

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

'Til All My People Are One

(Homily delivered October 9 at the Eucharistic Liturgy for Divorced and Separated Catholic Groups of the Diocese of Rochester in St. Mary's Church, Canandaigua.)

"Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you..." These words are taken from the valedictory prayer of Jesus which He offered soon before His death. Jesus knew the importance of unity among His followers. He knew the strength that comes from unity. He knew the love that would be shown by those who are truly united. He prayed to His Heavenly Father to bring about this reality among His followers. Unfortunately, as we look at history and indeed as we look at the world today, we see that His prayer never has been fully answered. The history of mankind has been a history of wars, of divisions, of separations. The world today is divided in so many areas, and yet from time to time we see glimpses of hope brought about in a world still divided.



The Second Vatican Council has set the wheels in motion in so many ways to enable us to work toward a greater unity. Ecumenism has never been stronger than it is today. We find great advances have been made in the areas of human rights. Racial discrimination, although still with us, is lessening. In the area that we are greatly concerned about today — marriage, separation, and divorce — much is happening and many steps, encouraging steps have already been taken

In our own diocese we have 14 groups involving people who are divorced or separated. For too long, this has been a very serious need in our diocese and in all dioceses in the nation. In the past, so many who have experienced problems are further burdened by guilt, exclusion, despair. Just one year ago, there were only two groups - one at St. Charles in Greece and one at St. John's on Humboldt Street in Rochester. I was very impressed with the fine work done by these groups, so I appointed Sister Kathy Kircher to foster the growth of this ministry throughout the diocese. What wonderful work she has done. I am pleased and proud to say now there is a group in every region of our diocese and more than one group in the larger regions. Today, almost daily reports are brought to me about the success and hopes for members of these groups.

The Mass booklet we are using today has many of your statements expressing the positive changes you have seen in yourselves. I am indeed grateful to all priests, Sisters and lay people who have brought the seed of this ministry to our diocese and worked so

diligently in the past year to make these groups so successful. We are hearing from Tribunals all across the country who are able to bring a special type of hope to people who are seeking it. Literally, thousands of people across our nation have been able to receive Church annulments enabling them to start anew. This is a great blessing that has come to our country and I hope these blessings will continue. Our Priests' Council at its recent meeting voted to write to Bishop Thomas Kelly, the Executive Secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, a message of encouragement for the Conference to continue to apply to Rome for an extension of the American norms which have been so helpful to so many people. In our diocese we are fortunate to have a Tribunal that has been efficient and understanding of the people who have come to it. Again, we hear often of people who are now filled with hope and expectation for the future, where before there were despair and sadness.

The Liturgy chosen for today and especially the Readings certainly express what we are all striving for in these days. The theme "'Til All My People Are One" reminds us of what we are working for. Unity is not present with us yet nor are there signs that it will be a reality in the very near future. Nevertheless there are strivings and encouragements on every side that bring us new hope and give evidence of new healing. The Second Vatican Council, over and over again, referred to our Church as a "Pilgrim Church." This means we have not reached perfection, that all is not accomplished yet, but that we must continue to recognize our mission as one of striving for unity for which Christ prayed. That unity is described again in the First Reading of today in which the Prophet Zepheniah pointed out how our God is living in the midst of us bringing us love and joy. No unity will ever be present until we are able to be united in a spirit of love marked by Christian joy. The Epistle to the Colossians by St. Paul reminds us how we must continue to "Put aside our old selves and put on a new person which will grow in knowledge."

It was my happy privilege to join with my fellow Bishops of our country last Spring in discussions about removing the penalty of excommunication for the divorced and remarried. Our vote to remove this penalty was a big step in removing one of the barriers to unity. St. Paul reminds us "There is no Greek or Jew here, circumcised or uncircumcised, foreigner, Scythian, slave or freeman." Rather there is only Christ: He is everything and is in all of you. He is the one to whom we must unite ourselves. He is the one who will bring unity. He is the one who brings us hope. He is the one who teaches us love. St. Paul goes on to describe for us a variety of virtues - compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. He speaks of forgiveness and bearing with one another, but the most important of all of these must be love. This is what keeps the other virtues together and what completes all virtues. It is this love of Christ and of one another that brings us unity and peace.

Finally, we know that although there are so many indications of hope, so much healing, so much progress that has already taken place, still all the problems are not solved, everyone is not healed, there still is not perfect unity. When we were called by Jesus to be Christians, we were called to share in His joys, but also we were called to share in His sufferings and in His cross. For some, the cross will be very evident and a very big part of their lives. It is important for us as we work together to understand that as we must share in Jesus, a part of Him is a share in His cross. He suffered during His life, and we, too, as Christians are called to share in His sufferings. We work together, we pray together. We strive to become one, to be healed, to solve the problems that confront us. Progress has been made. More progress will be made. But each step must be done in the Faith in Christ and with the spirit of love that He preached. We must be encouraged by the success we have seen. We must not be discouraged by the lack of success we often see. Rather, trusting in Him who prayed that all may be one, we grow together, we progress together, we reach out to one another in love.

I just hope that my presence here today tells you that I love you with a father's love. You are precious members of the family that is the Church of Rochester. You are flesh of our flesh, blood of our blood and bone of our bone. I have compassion for your sufferings of separation from your spouses. I regret deeply your feelings of alienation from the rest of the Mystical Body. I regret deeply any word or deed of mine at any moment of my life which may have contributed to that sense of separation. I beg your forgiveness.

