

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

The Eucharist and the Hungers of Mankind

Next Week in Philadelphia the Catholic Church of America invites all of the world to the 41st International Eucharistic Congress. To some



it may seem only another of the many spectaculars offered to dazzle our minds and emotions and imaginations for only a moment, quickly to be forgotten.

But those who have planned the congress hope it will be an occasion of grace in our times. It is meant to be a challenge to personal conversion and rededication to the moment in our lives when we can truly make the words of Christ our very own, "This is my body which is broken for you — This is my blood which is shed for you."

I am told that my beloved predecessor, Archbishop Sheen, is responsible for the theme of the congress — "the hungers of the human family." If our Eucharistic celebration means more than an empty gesture, it must become a challenge to responsibility in relieving the hungers of our brothers and sisters who are one with us in the Body of Christ. It is in the Eucharist that God lays before us bread that will be broken and wine that will be poured out. Jesus is the Bread of life and the food for all the hungers of the human family. He is the Lamb of God who calls us to His supper because we are all really hungry whether we know it or not.

The themes of the Eucharistic celebrations focus each day on some form of human hunger

I will list them for you. In subsequent articles I will comment on them.

Sunday, Aug. 1. "The Eucharist and the Hunger for God." This day of the solemn opening of the congress is also Family Communion Day throughout the world.

Monday, Aug. 2. "The Eucharist and the Hunger for Bread." The focus here is on physical hunger that is the daily plight of countless people all over the world. We Catholics of the United States will be asked to join in a poor man's supper and to celebrate the Eucharist together.

Tuesday, Aug. 3. "The Eucharist and the Hunger for Freedom and Justice." This is Suffering People's Day with special emphasis on the sick and handicapped.

Wednesday, Aug. 4. "The Eucharist and the Hunger for the Spirit." This day is directed to the Clergy and Religious. The Eucharist will be celebrated in petition and thanksgiving for commitment to religious vocations.

Thursday, Aug. 5. "The Eucharist and the Hunger for Truth." This is Pilgrim People Day, with emphasis on the various groups that have contributed to American Catholicism. The Conference for the day is on ecumenism.

Friday, Aug. 6. "The Eucharist and the Hunger for Understanding." The focus will be on our Youth and the contribution they

have made to the Church.

Saturday, Aug. 7. "The Eucharist and the Hunger for Truth and Unity." The day will be called "Peoples of the World" with festivals for the various national groups.

Sunday, Aug. 8. "The Eucharist and the Hunger for Jesus, the Bread of Life." The solemn closing will take place within an evening liturgy at John F. Kennedy Stadium.

I expect to be present for part of the congress. Bishop Hickey and Bishop McCafferty will be there, too, and a goodly number of people from the Diocese. I hope that all of you will be there in spirit and I expect special celebrations in our parishes will make the occasion of the congress a special grace to all of us to realize that the Eucharist is the Lord's gift to us and His challenge to us. It can never remain a mere external ritual that gives us life and dulls our hungers automatically.

We are called to be a Eucharistic communion of God's people. The heart of the meaning of our celebration is this: the love of God poured into our hearts — the love of God made manifest in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the love with which we respond to His love by loving one another. The challenge of the Eucharist is the offering it demands — the offering of ourselves as we live out our vocation to be the incarnation of His love which reaches out to the poor, the oppressed and to the outcasts of our society — a love which heals, lifts up, and liberates with all the breadth and depth of God's love which is limitless and unconditional.

Ss. Peter and Paul and Apostolic Witness

Pope Paul VI delivered the following homily in St. Peter's Basilica at a Mass commemorating the feast day of Ss. Peter and Paul.

Today we are celebrating the feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul.

What an immense subject of meditation! What a joyful motive of spiritual celebration!



What a classic reason for ecclesial confidence! For us Romans the feast is enhanced by two other causes. They were our fellow citizens, Romans, too, by adoption and ministry, and they crowned their life in Rome with martyrdom in the name of Jesus Christ.

And behold, at this supreme memory, there gushes forth a spring of great, age-old questions. When did this martyrdom take place? Where? And how? And what is the story and the fate of their tombs and their relics? These are historical, archeological, literary and religious questions of great interest, about which there is a great deal of documentation, a great deal of discussion. Their varied and sometimes disputed aspects do not invalidate the cult attributed in Rome and in the whole Church to these supreme heroes of the faith, but confirm it and revive it.

