

## PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

## 'Eagle Eye' John the Evangelist

Did you ever notice a picture or stained glass window depicting St. John the Evangelist? Quite likely you also noticed, and perhaps wondered why, there was a picture of an eagle nearby.



Ancient myths said the eagle could look directly into the sun and not be blinded. St. John, in his Gospel, takes us directly into that "inaccessible light" in which God dwells and tells us so beautifully how Jesus is the Light of the world.

St. John was the youngest of the apostles. He lived the longest, and was said to be the dearest of the apostles to our Lord.

As much as I like to read the epistles of St. Paul, or say the Psalms as my prayers — knowing that Jesus prayed in those very same words, or read those exciting stories about God's chosen people in the Old Testament, I still go back to the writings of St. John as the most precious texts in Scripture.

St. John wrote not just the Gospel we hear so frequently in church, but also three epistles and that enigmatic final book of the Bible, the Apocalypse or Book of Revelation.

John and his brother James were sons of Zebedee and Salome, and they were partners in the fishing trade with Peter. The young lad John apparently was

attracted, as were so many other people of his time, to the preaching of John the Baptist, that gaunt ascetic by the Jordan River. Despite his religious interests, John is described in the other three Gospels in quite unappealing terms. He and James want top rank in the new kingdom Jesus spoke about (Mark 10:35), they both had quite a temper and Jesus nicknamed them "boanerges" which means "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17) and they were quite intolerant of what others achieved (Luke 9:49).

By the end of our Lord's ministry and earthly life, John was closest to Jesus, as at the Last Supper (John 13:21) and to him Jesus entrusted the care of Mary (John 19:26). He was the first apostle to arrive at the tomb on Easter morning (John 20:1) and, in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, is the constant companion of Peter, the Vicar of Christ.

John did not write his Gospel until he was almost 100 years old, at Ephesus, when the Church was suffering persecution from its enemies and was in turmoil from the bickering within its own ranks. He wrote his Gospel, not to add new facts about Jesus, but — like an eagle — to lift our thoughts to the inner meaning of the life and words of Jesus.

A short time before his death, John was asked to speak to a Christian group. He said to them, "Little children, love one another." He then repeated it several times. Someone asked him why he repeated this message so much. "It is the Lord's command. If we do that, it is enough."

I think that was a good reply. It is still good advice for us today.



## vatican news

## Lay Council's Reorganization Explained

By Cardinal Opilio Rossi

With the Motu proprio, Apostolatus peragendi, of Dec. 10, the Holy Father Paul VI set up the Pontifical Council for Laymen, reorganizing what had been for about 10 years the Council of the Laity.

The significance of the sovereign pontiff's determination to create the pontifical council should be sought essentially in Vatican II. It was the Council, in fact, that asked that "some special secretariat, moreover, should be established at the Holy See for the service and encouragement of the lay apostolate." Paul VI fulfilled this wish by setting up the Council of the Laity, prudently assigning to it an experimental phase which ended after two five-year periods.

But the Ecumenical Council had done far more. It had renewed, clarified and defined better the Catholic concept of the laity, emphasized its mission in the Church and in the world, the nature and prerogatives, together with the duties, proceeding from baptismal vocation and participation in Christ's dignity. It had certainly not been, so to speak, a Copernican Revolution. It was a question, however, of a reassessment and recognition of fundamental value, which opened up multiple prospects for the dignity and the responsibility of the Catholic laity. The Council of the Laity represented a fruit and, at the same time, a concrete application of these principles. The subsequent institution of the Pontifical Council is linked with the same matrix, with in addition, the asset of the experience accrued in a decade of activity.

Here therefore is its significance in its essential points: to progress in making the most of the laity; to develop further the seeds sown by the Council; to bring to maturity the fruits that have sprung from them. In other words: to give, concretely, new vigor to the conciliar view of the laity, equidistant from laicism and clericalism, in order that an increasing apostolic impulse may bring new sap to the ecclesial structure as a whole.

The requirement is an extremely topical one, both because of the awareness the laity has acquired of its own responsibility and because of the contribution that is expected from its action. Let it be enough to recall that in the Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii nuntiandi, Paul VI dedicates considerable space to laymen as "workers of evangelization," and stresses the "extraordinary form" that belongs to them in this vital sphere of the Church.