Never forget that every member of the Christian community has a Spirit-given gift to share with others. You need to recognize yours and to claim it as your own. We need you — your brokenness — your reconciliation — your pain — your awareness of how difficult it is to be healed.

I look upon you as a great renewal group in our Church. Your presence among us is a call to awareness of each of us to our need for reconciliation. Did you catch the significance of the recent invitation which you graciously accepted to be a prayerful support group for a Marriage Encounter weekend? How better could the Church express its need for you.

You make us aware of how much loving can hurt. You call us to an ever deepening understanding of the ideal of married love by sharing your hurts with us. You challenge us to look at our own attitudes about success. You have so much to share with us about receiving love from others. You call us to conversion and salvation from our own judgmental ways of dealing with groups of people whom we quickly stereotype and cast into the limbo of isolation. Yes, you are a great blessing among us. I thank God for all of you — for this day which has brought us together — and for all of you who have made this celebration possible.

Hermit Canonized; First Maronite Saint in 400 Years

Vatican City— Blessed Sharbel Makhlof, a 19th century hermit monk and priest of the Maronite Rite, was proclaimed a saint Oct 9 in the presence of his relatives and delegations representing the government and the various religions of his native Lebanon

The new saint is the first Lebanese and the first Eastern Rite Catholic to be canonized by the Roman Catholic Church under procedures introduced 400 years ago.

Pope Paul gave the Maronite Patriarch Antoine Khoraihe of Antioch the honor of officially requesting the canonization. This ceremonial role traditionally is filled by a Vatican cardinal.

Saint Sharbel died on Christmas Eve, 1898, at the age of 70. The last 25 years of his life were spent in a

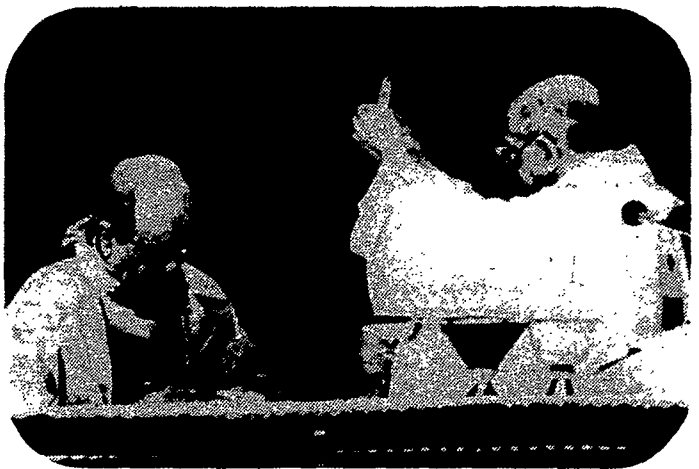
hermitage, where he followed a strict regimen of austerity and mortification, of prayer and manual labor, taking time to counsel the penitents who sought him out

The life of a hermit, Pope Paul remarked in his homily, is regarded again with "a certain amount of favor which cannot be explained only by the decadence of society"

The contemplative life, he continued, "far from being a survival of a past, seems very important to us, important to our world and our Church"

His homily, delivered in French, made a single reference to Lebanon's recent civil war

"The torment of recent events," the pope said, "has deepened the wrinkles on Lebanon's face and thrown a dark shadow on the road



Pope Paul VI and Antiochian Maronite Catholic Patriarch Antoine Pierre Khoraihe celebrate canonization Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, following proclamation of sainthood for Sharbel Makhlof.

to peace. But you know of our constant sympathy and affection. With you, we keep the firm hope for renewed cooperation among all the brothers of

Lebanon. Concurrently, at a ceremony in Annaya on Mount Lebanon, President Elias Sarkis called upon the various peoples of his

country to show the world that Lebanon is once again a country of holiness, love and joy

Saint Sharbel was born May 8, 1828, the youngest of five children in a peasant family living at the village of Beqaa Katta. He entered the Monastery of St. Maron at Annaya when he was 23 years old. Ordained in 1859, he lived in the community for 15 years and then received permission to use a nearby hermitage. Christened Joseph, he became Sharbel in honor of a St. Sharbel of Edessa, who is said to have been martyred for the faith during the reign of Emperor Trajan, 98-117 A.D. As a hermit, the new St. Sharbel ate but one small meal a day and slept only a few hours each night on a bed of straw, his pillow a log wrapped in cloth

The 20,000 people at the canonization ceremony included some 6,000

Lebanese of the Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Druse and Muslim faiths. There were three Muslims in the official government delegation and the 23 members of the Lebanese parliament who attended represented all the religious groupings of Lebanon. Former President Charles Helou, a Maronite Catholic, headed the delegation

At Annaya, 15,000 assembled for a Mass of rejoicing in a new church named for St. Sharbel

Pope Paul and the Maronite patriarch celebrated the canonization Mass, a liturgy combining the Latin rite with readings and chanting in Syriac and Arabic. The offertory gifts included a miniature cedar tree, bread and wine from the fields and vineyards where St. Sharbel once worked, a partridge and red and white roses, symbolic of the Lebanese flag.

at Otto hop John r Bishop director charities;

S

55

ION

CA

AVNE

B