These times of ours, furthermore, have had the fortune to reach, as regards St. Peter, the certainty, heralded by our venerated predecessor Pope Pius XII about the position of the tomb of the Apostle Peter in this venerable place, where this solemn basilica dedicated to him stands, and where we find ourselves now in prayer. This is an indisputable proof of the apostle's stay in Rome, the object, on the part of some scholars, of negative criticism, which seems to become more and more silent.

Furthermore, another fortune has fallen to us, assurance of the seemingly positive results of the assiduous and learned researches on the identification and authenticity of the venerated remains of blessed Peter, Simon son of John, the humble fisherman of Galilee, the disciple and then the apostle, chosen by Jesus Christ himself to head the group of his first qualified followers,

and placed as the foundation of the edifice called the Church which Christ proposed to constitute, and which was guaranteed by him to emerge unscathed from the mysterious conflict with the powers of evil.

Grateful to all those to whom merit goes in this difficult exploration, we welcome with reverence and joy the fortunate outcome of such a significant archeological event. It strengthens with new historical and scientific arguments the centuries-old conviction of the cult professed here to the Prince of the Apostles. It sees in it a confirmation and a presage of his dramatic, but victorious mission of propagating Christ's name in history and in the world.

And it is just on this mission that we wish to fix your attention, your devotion. We can connect this mission with an institutional and prophetic word of Christ which refers mainly, but not exclusively, to Peter. It is the word of Jesus Christ before taking leave of human associations. It is recorded by St. Luke in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the first book on the history of the Church, where the Risen Lord says to his disciples: "you shall be my witnesses." This is a word that returns frequently in the plan of our religion as regards its original and transcendent titles, those of revelation, and its faithful and perennial transmission. Christian tradition, the spreading and teaching of the faith, its interior and human certainty, supported by the charism of the Holy Spirit and by the divinely established authority of the magisterium of the Catholic Church, refer essentially to the institution of a specialized witness, which serves as an intermediary, a vehicle, a guarantee for the Truth, of which only some, the Apostles, and the contemporary faithful "chosen by God" had direct and corporeal experience. From this experimental reality, in fact, there springs the message, the "Kerygma", that is, a preaching, a word to be transmitted; the authority and at the same time the duty of communicating to others the word of known truth; there springs the apostolate, as the source that brings forth faith.

Jesus will give Peter the famous order, referring to his frightened denial of him: "When you have turned again, strengthen your brethren." Then, after the resurrection and the triple atoning profession of love, the triple pastoral investiture: "feed my flock." Peter will now feel dominated by this interior, imperious consciousness. The timid disciple will now be

the inflexible witness, the intrepid apostle: "we cannot but speak," he will state, "of what we have seen and heard."

Allow us to draw two conclusions from this brief mention of the qualification of witness attributed by Christ to his Apostles: in the first place to Peter and Paul. The first conclusion concerns the equation we can, to a certain extent, establish between the apostolate and evangelization, in order to match the authority of magisterium in the apostolic Church, and in that legitimately derived from it, with the faculty of teaching, interpretation and intrinsic development concerning Christian revelation, in its words and in its facts, and always in its supreme demand for authenticity. This, we know, is one of the strong points of contemporary culture and of the ecumenical discussion of our time. It is strong because of the controversy that would like to soften the firmness of the ecclesiastical magisterium which derives from the apostolic magisterium. People would like it to be more flexible, more docile to history, more in keeping with the fashion of thought, more pluralistic, freer; that is, guided by subjective and historicist principles, and not bound to formulations of a traditional magisterium which appeals to a doctrine that is revealed and divine. It is strong because of the historically and logically consistent attitude, with which the Church of Peter safeguards the doctrinal "deposit", which is entrusted to her. Her attitude is not obstinacy, not backwardness, not incomprehension of the evolutions of human thought; it is firm abiding by divine Thought, it is faithfulness, and therefore truth and life, even for our times.

The other conclusion concerns the breadth that the word "apostolate" must assume, understood not in the sense of teaching authority, entrusted to those whom "the Holy Spirit has made guardians, to feed the church of the Lord", but in the sense of the duty of spreading the evangelical proclamation: an exalting duty that is born in every Christian, baptized and confirmed, called as a living member of the Church to contribute, as the Council teaches, to the building of the Church herself. Every Christian, according to his personal and social conditions, must be a witness to Christ; this is a duty which the fact of being a child, young, a man, a woman, engaged in secular offices, or prevented by special duties, or infirmities, does not dispense one from carrying out.