

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Joan of Arc: Her Voices and Her Convictions

As summertime phases out and the fall season begins, we are faced once again with the reorganization of our parishes; schools reopen, new members are installed in parish councils, choirs plan their programs for the year, and generally new energy and new vision are in the air.



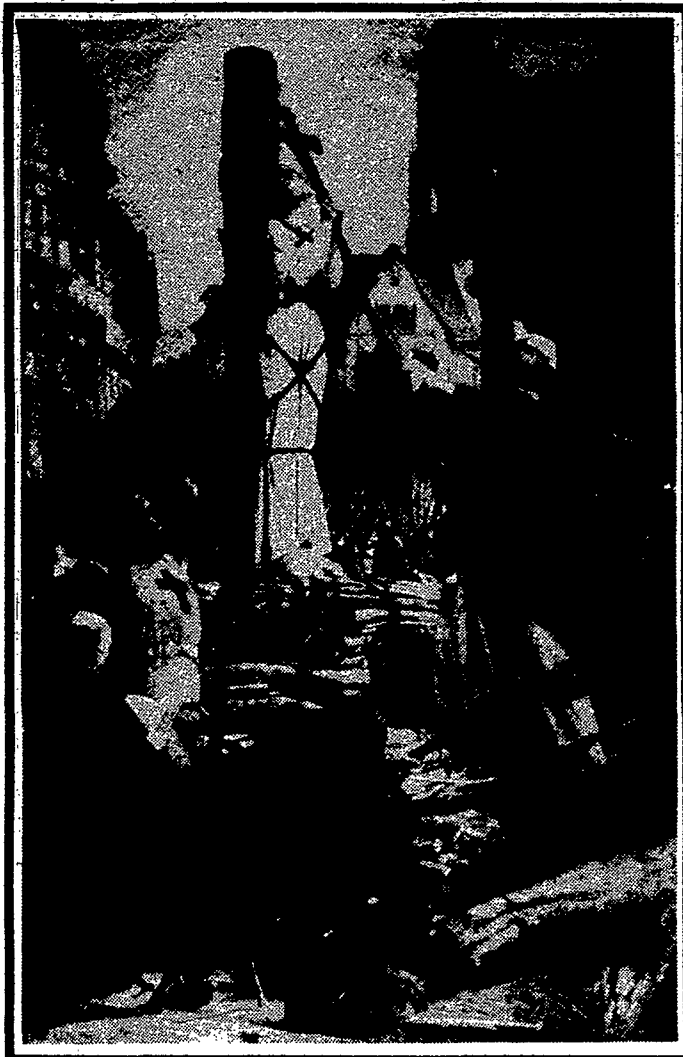
But the issues of human life which claim our concern remain unchanged. How do we instill a deep respect for life in people whose hearts are dulled by fear and hatred? How do we inspire hope where failure and poverty are rampant? How can we reach out to the lonely, the bitter, the indifferent, those who have no purpose to their lives and no faith in its meaning? How do we

move the people with the money and the power to act on behalf of the powerless

In the forums of our decision-making bodies, listening to the many voices and the varied opinions, how do we come to grips with these questions? In the midst of the new enthusiastic voices now mixed with the old familiar voices, at once urging new solutions and pleading for the old solutions, we are cautioned to listen, listen, listen... How do we sort out the messages of the many voices?

The Voices of Joan of Arc - interior voices - come to mind, and the amazing conviction with which she clung to their message, despite the skepticism and harassment in the voices of those around her who could not accept the truth of her revelations. Perhaps St. Joan has something to say to us

George Bernard Shaw's splendid drama about St. Joan made this almost legendary woman come to life for us. Indeed, as extraordinary as she was, and as "unbelievable" we are forced to take the historic



accounts of her correspondence with nobility and her interrogation by official courts seriously.

At seventeen, this illiterate peasant woman, ignorant of war and politics, strode confidently into the presence of Charles, the Dauphin, only partially accepted ruler of France, and announced that she would save Orleans for the French and lead Charles to

Rheims where he would be rightfully crowned king and rule the whole of France.

After almost one hundred years of fighting between England and France and a bitter struggle over the French throne, this claim could not have been more ridiculous in the eyes of seasoned warriors and politicians. But there was a clear tone of authority in Joan's voice. She believed in her mission and understood that this was God's will and this was enough for her.

