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Ash Wednesday... 1977

My dearly beloved in Christ:

Ash Wednesday summons us to enter into the experience of Lent. As we participate in the Mass of Ash Wednesday, the ashes will remind us of our mortality, and the Bread and Wine of the Mass will remind us of the new life we have received in Christ.

Mortality and new life — these are the realities of which Lent speaks to us. They are the two poles between which the Lenten experience stretches: mortality, we live in the shadow of death; new life, we live by the light of the Resurrection. Lent is our annual journey from mortality to resurrection. The road we take for that journey is the road of conversion. Lent, then, is mortality traveling the road of conversion and reaching, at the journey's end, the mystery of resurrection. Lent begins with ashes, the sign of our mortality, and ends with baptismal water, the sign of our risen life.

Another way of saying all this is to say that Lent is a sacrament. A sacrament does two things: first, it expresses a reality already going on in our lives; and, secondly, it deepens that reality and brings it to fulfillment.

If Lent is to be a sacrament for us, we must understand the reality already happening in our lives which Lent expresses, deepens and brings to fulfillment. That reality is the reality of conversion. Lent, therefore, is the sacrament of conversion.

To say that Lent is the sacrament of conversion presupposes something about our lives, namely, that we have grasped the fundamental imperative of the Gospel — that the Christian life is an ongoing, never-ending process of moving toward God and His will for us and of shedding the selfishness and self-centeredness that are bound up with our mortality.

Unless this conversion process is going on in our lives, Lent will not be a sacrament for us. For it will have nothing to express, nothing to deepen and bring to fulfillment. Without the conversion experience taking place in our lives, Lent will be merely a series of token gestures that in the end will have no real meaning. Easter will come and go without anything significant having happened to us.

But if the conversion process is truly a present reality going on in our lives, then the sacrament of Lent will deepen that process and bring it to fruition. Fasting, penance, prayer, acts of love and concern will not be merely isolated actions in our lives, but rather links in a chain of conversion that will bind us ever more freely and ever more fully to the risen life that is held out to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Eucharists and the other services that will take place in your parish churches will offer you the opportunity of expressing in ritual the conversion experience that you will be undergoing during Lent. May



I urge you to give these parish celebrations a priority in your lives during this Lenten season of 1977.

With my blessing, I remain
Devotedly yours in Christ,

Joseph L. Hogan
+ Most Reverend Joseph L. Hogan, D.D.
Bishop of Rochester

Operation Bread Box 3 Countries To Be Helped

A program designed to raise diocesan consciousness towards world hunger as well as money for three impoverished countries begins today.

Operation Bread Box, sponsored by the newly formed International Justice and Peace Commission, will send all donations given this Lent to Mexico, Upper Volta and India. The money will be used for agricultural self-help programs which are already in operation.

In addition to the collection, informational programs as well as slide shows dealing with each of the three countries will be shown throughout the diocese.

Sister Susan Schantz, SSJ, program coordinator, explained that Bread Box was modeled after last year's Operation Rice Bowl with some exceptions.

Lenten Regulations

Today, Ash Wednesday, is a day of fast and abstinence. Good Friday also will be a day of fast and abstinence, and the other Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence, but not of fasting.

The fast is defined as one full meal a day, with two lighter meals. It is required of persons aged 21 to 59. The prohibition against meat on Friday applies to those 14 years of age and over.

This year donating regions, parishes and individuals may choose which of the three countries will receive the money they give instead of donating to a general fund. As in last year's program, 75 per cent of monies collected in the parish goes to the selected project, while 25 per cent goes to local hunger efforts determined by diocesan regional assemblies, Sister Susan said.

