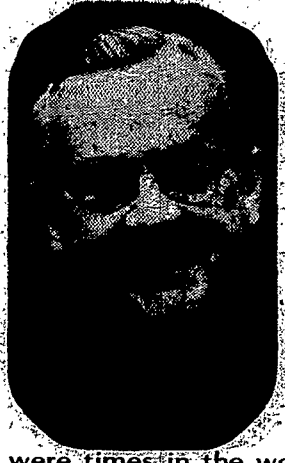


PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Our Senior Citizens — A Blessing In Our Midst

My directions for the year for the Church of Rochester have focused on the Unchurched, the Sacredness of Life and on the Basic Small Communities that need our support. In previous columns of the past few weeks I have suggested ways in which



we could offer assistance as parish families to promote these directions. Today I would like to address my remarks to the problems of the elderly who are among those who deeply feel isolation from the community.

It is estimated that there are some 25 million people in our country alone who are forced to pass the last days of their lives in poverty, sickness, inadequate housing and loneliness. There were times in the world's history, and it is still true among some peoples today, that the aging held a paramount position in society. This is not so in our country today which puts a premium on remaining young and where the energies of so many of us are consumed in the relentless pursuit of vitality, activity, and productivity. Any aspect of existence found lacking in these qualities is held to be undeserving of concern. Such negligence and disrespect for the elderly are naturally translated into the appalling poverty, sickness, hunger, homelessness, inadequate education and isolation with which they must reckon.

The question, then, that faces us is how to reduce the problems of the elderly. There is no easy solution. By way of hope, some efforts have been made by government and voluntary personal efforts to address their special needs. Retirement and health benefits have been increased by our government and in time a program for a guaranteed annual income may be implemented. Programs providing opportunities for community economic development staffed by the elderly have been established. Neighborhood senior centers have emerged which offer the elderly a central location where friendship and mutual help may be found. Nutrition programs have been initiated in many of these centers, providing wholesome diets at reasonable costs to their daily visitors. New community outreach activities have had relative success in locating and serving many isolated and lonely persons. Educational and training op-

portunities for the elderly are being developed. Transportation services for older persons in rural and urban settings are also becoming more available. All these modest efforts represent a step forward but they are not enough to meet the enormity and complexity of the problems facing the aging today — and they do not meet the deep-rooted cultural attitudes which have contributed to these problems. While government can alleviate the worst injustices befalling the aging, the basic problem can be solved only by a fundamental reordering of the values of our society. And that is where we, as Church, must play a key role in achieving this objective.

The Church must speak out and voice its concern for human dignity at every stage of life. It must seek to build a community of believers in which aging persons will find mutual concern and respect. The Church Community must serve as an advocate for older persons in demanding adequate medical care, an adequate standard of living, independence, the opportunity for social enrichment, and a chance to communicate and cooperate with others. We, as Church, NEED to give witness to its genuine interest in the aging and in so doing affirm the dignity of persons and the richness of their golden years.

Since I have directed my challenges in the Focus for the year, especially to the parish family where it really all happens, I offer these suggestions:

1. The parish, by becoming more aware of local, state and federal agencies and services available to help the aging, can become a vital information center and referral service for its elderly who so often do not know where to turn for help.
2. Transportation is often a major problem for the aging, especially in rural areas. The parish community could establish car pools or a volunteer list of telephone numbers of people who could be contacted in case of emergency.
3. One of the most successful programs of Church response to the aging has been to build a range of parish activities around one good hot meal a day. "Meals on wheels" has become a program of major importance in facing the nutritional needs of older persons unable to go to a Senior Citizen Center.
4. As all of us, the elderly need to have a sense of their own importance by serving others. When they work as volunteers in this service, they give great witness to the experience of involvement in such

programs as Foster Grandparents and in volunteering to visit the sick and bedridden in homes and hospitals.

5. A parish can provide an important service by organizing a telephone reassurance program. It is the feeling of abandonment that can cause so much pain for the aging.

The aging rightfully look to the Church for help with their complex problems. To many the Church is the last meaningful hope that is left for them who feel that they are the most neglected minority in America today. They feel crushed by the growing trend in our society called "ageism" defined by psychiatrist Robert Butler of Washington, D.C. as "just not wanting to have all those ugly old people around."

Ours is the apostolate of showing our love and caring concern and respect for their dignity and for their wisdom. Hopefully, we can return to the better days as recorded in Scripture when the Judaic Community counted among its greatest blessings the attainment of many years. Then it was that the elders of the 12 tribes held the prominent leadership roles in the community. It was the aged patriarch who could recount the same history of Israel and could have the wisdom to reveal God's purpose for His peoples. It was a day when the prominent precept of the community's law was to honor one's elders.

The PASTORAL CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD reminds us that "the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these, too, are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ."

Our aging people are deeply afflicted. They cry out to us to be their friends:

- "Blessed are you who understand my faltering step and palsied hand.
- Blessed are you who seem to know that my eyes are dim and my wits are slow.
- Blessed are you with a cheery smile, who stops to chat for a little while.
- Blessed are you who say, "You've told that story before today."
- Blessed are you who know the way to bring back memories of yesterdays.
- Blessed are you who make it known that I'm loved, respected and not alone."

