

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

The Church — An Alleluia Community

Many of us still live in the glow of another Easter come and gone. The theme of spiritual renewal has been drummed into us all through the holy season - life to death to new life. It is fairly easy to see (even in this climate) the signs of renewal in the earth - the daffodils and tulips, the fresh green grass and the sprouting leaves. We know that the whole earth will soon be lush and fruitful.



But renewal in the Church is not all that easy to see at a glance for many reasons. First of all it is a very uneven process and happens here rapidly and there very slowly. It is also obscured by paying too much attention to the accidental differences among us and not enough to the basic beauty of our shared faith. We get mired down in the tug and the pull between the "old" and the "new," between "change" and "no change" and forget the truly beautiful and meaningful things which are happening in peoples' lives.

After fifteen years it is important that we go back to the documents of Vatican II (as the Holy Father recently recommended in one of his audiences) and thereby bypass some of the controversies which have become like barnacles on the bark of Peter.

The document on the Church in particular gave us a fresh new viewpoint on the meaning of Church, one we can ill afford to neglect. And as a matter of fact, I see very hopeful evidence all around that we are well on the way to realizing that new and beautiful insight into what Church is.

One of the best expositions of these insights was given at a clergy conference several years ago by Father Richard McBrien. He drew parallel columns as to what the Church was and what it was not. The Church is first a community, then an institution; it is collegial, not monarchical; the mission of the Church belongs to all, not just to the hierarchy with the laity as helpers; the call to holiness is for all, not just for a spiritual elite; it is called to promote social justice, not merely the spiritual welfare of the individual; the Body of Christ embraces all the baptized, not just baptized Catholics; freedom of conscience is a basic right; the Church is for the sake of the growth of the Kingdom of God, it is not the Kingdom of God. Some of these statements may seem very liberal and avante garde but they are contained in the Constitution of the Church of Vatican II and what I rejoice in is that many of them are becoming present practical reality.

One of the most important concepts which the Council brought forward (it is by no means new in the Church's history) is the idea of the Church as a pilgrim

people. We are on the march to our destiny, a fuller share in the life of God. The scenery along the way is changing; we are changing; our perception of reality is changing. But after all, these things happen on any journey. A journey is not all sweetness and light - we have detours; we lose our way for a little while and have to come back to the crossroad; we get weary and dusty and ache a little. We may even be irritable to one another, like children on a long car trip. In spite of all this, we are upheld by our eagerness to press on, because of journey's end, so delicious.

Have we made any real progress these fifteen years? I realize change isn't necessarily progress. But in my mind, we have come a long way. Just look around in so many of our parishes and regions and the diocese as a whole. See the number of people who are deeply involved in the Church's life and journey. One small but very large example comes to my mind. I was deeply moved, as I have been in the past several years, by the wide range of cooperation and countless hours of loving labor which made the Chrism Mass in St. Mary's, Auburn possible. It was to me like loving hosts and hostesses inviting their dearest friends to a very special celebration. All of that prepared the way for a very deep sense of community and commitment, not just for me, but for the hundreds who shared that beautiful experience - the joy of sharing a common faith. It is awfully nice to know that so many people are on the same wonderful journey.

vatican news

Pray for Peace, Pope Paul Tells 50,000

Vatican City (RNS) - Pope Paul, in a Palm Sunday address, urged the faithful to pray for the "enlightenment" of world leaders to put an end to "the wars and clashes" still plaguing the world.

The Pope spoke from his apartment window to a crowd of 50,000 in St. Peter's Square at noon.

"Let us," he said, "accept with immense joy and with conscious gratitude the message of peace which Jesus Christ brought to us and to the world, and let us convert our joy into prayer: 'Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace!'"

"Episodes, symptoms and rumblings of war," he said, "still rise up today in the life of the world and paralyze progress toward peaceful co-existence, arousing hate and greed and causing terrible harm to a precarious peace."

He urged the faithful to pray for peace "for the enlightenment of those who dominate world politics to think of ways of establishing peace in the world and to put an end to the wars and clashes, which are still to be found in the world."

