constant theme pervades all of these varied celebrations. It is one of gratitude and a revival of memories. They go hand-in-hand. For, once we lose our sense of history, we lose our sense of gratitude. The theologian, Yves Congar, once wisely remarked: "A day of celebration is a day of summary of the days and weeks and years that have brought us to the moment of celebration."

The Lord of history had this thought in mind when He instituted a series of celebrations for His Chosen People. We can read all of His plan in the Book of Leviticus. He was the good Teacher who sensed that the "thank-you" habit was not an infused virtue but had to be acquired. Accordingly, He ordained precise prescriptions for days and weeks and years of feasts to remind His people that they had reached their present moment of history only because a loving Father had reached out to rescue them from themselves. Among the celebrations, we recall the Feasts of Passover and Tabernacles and the year of Jubilee.

Today as we celebrate the Jubilee year of Camp Stella Maris, I share with you some personal memories and my own litany of gratitude. If time and weather permitted, it would be edifying to have those of you who have been a part of these fifty years of history add publicly your own memories and to express personally your own gratitude.

I recall with gratitude and share these memories with you:

There was the day that John Whalen (now Pastor of St. Patrick's in Mt. Morris), then seminarian and head counsellor, invited me to join the staff as counsellor. I was thrilled beyond words. There was no temptation to say no especially in days when the economy was depressed and jobs were scarce.

I recalled, too, the challenge of a Father Luddy, Rector of St. Andrew's Seminary, to keep ourselves busy during the Summer. He always had a unique talent for getting his message across. And his parting words before vacation were: "Don't sit on the front porch and watch your mother mow the lawn!" It was the year, too, of the closing of many banks as F.D.R. was trying to get the country back on solid footing. The stelement of my personal account at the Lima bank amounted to 13c. I recall my dear father and mother coming to Camp to present me with this tidy sum and telling me not spend it all at once.

I recall, too, the salary scale. Dishwashers were on the lowest rung (\$2.50 per week). Then came the mopsters (maintenance crew) with the same pay but more prestige (so they said). Then came the counsellors at \$7.50 per week.

I was assigned to Company A on the upper front deck where delightfully refreshing breezes blew. My photograph album shows faces like little Dan and David Tormey (one now a priest, another a doctor) and an Elmira delegation of Dutchy Wilmot, Louie and Larry Lodico and Jack Battersby. Our paths have crossed since. And to their question, "Do you remember me?" my constant reply is, "How could I ever forget!"

My first assignment was to the Craft Lodge where I probably destroyed more materials than I fashioned creatively. Bob Meng (Father Robert now) finally assigned me to boondoggling (losses minimal) and to sweeping the lodge each evening. How many boondoggling bishops do you know? Webster defines boondoggling as "a trivial, useless or wasteful activity" which probably means I should begin to make restitution for the salary I accepted.

From Craft Lodge I was moved (promotion or demotion, I know not) to supervise Nature Lore. This meant that I had charge of youngsters who had no interest in the normal run of Camp activities. I always carried a microscope but never recall using it. You see, we spend all our time building dams.

I recall the afternoon hikes to Livonia and Mrs. Emory's soda fountain, the trips to the mysterious nearby Salt Mines, the overnight hikes to Blood Gulch, Fall Brook and the Hemlock Hills. Venerable Black Maria (an ambulance donated by St. Mary's Hospital) was used to transport supplies. She died a noble death and gasped her last with my hands coaxing her throttle on a trip back from Hemlock.

I remember Fred Shaeffer, the dedicated caretaker, and his wife whom we affectionately called "Ma." There were her two sisters, Mrs. Fisher and Mrs. Kohlmeier. Long before evaluation teams and performance reviews, these three met regularly to rate the Counsellors. Believe me, we worked hard to stay in their good graces.

I recall the annual East Rochester invasion of over one hundred. It was Judge Dan Malone who thought of this splendid opportunity for an army of hyperactive and hungry kids. Unfortunately, they arrived when we were at a point of exhaustion after eight weeks of work. Then followed the annual Chicken Dinner and Bazaar, clean-up operations and then back to school. St. Bernard's really looked inviting — no small blessing in itself.

