

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Detroit, Here We Come!

On Wednesday night, Oct. 20, a group of about 20 persons will leave from the Monroe County Airport on a plane for Detroit. There, for the next three days, our nine delegates and eleven observers will join with 1400 delegates and 600 observers from more than 125 dioceses of the United States to take one more step in determining "how the American Catholic Community can contribute to the quest of all people for liberty and justice." These are the words of John Cardinal Deardon when he started the process of this Bicentennial consultation in February of 1975.

At that time the American Bishops decided to celebrate our faith with a Eucharistic Congress, to feed the hungry in Operation Rice Bowl and to examine the commitment of the Catholic Church to justice in the world in the "Call to Action" program. I was present for the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia this summer and found it a source of spirit, faith, and love. I was delighted by the participation of our people in Operation Rice Bowl last Lent when the families of this diocese prayed for the hungry each week and then sent more than \$30,000 saved by cutting back on their own meals to feed the hungry of the world. Now, I am flying out to Detroit for three days of hard work in formulating recommendations for action for the Church of the U.S.A.

Perhaps a little background information might be helpful for those who have not been aware of this process that has been going on for many months. In early 1975 the American Catholic Bishops prepared a parish discussion booklet entitled Liberty and Justice for All. The articles, while a bit heavy, were provocative. At the end of the booklet there was a page which could be removed and sent to Washington with the input that the group using the booklet wished to make. More than 850,000 of these pages were sent to Washington. (In this diocese we were working on the Pastoral Council, LIVING STONES, Planning, and in the stir we missed this phase.) In late 1975 and early 1976 panels of bishops began holding a series of six hearings all over the country that totaled 18 days of testimony. Then the writing began. Each

writing committee was headed by a bishop and reports were produced. Each of their reports include: 1) an introduction placing the topic in the context of Catholic tradition and experience; 2) a summary of the materials received, together with some interpretation; 3) a reflection on the meaning of these materials in the light of Catholic teaching, combined with some assessment of their significance in terms of contemporary American Catholic life. Finally, they prepared three or four recommendations for action for consideration by the delegates. There are eight topic areas for the Conference: 1) Personhood, 2) Family, 3) Neighborhood, 4) Nationhood, 5) Humankind (not Mankind), 6) Church, 7) Race and Ethnicity, 8) Work.

Last Saturday, the nine delegates from our diocese gathered to discuss the books and the recommendations. Each of us had passed around our report and generated as much input as possible. Each of us had summarized all input that we received as a result of Courier-Journal publication of the recommendations. We listened to the input and tried to achieve consensus in our delegation on the 27 sections of action suggestions. It is never easy to achieve agreement, but we are getting closer.

And now on to Detroit where there will be debate, change, new ideas, some struggle, much prayer and hard work. The recommendations that are accepted by the 1400 delegates will then be taken up by the American Catholic Bishops in May, and we hope and pray that a major pastoral letter written American Catholic style will come forth. This pastoral will be the culmination of 30 months of effort to collectively examine our conscience, let the Spirit work in the midst of the Catholic Community, and state clearly what we intend to do. I am pleased with our delegation to the Conference. The delegates include a faculty member from Colgate Rochester; the head of Black Ministries in the diocese; a representative layperson from Spanish Apostolate; a laywoman who works on housing for the rural poor in Cayuga County; a teacher; a Sister who works for a hospital in Rochester; a priest from Wayne County; and a layperson who has worked in community organizations in Rochester. Our observers further broaden the groups represented at the Conference. We have two representatives each from the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St. Joseph. Both the faculty and student bodies of St. Bernard's will send a person as will the In-

ternational Justice and Peace Commission of the diocese. A parish council member from Trumansburg is going. The departments of Education, Pastoral Ministry, Human Development and the Urban Vicar will send representatives.

Social Ministry is not a fad, not like the passing phase of activism that swept through the country in the '60's. Many seem to think that is all the Church's involvement represents. It was the thing to do, so, to be relevant (and a little late) the Catholic Church jumped on the bandwagon. We cannot expect everyone to understand the basic change that took place as a result of Vatican II. It is Vatican II that has led the Catholic Church to courageous action for justice in South America, Africa, Asia and everywhere the Catholic Church is vital. The loving concern of the Church in prayer, word, and action about the kind of world that we are building, the kind of nation that we are shaping, is central to the mission of the Church. Pope Paul, in his Bicentennial message to our nation said this: "We are deeply appreciative of your constant solicitude in bringing the application of Christ's message into the lives of your people. We know your commitment to the social teaching of the Church in various fields. We thank you for promoting liberty and justice and for your concern with the many needs of your people: for food and housing, for health assistance, employment and education — your preoccupation for farm labor, for the condition of migrants, for the dignity of immigrants and for the promotion of peace through endeavors favoring development. We would confirm you in this pastoral solicitude offered in the name of Christ. And we would likewise recall to you that your endeavors must be incessantly renewed in the application of the uplifting message of the Gospel. Each day constitutes a new beginning in our service of Christ in our people."

