

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Land of Plenty, Pilgrim People, Outstretched Hands

We have been celebrating this land — America — all year; we have been remembering our history, looking again at the vision of our founders, at the growing pains of those pioneer years, at the achievements, the failures, the struggles, the hopes of two centuries of life in this land of plenty.



How can we give thanks

How can we put into words something of the gratitude, the awe, the joy, the humble sense of stewardship which prompted those early Pilgrims to set aside a special day to thank

God for His blessings in their lives?

What were the thoughts, the feelings, the experience that shaped their thanks?

How can we shape ours

It seems to me the gratitude of the Pilgrim People grew out of a stark, an overwhelming sense of helplessness and need

To a pilgrim people, fleeing from the limitations and oppressions of their former homelands,

The plenty of this land, stretching far beyond their gaze and largely unexplored,

Must have seemed a boundless source of God's good gifts

This land was salvation from the treachery of their ocean voyage;

It was shelter and security, new-built homes however inadequate;

It was unexpected help and friendship from the strangers who had lived in the land before, and who knew its secrets;

It was the opportunity to build a new life, to work and plan and provide for their families;

It was a rich harvest gleaned from an untried earth, planted in an uncertain springtime;

It was recognizing God's hand stretched out to them in the events that brought them help

They were a people who had come to know their need for God and one another — a people who had learned to stand with outstretched hands and ask for help. They were a people who had a vision and a purpose, who knew what they were struggling for and who kept moving along the way, never satisfied to settle in complacency;

They recognized the hardships of their lives as challenges to new growth and responsibility;

They knew they had to prepare the way for others who would follow them, who would need to draw upon their experience;

They faced the future with a courage born of their belief that God would care for them.

They were a people who had come to know that God helps those who help themselves — their hands outstretched in need were also reaching out to find the way, to take hold of destiny and help their God give it shape. So their gratitude was formed by their risk and their courage as well as by their need. They were a people who knew how to give. The Pilgrims gave to others, not only from their surplus, but from their want.

They understood the needs of those they had left behind;

They knew the pangs of hunger, exposure to the cold and heat, the basic needs of life, and they could not withhold from anyone what they knew to be a freely-given gift to them.

Hands outstretched — to receive, to work, to give: these are the hands that were raised in the prayer at that first Thanksgiving in America. It is hands like these that will be able to give thanks today in 1976. Those among us who recognize that everything we have is a gift from God, given to do His work; those among us who realize that we are co-creators with our God and must take our share of the responsibility of providing for our needs; and those among us who watch out for the needs of others, always ready to share the gifts we have been given, are the ones who most truly can give thanks, with hands outstretched to God and to His people.

Foster Harmony of Sentiments in the Church

Following is the text of Pope Paul VI's address during the general audience of Oct. 20 at Vatican City.

There is much talk in these days about the forthcoming meeting on "evangelization and human advancement." Whether or not it achieves success in guiding Catholic life depends on the intentions from which it derives and at which it aims and whether they are good or ambiguous. It is necessary to realize from the outset the outlook which inspires this meeting and the outlook which it intends to serve. It is a journey towards an ideal: one can either face the sun or turn one's back. So once more, without going into, now, the subjects which the



meeting intends to propose, we will examine ourselves on the mentality which this event can awaken and form. We will ask ourselves, to use a current expression, "what new way of being Christians will it propose to us" in social life particularly.

Before we set out let us try to clarify for ourselves our starting point by asking a question: Have we not, by chance, already got our minds made up in a way that will prejudice the direction of the reflection to which the meeting invites us? Is the attention which we bring to this study free and open? Is it one which makes us receptive to that "truth that makes us free" and guides us, of which the Gospel speaks to us?

We take the liberty of asking, nay more begging, those who will take part in the meeting and those who follow it with interest in the local

churches, to bring to this assembly a true Christian spirit, a spirit that is extremely eager for coming together and for unity. Such unity springs from charity imbued with adherence to the same truth to the specific faith of our Church, or rather the Church of Christ as such. Let us look once again at St. Paul: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all say the same thing; and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be perfectly united in one mind and in one judgment."

Today we are confronted by discord, by differences of opinions and tendencies, by autonomous and arbitrary pluralism which is penetrating even among Catholics who are inclined to confuse it with a legitimate freedom of opinions and with a just variety of expressions which have substantially the same meaning. In this situation let us endeavor not only to preserve, but also to foster that harmony of sentiments, thought and action, which is the mark of the universal concert of faithful voices, and which by an inherent necessity of every human society, and by the divine institution of Jesus the Master and Pastor, presupposes and calls for a magisterial authority. We exhort you to love the Church, that is, the assembly of believers, the Mystical Body of Christ, to promote her union, to love her deep and effective communion.

You see: some good ideas, once they are isolated from the doctrinal and operational context of the Church, have become dangerous and harmful. Take for example self-criticism — the examination of conscience that the Christian must make on himself, and which has inspired not a little of the literature of recent times. It has changed into habitual contestation, and generally speaking not to beat one's own breast, but others. The result is that our brotherly society becomes bitter and often polemical. It is deprived of what are its specific

charisms: concord, joy, industry. In this way the Church would no longer be herself.

There is another point. The fervor of modern life has revealed more clearly the needs of immense categories of persons kept at a low social level. It is an excellent thing to be aware of this too widespread anomaly of civilization. But the eagerness to remedy these structural disorders has given rise to a motive which makes the divisions and the struggle between classes deep and irremediable, and therefore brings about new misfortunes and new unhappiness. The pursuit of economic and immediate aims, right in itself, has made even some of our faithful forget the pursuit of the higher ends of human life. But this is to the detriment of the overall good that human life needs, moral and religious good, which must always have precedence over every other desirable good, if only to make it obtainable and enjoyable.

And there is yet another point. Observe how easy the temptation is, even in our field, perhaps also with the best intentions, to align oneself with those who appear to be winning. To suffer for faithfulness should be second nature, from baptism onwards, for the Christian. But conformism, even when it is hazardous, exercises a charm supported by many fascinating reasons and hopes.

There are many other forms of restlessness, with regard to our own or others' living of a strong, complete and joyful Christian life. These make it easy for some people to assume that the well published and eagerly awaited meeting will be a cause rather of conflicts than of agreement. No, Brothers and Sons, the One who called us, in the Church of God, "into his marvellous light" is certainly preparing a propitious opportunity for that renewed fullness of life which we, for the sake of understanding one another, greet as the "civilization of love."