Earlier, the 79-year-old pontiff blessed palms at an outdoor ceremony in St. Peter's Square, went in procession into the basilica,

and celebrated Mass before a congregation of 30,000.

Some 23 cardinals, scores of bishops, and members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See were at the ceremony.

In a homily on Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Pope asked: "Do we recognize in that Jesus of Nazareth of whom the Gospels speak the Messiah, the Christ, the divine King, the ruler of history, the eternal Savior?"

"Do we recognize in Jesus the One sent by God, indeed the Word of God made man, the center of our lives, the hinge of our destiny?"



Pope's Palm Sunday Mass

Pope Paul VI arrives to celebrate Palm Sunday mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. The Pope spoke from his apartment window to a crowd of 50,000 in sunny St. Peter's Square and to 30,000 in a 1,200-word homily from St. Peter's main altar. Recovered from influenza, the Pope planned a heavy Holy Week schedule. (RNS)

Laity Council Upgrade Offers Greater Voice

(RNS) - The Vatican's Council of the Laity, recently elevated to the status of a "pontifical" commission, has a better chance than the previous council of making its voice heard by the world's bishops and the Pope, according to Rosemary Goldie, former undersecretary of the previous council.

Miss Goldie, a 61-year-old Australian, was undersecretary of the Council of the Laity for five years until it was upgraded (last December) by papal decree to a "Pontifical Council of the Laity," a move requiring that its executives be priests or bishops. Miss Goldie is now a consultant to the newly-structured Council.

The new pontifical agency, whose president is Cardinal Opilio Rossi, has a

presidential committee of three cardinals: Pope Paul's Vicar for the Diocese of Rome, Cardinal Ugo Poletti; Argentine Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, pro-prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes; and German Cardinal Joseph Schroeffer, secretary of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education.

The members of the new council (all were lay persons in the previous council) now include an archbishop, a bishop, and a monsignor: Archbishop Derek Worlock of Liverpool, England; Bishop Peter Poreku Dery of Tamale, Ghana, and American Msgr. James McHugh, head of the Pro-Life Activities office of the U.S. Bishops' conference.

New members of the

pontifical council include two married couples, Mr. and Mrs. Brad Rigdon of Huntington Beach, Calif., and Mr. and Mrs. Armando Cifuentes of Colombia.

Other new members are Miss Mary Matthews, head of the Women's Catholic League of Canada, Brian Moylan of Australia, and laity from Malaysia, Japan and Poland.

In addition to Miss Goldie, new consultants to the pontifical council include Father Henri de Riedmatten, OP, secretary of the Pontifical Council, "Cor Unum," the Vatican coordinating relief agency; Sister Mary Linscott, president of the International Union of (Women) Superiors General, from England; Dr. Claude Lanctot of Canada; Miss

Elizabeth Lovatt-Dolan, Ireland, and a married couple from Belgium Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Verduynde.

Six bishops, each representing a different agency of the Roman Curia, the Church's central administrative arm, have also been named consultants.

Miss Goldie told Religious News Service that consultants would no longer be included in annual meetings of the council as was previously the custom. She said it was not yet known whether they would be consulted singly or in groups.

Miss Goldie, who has long

been active in positions of leadership in the Catholic Church's lay apostolate movement, insisted that new lay members of the pontifical council had not been chosen "because their views would not offend the Pope," but conceded that "discretion" on the part of the new members was important.

"What is discussed (at meeting of the council) is one thing," Miss Goldie noted, "and what is published for general consumption is another. Otherwise, things could not be discussed openly at meetings."

Various articles have appeared in the Italian press in recent days accusing the Vatican of renewed anti-feminism, following publication of a Vatican document banning ordination of women to the priesthood and the removal of Miss Goldie from what was the highest position ever held by a woman at the Vatican.

"What matters," said Miss Goldie, "is the sensitivity of the people actually in charge (at the Pontifical Council of the Laity). The important thing is how responsive they will be to the views of both laymen and laywomen."