Well, Detroit, here we come. I will be reporting to you in this column what happens there. Putting flesh and blood on the recommendations that come from the "Call to Action" meeting in Detroit will be my task, the task of the delegation with which I travel, and the shared task of the Church community for this diocese upon our return. Nineteen seventy-six has been, and will be, a year to remember and I cannot tell you how proud I am to be a Catholic, living in this country, at this time in history.

Pope Paul on 50th Anniversary of Mission Sunday

Among the Church's main celebrations this year, a place of special importance will be held by Mission Sunday, instituted 50 years ago by our great predecessor Pius XI, to be observed Oct. 24.

Welcomed from the start, with great interest and fervor, by all the Bishops, and generously supported by the clergy, Religious and laity, Mission Sunday has proved fruitful not only for the direct missionary apostolate but also for the maintenance and increase of the faith in the Churches of older as well as more recent foundation.

Mission Sunday aims especially at forming a missionary awareness in the People of God, both as individuals and as a community, at awakening missionary vocations; and at increasing aid, both spiritual and material, for missionary activity in its full ecclesial dimensions.

We hope that Mission Sunday 1976 will be highlighted in a special way through a thorough catechesis on the missionary universalism of the Church. This important theme is one of the main doctrinal motifs of Vatican II, as well as of the last Synod of Bishops and of our Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, which flowed from it.

It was precisely the spread of this doctrine of missionary universalism among the People of God that was the first and most important aim assigned to Mission Sunday, which from the beginning, in a public document of the Holy See, was referred to as "The Great Day of Catholicity." This same universalism has also

been the constant motif in all the pastoral exhortations we have addressed to Catholics for Mission Sunday each year.

On every page of the Gospel we come across new and illuminating insights into Christ's universal salvific mission, which He passed on to the Church He founded. We must not forget that this mission should remain a doctrinal and dynamic focus for all pastoral work, in spite of changing conditions of time and place. It is a permanent and universal rule that must be applied by the Church to the men of each generation.

All the members of the Church, without exception, "should have a lively awareness of their responsibility to the world. They should foster in themselves a truly catholic spirit. They should spend their energies in the work of evangelization." (*Ad Gentes*, 36). Missionary spirit and Catholic spirit are the same thing, as Pope Pius XII said in his important Encyclical *Fidei Donum*: "Catholicity," he said, "is the principal mark of the Church, so much so that a Christian is not united to the Church unless he is linked also to all the faithful and wishes ardently that the Church should take root and flourish in all parts of the world" (*Ibid*). These two essential conditions for a truly Catholic spirit are worth recalling for Mission Sunday.

This universal cooperation is not only a duty of the whole People of God but takes priority over any form of particular aid, and concerns ecclesial communities and institutions as well as individual members of the Mystical Body. It is like the essential function of every cell in a living organism, namely to contribute to the maintenance, development and perfection of the whole being. It is only in this contribution to the perfection of the whole that each member

will find the guarantee of his own growth, perfection and salvation.

We would like to end this Message by pointing out once more the Pontifical Mission-Aid Societies as the bearers of the missionary universalism which, as we said, binds all members of the Church, both as individuals and as groups.

It was in fact their missionary universalism that distinguished these Societies from the start and moved the Holy See to raise them to Pontifical status, making them the official instruments of the Church for the missionary cooperation of the People of God. Their universalism and pontifical status induced the Second Vatican Council to declare them the principal instruments of the bishops too, in their pastoral work in favor of the missions.

It is not, therefore, through a gratuitous privilege granted by the hierarchy that the Mission-Aid Societies take precedence over private forms of mission-aid; it is a privilege that springs from their own nature and aims. They are Societies that, in their origin, development and structures, have had the precise aim of cooperating with the total missionary activity of the Church, in its various forms and requirements, and doing so in accordance with an overall global plan. They deserve, therefore, to have the full backing of the People of God.

We earnestly hope that this year, which marks the 50th anniversary of Mission Sunday, the Pontifical Mission-Aid Societies will grow still more vigorously in both the older Churches and those of more recent foundation. With the help of these Societies, each Bishop will find it easier to make his Diocese be more aware of its worldwide missionary responsibility and, at the same time, they will help him bring about a deep renewal in the Christian life of the diocese.