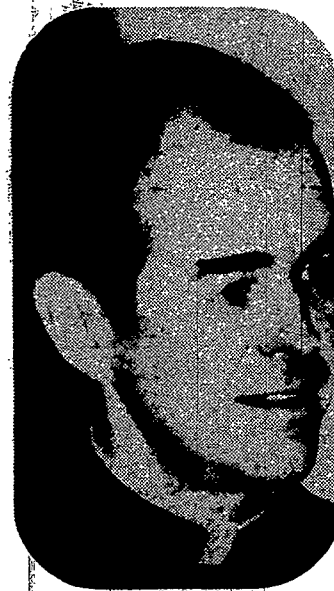
There will also be a follow-up program on how much money was donated as well as how and where it was used.

More importantly, Sister Susan said, Operation Bread Box will "collect and distribute the money in a way that emphasizes our interdependence with the other countries."

Both Sister Susan and Lourdes Perez, International Peace and Justice coordinator, said that all administrative costs are being absorbed by the commission. All donations will go to the selected projects.

Results of the Lenten collection will be announced "hopefully by early May," Ms. Perez said. The follow-up report should be ready in September.

Anyone interested in Operation Bread Box is asked, by the commission, to call Lourdes Perez at (716) 328-6400.



FATHER KELLY

Rochesterian Named to Key USCC Post

BY MARGARET CONNOLLY

Father Thomas C. Kelly, OP, a native of Rochester, has been named chief administrative officer of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' and its action agency, the United States Catholic Conference.

The 45-year-old Dominican priest has been associate general secretary of the NCCB since 1971. On March 18 he will assume the post of general secretary of the two organizations, succeeding Bishop James S. Rausch, the new ordinary of the Diocese of Phoenix, Ariz.

Father Kelly spent the first six years of his life in Rochester and his 17th year in Ithaca. Between times, he and his widowed mother

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Detroit Conference

U.S. Bishops Plan Preliminary Response

Washington (RNS) — The U.S. Catholic bishops at their May meeting in Chicago will not consider the 182 recommendations which emanated from the Detroit "Call to Action" conference on social justice questions last October, but will vote instead on a "preliminary response" to the recommendations prepared by committees.

According to a spokesman for the bishops, all the recommendations of the Detroit conference will be "referred" to the appropriate committees of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) and the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC).

Russell Shaw, NCCB secretary for public affairs, made the announcement "in view of the interest in the handling of the recommendations" of the Detroit conference, which culminated a two-year bicentennial program sponsored by the bishops. The announcement came in conjunction with the Feb. 15-17 meeting of the administrative committees of the NCCB and USCC here.

Shaw noted that the task force set up last November to review the Detroit recommendations met Jan. 12 under Archbishop Joseph Bernardin, president of the NCCB-USCC. Shaw said that it had decided that all

recommendations be referred to the various bishops' committees, and that the bishops consider a "preliminary response" in May.

Members of the administrative bodies of the NCCB-USCC received a document indicating the distribution of recommendations among the committees.

(The 182 recommendations, some of them

controversial, relate to eight general topic areas of the Detroit conference — Church, ethnicity and race, family, humankind, nationhood, neighborhood, personhood and work.)

During the recent meeting of the administrative committees, Archbishop Bernardin distributed a draft of the proposed "preliminary statement" to be submitted to the full body of bishops in May.

Administrative com-
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Bishop Encouraged By Action Response

It is with great interest that I noted the fine response to the "Call to Action" questionnaire that was reported in the COURIER-JOURNAL of February 16. I am encouraged by the enthusiasm and honesty in the 2,572 responses that have been returned to me. Those involved in surveys assure me that I have received a high percentage of potential responses. Personally, I have studied the "Call to Action Summary" and reviewed the many letters that have been addressed to my attention. In preparation for the May 1977 National Conference of Catholic Bishops' meeting in Chicago it is imperative for me to know how the people of the Church of Rochester view the issues raised in Detroit. Phase I of our diocesan response to "Call to Action" is successful. I now look forward to the study-expertise and grass-roots tracks in the program. I extend a word of sincere thanks to Father Douglas Hoffman, Chairperson, Committee Members, the COURIER-JOURNAL staff, as well as to all readers who so generously gave of their time and opinions in Phase I of our diocesan response to the CALL TO ACTION.