This reality is suggested in the new name, Pontifical Council for Laymen. **Pontifical**: it is a question of an organ of the Holy See, closely associated with the

Sovereign Pontiff's mission of guidance and pastoral service. **For laymen** (rather than of laymen). This expresses more clearly the character of service for the Catholic laity, and at the same time, establishes a uniformity with the other Congregations of the center of the Church. As a result of post-conciliar updates, the sacred Congregations are now called "for the bishops," "for the clergy," "for Religious." The formula of the Pontifical Council, which resembles them, is similar.

The new feature consists, therefore, in greater integration in the framework of pastoral government and in increased sensitiveness to lay realities.

This is shown also by the structure given to the Pontifical Council, which it is enough to mention rapidly. The Cardinal President is assisted by a Presidency Committee. It is composed of three Cardinals resident in Rome, and also the Secretary of the same organism. The members of the Pontifical Council are in the vast majority laymen, and the consultants are chosen in such a way that laymen are more numerous than ecclesiastics and that a fair proportion is maintained between men and women. It is hardly necessary to point out that this structure, to which ecclesiastics and laymen belong, reflects the harmony between pastors and faithful which is an indispensable element in ecclesial life; a harmony which, on the ontological and on the practical planes, constitutes therefore the standpoint from which aspects and problems of the laity are always considered.

Very interesting is the chapter on the tasks for which the Pontifical Council is responsible. They are essentially of two types: the area of the whole lay apostolate and the life and norms of life of laymen as such.

The Motu proprio that sets it up goes into details of the greatest importance. Its task will be to incite and stimulate the lay faithful, both as individuals and as members of apostolic organizations, to take part in the mission and life of the Church; to evaluate, direct and promote the initiatives of the lay apostolate, to deal with questions regarding apostolic organizations of the laity on the international and national planes, associations promoting the life and spirituality of laymen and the Catholic apostolate, confraternities, pious unions, secular Third Orders, associations composed of ecclesiastics and laymen. Furthermore, its task will be to foster the participation of laymen in the catechetical, liturgical, sacramental and educational fields; to see to the precise observance of the ecclesiastical laws that concern the laity. Last — but not least — it will be expected to take an interest in matters regarding the pastoral Councils, both

diocesan and parochial, so that laymen may be actively integrated into the "overall apostolate."

It would have been possible in this short survey to keep the strictly juridical elements separate from the more specifically pastoral ones. But in this way it seems to me that the interpenetration of the juridical and the pastoral aspect, with the subordination of the former to the latter, is sketched more clearly. Thus the living aspects emerge all together, making up a harmonious picture which embraces the whole lay reality, the individuals who compose it and are active members of the ecclesial tissue, the numerous, vast and varied fields of apostolic activity, ranging from the traditional one, the turrows of which have not lost their fertility, to the new formulas which reflect the promises and — why not admit it? — the difficulties of the present ecclesial situation.

It can be said, substantially, that it is a question of a new stage in the effort to reassess and promote the laity, a new testimony of the faithfulness with which the Holy Father Paul VI is carrying out the postulates of the Council.

(Cardinal Rossi is president of the Pontifical Council for Laymen.)

## Pontiff Sends Johnstowners Sincere Sorrow

Vatican City (RNS)—Pope Paul has expressed his "sincere sorrow" for the victims of flooding in Western Pennsylvania

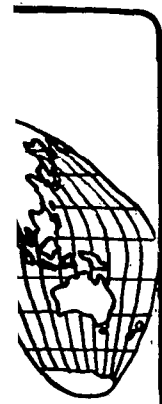
and encourages those engaging in relief efforts. With paternal compassion he invokes God's comfort on all in the afflicted area.

A telegram, addressed to Bishop James J. Hogan of Harrisburg, Pa., was sent by Cardinal Jean Villot, the Vatican Secretary of State, on behalf of the Pope.

"Grieved by the news of recent disaster," the telegram said, "the Holy Father expresses his sincere sorrow. He commends the dead to the Lord's mercy, offers his special prayers for the injured and homeless,

The flooding in the Johnstown area has already claimed more than 60 lives. The Red Cross estimated that the flood waters have forced 7,491 families to flee from their homes. Thousands of people are also out of work, including 11,000 employees of the Bethlehem Steel Corp., biggest employer in Johnstown, the hardest hit community.

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