May the Church of Rochester always be blessed in its care for our Senior Citizens — our great gift and blessing.

Remember Humility and Poverty

Following is the text of the address by Pope Paul VI at the general audience on Wednesday, Jan. 11.

Once again on Christmas. This is an endless meditation, always inexhaustibly rich in the fundamental themes that concern our relations with God. We will take leave of this celebration of the great event of Christmas, bearing in mind that example it gives us, which is such, on the one hand, as to serve us as the revelation of divine thought on our affairs, and, on the other hand, to conform our present existence to the form best fitted to bring it into line with that of God made man. The Lord, even before instructing us with His word, was our teacher with the example of his actions, with the gospel of his appearance in human guise among us.



The mere fact of setting before us the story of Christ's life raises problems that we will never succeed in solving completely, but we will always see radiating from the presence of Christ in the world such a light of Truth, such comfort of hope and life that we realize how He is the light of the world, and how it is only in the luminous shaft of doctrine that the Church gives us that we can enjoy his light and have from it our salvation. This implies an obligation to fix the eyes of our faith on Christ the Lord with complete adherence of thought and life. Let us remember the concluding words of the prologue of St. John's Gospel: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only son of the Father" (John 1, 14).

But at this point of our contemplation on the Word of God made man, instead of meeting with his glory, we meet, in the framework of Jesus' temporal life, with his humiliation, his littleness, his annihilation. We meet not with greatness, but with the negation of the values of our present life. The crib tells us so. Christ's humility will be our surprise. A humility that mortifies our Messianic expectations, and that obliges us to change, and even contradict, the estimate of what we believe are necessary goods for our natural existence. And let us remember that with regard to two Christian

virtues, that is, two characteristic negative dimensions of our presence in the world; we mean humility and poverty.

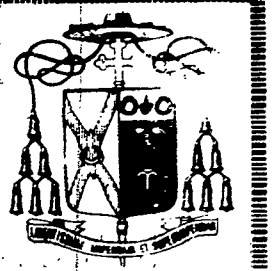
That God willed to manifest himself and to live with us appalled in absolute humility is a thing that upsets and transforms our judgments on ourselves and on our relations with things and with the events of the world. "Learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Mt. 11, 29). This attitude of humility concerns not only the exterior forms of Christ's life, but also the essential forms of the life, doctrine and mission of God made man.

Here it is necessary to quote a very well-known sentence of St. Paul's, which contains the synthesis and offers us the key to understand the whole figure of Christ. It is the quotation of the words regarding the "kenosis" of Christ, that is, his abasement in carrying out the plan of our redemption, and they are from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Our meditation, pausing here, becomes boundless admiration. Christ's mortification becomes the principle and model of our exaltation. So much for the humility of the God man that characterized his appearance in the world.

Similar remarks can be made with regard to the poverty of Christ's coming among men. Hence a radical change in the evaluation of the goods characteristic of the natural sphere of present life; this change qualifies Christianity, where humility and poverty will find expressions unknown in the natural conceptions of human life, but will have in compensation the supernatural conquest of the Kingdom of God, the new life promised to the meek and to the poor in spirit. Let us think about it carefully!

The Bishop's Public Appointments



- FEBRUARY**
- 2 — Celebration of Eucharist and Homily, Rite of Candidacy, St. Bernard's Seminary — 7:30 p.m.
 - 4 — Radio Message, Family Rosary Network — 7 p.m.
 - 5 — Celebration of Eucharist and Homily, Catholic Community, University of Rochester — 9:15 a.m. and 11 a.m.
 - 5 — Celebration of Eucharist and Homily, Catholic Schools' Week, Sacred Heart Cathedral — 2:30 p.m.
 - 6 — Priestly Spirituality Meeting, Becket Hall — 12:30 p.m.
 - 7 — Priests' Council Meeting, Becket Hall — 10:30 a.m.
 - 8 — Ash Wednesday — Celebration of Eucharist and Homily — St. Thomas the Apostle Church — 7:45 p.m.
 - 11 — Diocesan Sisters' Council Meeting, Nazareth Motherhouse — 2 p.m.
 - 11 — Celebration of Eucharist and Homily, Mercy Motherhouse, Lourdes Hall — 4 p.m.
 - 11-12 — Confirmation, St. Louis Church, Pittsford — 8 p.m.; 2 and 4:30 p.m.
 - 13 — Joint Executive Committee Meeting — Pastoral Office — 7:15 p.m.
 - 14 — Celebration of Eucharist and Homily — St. Monica's Convent 5 p.m.
 - 16 — St. Bernard's Seminary Board Meeting — 10 a.m.
 - 16 — Confirmation, St. Patrick's Church, Mt. Morris — 7:45 p.m.
 - 17-18 — Diocesan Pastoral Council Retreat — Becket Hall
 - 27 — Becket Hall Board of Directors Meeting — 10 a.m.
 - 28 — Episcopal Ordination of Most Reverend Frank J. Rodimer, D.D., St. John's Cathedral, Paterson, N.J. — 3 p.m.