PASTORAL PERSECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Dad's Day in the Sun — A Challenge

This message comes three days after our annual celebration of Father's Day. But what I have to say is sincere and is valid for any day of the year.



The Church offers to fathers a great deal of encouragement in the liturgles of marriage and baptism. One form of the nuptial blessing is this prayer. 'Give your blessings to your son, so that he may be a faithful husband and a good father.' The blessing at the conclusion of baptism reads: 'God is the giver of all life, human and divine. May He bless the father of this child.

He and his wife will be the first teachers of their child, in the ways of faith. May they also be the best of teachers, bearing wifness to the faith by what they say and do, in Christ Jesus our Lord.".

A priest from Ottawa recently remarked: "Dagwood Bumstead is not my idea of the fathers we honor and respect. In fact, I would like to sponsor a campaign to rid our culture of the image of a father as bungling, slightly stupid, or at least simpleminded, easily hoodwinked, and very humorous in the wrong sense."

I am all for that. While some fathers may operate in this image, there are many who take their role seriously. We praise them for the blessing they were intended to be. The new baptismal ceremony calls for father and mother to trace a cross on the child's forehead. There is

in this gesture a deep symbolism of what parents should be to their children every day — a blessing and a sign of God's Jove.

It takes a life of study and dedication to become a worthy father. There are no courses that I have ever heard of to prepare a man for the position, nor any intuitive knowledge to serve as a sure guide to success. And it requires a constant sacrifice of personal convenience to be the father of a family. There are no vacations from the job, nor shifting of responsibilities to Mother. No one can replace him in his 24-hour per day assignment. Jesus spent His whole life felling us about His Father and calling us to learn more about His Father's love.

The Gospels are filled with the words of Jesus about His Father. These are the qualities that should be reflected in the lives of those who bear His name on earth:

1. The Father is a giver, willing to share everything that is important to Him. He shares the gift of life and even gave us His only Son as His special gift to us

2. The Father is a lover, lesus preached a great deal about the fact that His Father was not one who approached His people as an oppressive ruler, but rather He sought His people out to give Himself to them in tenderness. To prove His love even more clearly, He constantly offered His forgiveness even before His children asked for it.

3. The Father is firm because He is faithful and never gives up on those He loves. He is firm with all who deny His love by refusing to love His children. For all who refuse to love, indeed deny God's presence in the world.

A recent article in the June issue of the St. Anthony Messenger offers a challenge to fathers who have shifted their duties to Mother or to educational institutions. Dolores Curran writes: "Dear Old Dad is the missing link in religious education. He is the single most important element in a child's religious formation."

She quotes heavily from studies made by Father Andrew Greeley and Dr. William McCready of the National Opinion Research Center. Father Greeley has this to say: "An analysis of the parochial school data leaves no doubt at all that the most important predictor of the religious performance of children is the religious behavior of their parents (and particularly their fathers) and the quality of the relationship between their mothers and fathers."

One father responded: "I've got to admit I never before realized I was basically important to my children's religion. Sure, I heard the pulpit pleas and all that, but I never knew there was solid data pointing to me as the most important religious personage in my children's lives. That's pretty frightening."

Indeed it is But it is a proven fact, Dad. Your family desperately needs the blessing which only you can give them.

vatican news

Prayer in a Secularized Society

Pope Paul VI delivered the following address at the general audience in the Vatican on June

We return again to the great subject of prayer. A great subject, like a cathedral. We approach this monumental edifice, impelled by

two practical reasons: the liturgical season and the needs of our time; well known reasons.



The feast of Pentecost, the feast of the Holy Spirit, summons us to turn on again our interior lamp, which is prayer. And then, how can we not feel, in the midst of the difficult events that shake normality, order, prosperity and peace in the world, a need of divine assistance, which prayer

encourages us to hope for from above, from Providence? Hope and prayer live together.

In addition to these occasional stimuli to have recourse to prayer, we know that it is a law, always present, though binding and urgent upon us in different degrees, for those who wish to live the Christian life, and we can even say simply an authentic and full human life. We know that this serious and sweet duty is imposed on us by Jesus, who teaches: "that they must always pray and not lose heart" (Lk 18, 1) We will say nothing about all the books and religious discourses which remind us of this fundamental duty.

But today we stop for a moment at the threshold of the temple of prayer; and we see that the door is closed. Once it was always open and to everyone, not now. Once there were quarrels about the legality, that is, the orthodoxy of access; how many martyrs recorded by history for the sake of a religion professed or denied. Now the religious question (for this is what is involved, fundamentally) is posed in a different and radical way: there is no longer any reason to pray!

Beloved Sons and Brothers! What a formidable question! Even if we are not all able to analyse the anti-religious phenomenon of our time, we all know, however, how radically it opposes our spiritual tradition, especially the Christian and Catholic tradition, even in countries historically imbued with religion, and we feel, to some extent, how atheism threatens, within the soul, the solidity of the motives that justify and demand the religiousness of our rational and spiritual being.

Once atheism was judged negatively by public opinion, as an absence of the common faith; now, on the contrary, it is judged positively, erroneously and unfortunately, we think, as progress, as liberation from a mythical, primitive mentality, as a banner of the new times. Science is sufficient. Reason shuns mystery. But it is not true; on the contrary, those who love science and perceive its depth and precision cannot, must not block the way of thought in its metaphysical and mystical explorations. Those who desire not to restrict reason within the limits of its conventional treatises must admit the necessity and the joy of transcending them to seek at least, or to ex-

perience, and enjoy if possible, the meeting with a Wisdom, with a Word, which while it bows them to religious worship, raises them to the prejudes of a supra-rational and intoxicating dialogue, prayer.

This utter misunderstanding between scientific thought and religious (Christian) thought, shakes all our mental certainty, which will become moral uncertainty, and social restlessness. It is the great problem of courage. We must not be frightened, not only because our religious mentality has no preconceptions or objections to scientific progress, either speculative or practical and technical, but because on the contrary it favours it and integrates it, both objectively and subjectively with its cult of complete Truth, as it is, in fact, sought, professed and proclaimed in our Creed.

Let us endeavour not to feel satisfied with a purely and exclusively "lay" mental formation, that is, one that disregards systematically and in every field of thought and life, a logical religious reference, in order not to fall, without realizing it, into that atheism which we rightly fear as the subverter of all order, and to erect the legitimate autonomy of earthly realities as the exclusive criterion of Truth.

Let us also endeavour not to let ourselves be caught up in that religious and spiritual apathy, which is so widespread today in our mundane and secularized world, and which seems to be an inevitable result of modern activism and of the overwhelming babel of public voices, but let us seek to adopt the programme of Christ's formula: "watch and pray" (Mt 26, 41).

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