Curiously, as her biographers point out, her strategies in battle were not always the best-chosen according to military prudence of the time. Sometimes she acted impetuously and without much apparent forethought. Yet the conviction which motivated her was so strong that she followed through firmly and achieved the ends she desired, as long as she was faithful to God's promptings.

It is interesting that, on the few occasions when she apparently acted without the conviction that God was prompting her, her endeavors failed. It is even more interesting that, after she was captured by the English, and she became aware that they wanted her burned at the stake, if she did not submit to their accusations of heresy, she would not relinquish the testimony of her revelations. She would rather burn than deny the voices that gave her God's message.

Responsibility to God's message and faithfulness to the convictions he inspires, will not, hopefully, lead us to the stake. But it will take us through much struggle and fire of another sort, and, it certainly will call for our courage.

The message of Joan's life seems to be: listen well to the voices through which God speaks to you; let your voices be tested by those who are in tune with God's Spirit; and act with courage on the conviction that comes to you through these voices.

Christ Gives Us Heavenly Bread

Following are excerpts from the homily preached by Pope Paul VI at the National Eucharistic Congress in Pescara, Italy, on Sept. 17.

Let us now invite you for a moment... to think about the inner meaning of our present religious celebration. "Christ with us" seems to be the dominant thought to which we now give the homage of our minds. This expression is reflected like the sun on our minds, which have been made clearer by the intensity of faith and love caused by an extraordinary event such as the present Congress and flashes back to the heavens above us, or, to express the idea better, to the historical atmosphere about us in a blessed reply: "We with Christ!"



The word "communion" sums it up in a word that religious usage has made familiar. But what a wealth of immense meaning it contains and reveals to anyone who even begins to think about its

terms. We recall some of them; they at once bring us into an ocean of mystery, but we dare not, cannot evade it, if we but begin to recall the words of the last farewell of Christ as he leaves the material scene of this world, without however abandoning it, taken up as he is into the other worldly glory of heaven. He says: "And know that I am with you always: yes, to the end of time"

These words are divine, they are eternal, they are relevant to the present moment: Jesus Christ remains with us. Jesus hides; but Jesus remains. But how does he remain? With his word? Yes, he has assured this presence: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." Does he remain with his mystical and invisible presence wherever his faithful followers come together in his name? Yes, he has confided to us this secret: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name," he has told us, "there am I in the midst of them." But he remains not in a perceptible, but in an interior, ineffable manner. Other words of the Gospel, of the New Testament, disclose to us this supreme and overall purpose of God actuated by means of what we can call the essential plan of Religion: that of the Covenant, the Incarnation and the establishment of relations of friendship, closeness and redemption between God and Humanity: "and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us)."

But nobody imagined that this plan would go so far as to have in Christ the Bread of life. Do you remember the incontrovertible words of Jesus himself: "I am the bread of life"? And do you recall the words which follow, presenting the vision of Christ as a victim who not only offers himself as life-giving food but as a lamb destined for immolation, who gives flesh and blood to be sacrificed for the salvation of men? These two assertions refer to an irreversible fact and to an unavoidable obligation regarding the entire Church. Not without reason do commentators on these mysterious words of the Lord, who in the text of the Gospel discourse sums them up in the eating of his own flesh and the drinking of his own blood, see in them the announcement of the institution of the Eucharist and of the Sacrifice of the Cross, which will have in the Eucharist itself perpetual memorial. O Jesus, necessary bread, O Jesus, irreplaceable lamb, will your followers understand that without you they cannot have true life, triumphant over death? Will the world understand? This is a hard saying! And who can listen to it? It was hard the first time that it was said, after the amazing miracle of the multiplication of loaves, a miracle that had not sufficed to disturb and then reassure the people who had benefited from it, nor to arouse in them hunger for the heavenly bread that Christ the wonder-worker logically revealed next. His hearers were disappointed and went away. They would have liked a repetition of the material miracle, and they showed unbelief and lack of understanding in a miracle of a different and higher order, a miracle concerning a heavenly bread.

