



A Special Devotion

St. Joseph has a special place in the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Abbate S. Potenza. Mrs. Potenza explained that 25 years ago when Mr. Potenza (then her fiance) was drafted into the Army, she had prayed to St. Joseph, promising a dinner table in his honor, if he would watch over the safety of her husband-to-be. Though Mr. Potenza's infantry unit was shipped to Korea, he was ordered stationed in Schenectady. In March 1953, Mrs. Potenza kept her promise and held her St. Joseph's table. The event lasted two days during which she recalled serving over 100 people. It was not only "Doing something for others," she said, "I was spreading the word of St. Joseph's helping us." Above, Mr. and Mrs. Potenza display the special heart shaped St. Joseph's bread they said was baked for the occasion 25 years ago and which they decided to save as a memento.

The Church 1978



Fr. Andrew Greeley

I have been harassed lately by people demanding that I write "more positively." I suspect that they mean I write more positively in this column, because books such as "The New Agenda," "The Great Mysteries," and "The Mary Myth" are as positive. I should think, as anyone could want. The demand is that a column of opinion stop being what it is designed to be, an exercise in social criticism, and become an exercise in pious exhortation. "We read the Catholic press," one bishop told me, "in order that we might be strengthened in our faith." What he meant was that that's why he reads it.

My own view of the matter is that the purpose of a column is to be designedly neither positive nor negative but to tell the truth. When I say repeatedly in this column that the Church is beset by problems of authority, birth control, and abominable sermons, my purpose is not to be negative but simply to report the truth.

Recently a bishop wrote to me explaining why his paper had dropped the column. (If you're interested, the column holds about even, normally picking up a paper about the same time it loses one.) His was, he told me, a small diocese which was neither urban nor cosmopolitan. The crises had been passed in his diocese (he wasn't specific as to which one)

and the need now was, for synthesis, healing, a positive view of the Church. The kinds of discussion that sophisticated cosmopolitans could tolerate would be deeply disturbing, it seemed, to the people in his diocese.

I deliberately omit the name of the bishop because I don't think it's fair for the people of his diocese to know that their bishop thinks they are a bunch of Hicks.

I decided to check the possibility that the bishop might be right in his basic assumption that the problems of birth control, sermons, and ecclesiastical authority were less acute in a non-metropolitan, non-northeast-north central region of the country. So I turned to our data files and looked at Catholics outside the big cities and outside of the east and the north central. There was, of course, no difference in their rejection of the birth control teaching, their dismay with the Sunday sermons, and their refusal to concede the Church authority in their sexual, social, and political lives. The bishop's own diocese may still be an exception, though I very much doubt that it is all that unique, and he certainly has no evidence that it is.

The crisis of credibility has not passed in his

diocese; it has passed in his own mind. His plea is not that I stop disturbing his people; his plea is rather that I stop disturbing him. He has the nice, pleasant fiction that the crisis is over and that healing and synthesis is going on. In fact, church attendance continues to decline, the people continue to drift away, the laity continue to be fed up with the quality of the Sunday sermons.

At least the bishop feels good.

The fallacy in the bishop's approach is to assume that problems happen because people talk about them publicly. If only a few loud-mouths would stop talking about birth control, authority, and sermons, the problems would go away. It's kind of like the Old Testament custom of blaming the herald who brings the bad news for causing it. In fact, in the Old Testament the king would have felt better if he didn't know about the defeat of his armies, but he was much better off knowing about it than not. Bishops like my friend, in whose dioceses synthesis is going on, feel better thinking they have no problems, but they are better off knowing the truth. There are few enough of us around who are willing to tell bishops the truth. It would be wiser of them to listen than to try to shut us up.

Paratore Helping Missions

Matthew Paratore, onetime information officer and alumni relations man for St. Bernard's Seminary, returned to Rochester recently as the chief of International Liaison, an affiliate of the United States Catholic Conference, helping lay volunteers to work directly in domestic and foreign missions.

The coalition, Paratore explains, gathers every two years "to make ourselves equal; to discuss mission, laity and volunteerism."

The third aspect of his duties is, "to be the principal education arm of the USCC in regard to mission — to help the laity understand and appreciate mission."

As Paratore explains it, International Liaison has been operating since 1963, first as an activity of the Archdiocese of Newark and, since 1975 as an affiliate of the USCC.

Paratore sees the duties of his office as three fold. The first is to work directly with the "grassroots," those individuals seeking to work in mission, referring them to appropriate groups and mission territories. The second is to coordinate the activities of the International Liaison Coalition, a recently born group of a goodly number of mission agencies, communities and orders, whose members gather to discuss common mission problems and programs.

International Liaison fell to these duties by sheer longevity, he noted. Among similar organizations such as the Extension Society and the Papal Volunteers, International Liaison alone survived the turbulence of the late 1960s, he said. It therefore was in a position to assume the mantle of sole mission referent for laymen in this country.

Paratore figures that the average number of referrals made by his office in the course of a month is 25 to 30 people. Of those so referred, he estimates a monthly placement of 8 to 10 people.

Persons interested in working in mission are encouraged to contact International Liaison, in this

diocese through the local office of the Propagation of the Faith.

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St. Joseph's Day Set at St. Jude's

At 7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 18, the eve of St. Joseph's Day, Father John Steger will celebrate Mass at St. Jude's to open a traditional parish family feast. He then will bless the St. Joseph's Table set up in the hall.

the offertory gifts and lead a procession to the table, which will be laden with kinds of Old Country dishes except meat.

The pastor's Mass will be especially for the intentions of his parishioners and all others attending the celebration.

Parishioners portraying the Holy Family will present

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