I recall the year of the invasion of the dietitians and the institution of the balanced diet and the revolt that it, quickly and justly promoted. But, I was a priest guest then. My stay was only overnight, though I had planned to remain for a week. The reason — the evening dinner: **wilted lettuce and bacon and tea — or how to empty a camp in a hurry.**

I recall with gratitude the many blessings that Stella Maris brought to my life: the opportunity it gave me to feel comfortable with young people and to speak their language, the fraternity that it developed among so many counsellors most of whom are either part of the great priestly fraternity or active in the life of the Church as laymen. We were accused at times of acting like an elitist group during seminary days, but I never felt the accusation justified. I personally felt privileged to be chosen to serve as counsellor and will always be grateful for the opportunity.

A Jubilee is a time to remember in a special way all the generous and dedicated people who sacrificed so much to make this day of celebration possible and who have gone before us to their eternal reward. Their names are beyond my ability to recall, but I think especially of Mr. and Mrs. Max Russer, who donated the Camp to the diocese; Monsignor Gerald Lambert and Father Eugene Hudson, who as seminarians initiated the program; Monsignor Joseph Vogt and Father Walter Fisher, who served many years as camp directors.

May Our Lady Star of the Sea continue to intercede for all associated with the Camp dedicated to her, and may the future years of its history be worthy of her Son's richest blessings.

Living Our Baptism

Following is Pope Paul's address at his general audience of April 24.

We have celebrated Easter. In so doing we have celebrated our vital reconciliation with God, which took place with our baptism. We must always remember the relationship between the death and resurrection of Christ, that is, the Passover of the Lord, and the efficacy of baptism, which derives from that central event of the Redemption operated by our Lord. We became Christians when we were incorporated in Christ, who died for us and rose again for us.

Let us recall among the many scriptural texts which teach us about the relation existing between Christ and us, between his passion and resurrection, and our regeneration to the new and supernatural life, at least the following two, which St. Paul stresses as the foundations of the new religion, our religion, which is catholic and, during time, definitive: "Jesus Christ . . . was put to death for our sins, (this is the meaning, the sacrificial value of the cross), and rose again for our justification" (this is our salvation).

Jesus and mankind are to be considered

intentionally bound together in the events that concluded the Lord's temporal life, a life like ours: He died and rose again for us. And how is this salvific purpose of Christ, who died and is risen, carried out in our lives? It is carried out individually, according to the normal plan established by God, in a marvelous, sacramental form, which reflects in each of us, in a symbolic way, but with a mystical efficacy of effect, the death of Christ, which is operated in us as the death of the old self, the man disinherited from vital and supernatural contact with God, and the resurrection of Christ himself, by means of a regeneration to a new life, inserted in that of the Risen Christ, and therefore sharing the adoption of the heavenly Father, and animated by the mysterious breath of the Holy Spirit.

A question: to obtain this rebirth, destined to have an eternal significance, beyond the time of our earthly life, what condition is required? A double condition: conversion, that is, the correct moral orientation of human life, the moral one; and faith. As we know.

Then for us baptized there arises a way of conceiving life, which we could call "post baptismal", and which reflects in thought, in feelings, in behavior, an outlook consistent with the extraordinary event of our Christian rebirth, by means of baptism. We must check, that is, if our conception of life is in conformity with the grace conferred on us with that regenerating

sacrament, with the faith that it demands and with the moral commitment that it involves.

Mention should be made of the ease with which, in our society, though it calls itself Christian, the importance of this sacrament is nullified in practice and in theory. Unfortunately, it does not always distinguish the style of life of a Christian from that of one who is not a Christian. This is a serious, a very serious matter, firstly for the individual, who practically abdicates his extraordinary vocation. It is also serious for a society in which those moral patterns characteristic of Christianity are diluted and submerged by morals which, fortunately, are still, perhaps, marked by Christian principles but no longer, or which are not always aware of the generous effort needed to make them really human, and superhuman into the bargain.

Let us be content now to recommend the Christian of today; an adult as he is usually defined, to give attention to the biblico-theological literature on baptism, and also the more simple but so sound and wise literature intended for pastoral information. We praise and encourage all authors, pastors, teachers and catechists who create and spread this literature, which has its roots in a very rich patristic, scholastic and spiritual tradition.

Humbly, fervently, we will try to think again of the fortune of our baptism in joy and faithfulness.