Thus also today, the sociological mentality, with its narrow view of human reality, a mentality that is gaining ground even in the ranks of Christ's followers, would like him to give the basic solution to social and economic problems; it accuses his school which concentrates on the mysteries and conquests of the supernatural world, of failing in its mission, because it has not yet succeeded in satisfying the legitimate hunger for temporal bread. In so doing it fails to evaluate as it should the double nature of the providence of Christ who by bringing human aspirations back to the higher sphere of the economy of faith and grace satisfies the higher and inescapable demands of the human spirit, and thereby urges and makes possible the satisfaction also of the temporal needs of earthly life. The Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of love, knows this double series of riches and makes one follow the other: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness," says the Gospel and all the other things needed for the order of the present life will be given you in consequence.

Courier-Calendar

- Focus on the Eucharist**— Evening vigil at St. Andrew's Church, 923 Portland, 7:30-11:15 p.m. tomorrow, Mass at 8:15, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Everyone invited.
- Catholic Mission Guild**— Luncheon card party, 1 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 12, K of C, Thurston Road at Brooks.
- Church Women United**— Morning of reflection on prayer, led by Sister Kathleen Kircher, 9:45 a.m. Friday, Oct. 7, United Church of Puttord, 121 S. Main. Participants asked to bring lunch.
- Ham Dinner**— At St. Rita's Barn, Maple Drive, West Webster, 4 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 8, everything home-made. Adults \$3.25, Golden Ages \$2.50 under 12 \$1.50.
- Oktoberfest**— At St. Pius X, 3000 Chili, 9 p.m.-1 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 15, German supper, dancing, music by Silver Stars. Tickets after Mass or from Mary Bleier, 247-4997, Shirley Green, 426-2549, Kathy Lapp, 247-3331.
- Country Fair**— At St. John the Evangelist school hall, Martha and Amity streets, Spencerport, 6-11 p.m. Friday, Oct. 14, 10-6 Saturday. Thirty-five artists and craftsmen represented.
- Luncheon Fashion Show**— At St. Margaret Mary's School, 400 Rogers Pkwy., 1 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 15, Members of Altar-Rosary Society to model clothes from Webster Style Shop. Details, tickets: Regina Knauer, 342-4499, Millie Parks, 544-4700.
- Next-to-New**— Annual sale at Our Lady of Lourdes, school hall, 165 Rhinecliff, Friday, Oct. 14, 9-9, Saturday, 9-4, proceeds for new sound system in the hall.
- Allendale-Columbia Sale**— Annual next-to-new, at Allendale gymnasium, 519 Allens Creek Road, tomorrow and Friday, 9-9, Saturday, 9-1.
- Photo Flea Market**— Sale of used and new equipment, prints, enlargements, sponsored by Xerox Photo Club in Xerox Building 336, north of Webster off route 250, Sunday, Oct. 9, noon-4:30.
- Italian Gala**— Saturday, Oct. 8, Shults Community Center, Nazareth College, after 8:30 p.m. reception in Medaille Hall, art auction, dinner, dancing, music by Roman Preservationists, Dole's Cello, 254-1371, Lucy Gallo, 458-7723.
- Sunday Afternoons at Nazareth**— Golden Link Folk Singing Society, 3 p.m. Oct. 9, Nazareth Arts Center. Free.
- Classic Film Series**— Scarlet Street (1946) 2 and 8 p.m. tomorrow, Rochester Museum auditorium.
- Strasburgh Planetarium**— The Sky This Month, 7 p.m. tomorrow, Alien Odyssey, science fiction produced by staff. For times, reservations, 244-6060, ext. 56.
- National Theatre of the Deaf**— Performing The Three Musketeers at NHD Theatre, Rochester Institute of Technology campus, 8 p.m. Oct. 7 and 8.
- 18th Century Art**— Exhibition opening Friday, Oct. 7, simultaneously at Memorial Art Gallery and Hartnett Gallery, U of R, reception at Hartnett 4 p.m.
- Gertrude Stein**— Documentary film, 3 p.m. Sunday, Memorial Art Gallery.
- Video Program**— Documentaries by John Rogers of San Francisco, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 11.
- Rapid Reading**— APG program sponsored by Rosary Society, Mother of Sorrows, classes start Oct. 12, information 663-5492.
- Justice Forum**— Luncheon series on child abuse starts today, runs through October, on Wednesdays, 12:15-1:15 at 101 South Plymouth.
- Nuclear Power Forum**— Four-part series sponsored by League of Women Voters and others begins Tuesday, Oct. 11, 8 p.m. at Asbury First United Methodist Church, 1050 East Ave.

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