

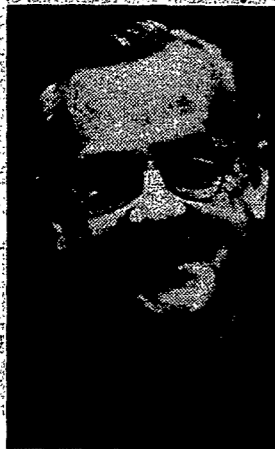
PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Chrism Mass — 1978

Bishop Hogan delivered the following homily last night at the Chrism Mass in Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Tonight as we celebrate this annual Chrism Mass, I am reminded of the old adage that says: "One picture is worth a thousand words." The rich ceremonies and symbols of this Eucharistic Celebration, like all of the ceremonies and symbols of Holy Week, speak to us



more loudly than words. In fact, there are so many symbols that unless we stop and meditate on them, they are lost in a blur. I have decided, therefore, that my words to you this evening should be in the form of a reflection. We must use a few moments to look around, to notice the richness of symbols and soak in their meaning. We must pause to see what the Church presents to us in order that we might deepen our understanding of God's

mysterious plan of salvation. And so, I would ask you to sit back, put both feet on the floor, take a few deep breaths, and allow yourselves to become calm. Permit me to present a few points for your meditation and give you a brief time of silence between the points in order that you might gain inspiration for yourself and for our common work.



Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, upper right, was joined by bishops, priests, religious and laity on the occasion of his ordination as bishop nearly nine years ago.

1. Consider first where we are. This lovely Cathedral is more than a building. It is more than a parish church. It is the symbol of the unity of the People of God. It is the center of the diocese. It is here that we gather as Church — the Bishop and his assistants, the clergy, the faithful People of God. It is here that we celebrate the very heart of our life — sacraments and ministry. And so as we gather, we are conscious that our action is not an individual action limited by the time of this day, or the space of these walls. Tonight we reflect on the entire Body of Christ.

2. God's word has been proclaimed in our midst this evening. We reaffirm once more that the spirit of the Lord is upon us. And we once more hear the reason why the spirit is upon us — in order to bring Good News to the poor. Will this be another hearing of these readings, or will they — at last — change our lives? Do we know that there is Good News? Do we know what Good News is? If so, why is it that after nearly 2,000 years it is still considered shameful to be poor? When will we be ready to become a poor Church? How should we respond tonight to God's Word?

3. Now I would ask you to look around you in this Cathedral. No, I mean really look around — at one another! See that you are not alone. The work of bringing the Good News to the poor is not a task that we undertake by ourselves. We do this as a community

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called to service. As Bishop, I am called upon to use all the talents of the People of God. Each of us has a unique gift to give for building up the Body of Christ. But all of us also have the same gift for this service. That is the gift of PRIESTHOOD. We are all priests offering our service through Christ to God our Father. Some of us are vested in the garments of the ministerial priesthood. But each of us shares in the priesthood of the faithful by reason of our baptism. Think for a few moments about your priesthood. How can you continue to offer your life in the service of God's People? How can you bring Christ to a world that needs him so badly?

4. Meditate with me now on the symbolic meaning of OIL. All of us have gone through a harsh winter. We wonder when it will end. We are so tired of snow and cold. Our hands are sore, our lips are chapped, our bodies ache. How pleasant it would be to heal our worn bodies with a lotion that soothes and heals. Recall how often these oils will be used in our diocese throughout the coming year. They will comfort and heal. They will

be used to show the care and concern of Christ and his Church for the bodily needs of people. They will remove pain and strengthen tired limbs. Think about the fact that in a real way, you will be present in this ministry of oil. Let us ask that God will grant many blessings through this ministry.

5. Finally, let us reflect with gratitude on the great gift that we have at each Mass, the EUCHARIST itself. Again and again, we are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ. Although we are torn by strife within and without the Church, we are still one in the Body of our Lord. We proclaim ourselves once more to be a Eucharistic people. With hearts full of love and peace, we pause to say "Thank you."

We now continue our Chrism Mass celebration. May the Lord who has begun this good work in us, bring it to fulfillment. Amen.

Awareness of Relationship with God

Following is the talk given by Pope Paul VI at his general audience March 1 in Vatican City.

The liturgical period of Lent in which we find ourselves, the period of preparation for Easter, obliges us to return to the consideration of one of its essential aspects, namely, a return to religious awareness, to interior and personal consciousness of our relationship with God. This relationship must be given the place and the function it claims by its very nature. From the very fact of our existence God is necessary for us. He is necessary, furthermore, for our conscience; this is the responsible point, decisive for us. It is precisely this that makes us religious, aware both of the sovereign existence of God, in himself, in his ineffable, but dominant mystery, and of the relationship that unites us with him.

Everything depends on this: the scale of duties, the scale of values; that is, the meaning of life, which Christ confirmed to us and made it possible for us to make it the guiding lamp of our existence. Let us always remember it, with interior joy, with energy, with the interior and practical resolution of making this fundamental faith in God the superior and interior direction of our personality and our activity.

Our "creed," the one especially which we, with the Church today, recite during Sunday Mass, should have a function like that of a pilot of a ship to check whether

*"St. Augustine expresses in two words the divine and human history of the Gospel: mercy and misery"*

the helm is set in the right direction, to confirm it or to change it, if necessary. This verification, this confirmation have their supreme expression precisely at Easter. The usual and popular formula "to make one's Easter duty" has indeed this practical meaning, that of rectifying the course of our life in relation to its supreme orientation, which is the religious one.

Now we all know how this norm, which sums up in itself the wisdom of our temporal life, is neglected and contested today by many people, a great many, unfortunately. The sacredness of human existence, its consistent and essential religious relationship, is contested. What is more, even among those who still admit an ontological relationship between man and God, that is, a religious, existential relationship, there can be noted today a tendency which is called "horizontalist." This tendency neglects the religious element and duty, in order to stress the primacy, and then the sufficiency,

of the social relationship as the supreme end of human activity.

We will certainly not take it upon ourselves to deny the importance, the dignity, the necessity of social duties, in order to depreciate social horizontalism. Social duties have in fact the place of honor, in the sense of service and sacrifice, on the list of human duties, precisely by virtue of what justifies and ennobles them all, namely, the duty of worship and love of God. But these social duties will have from us all the more recognition and activity, the firmer and clearer is the principle from which they draw their raison d'être, which is the religious principle.

We will recall an expression of the Gospel, an expression which seems incidental in a literary sense, and which has for those who understand it the unfathomable riches of perfect human psychology. With reference to the "prodigal son," in St. Luke's account, we are told about the unhappy son who threw away honor and possessions in "loose living." At a certain moment, "he came to himself" and wishes to return to his father's house. With courageous impetuosity, he resolves, "I will arise and go! The conclusion, well known, is a joyful one in which the two protagonists, though they do not admit of comparison, God, the Father, and man the sinner, meet happily.

It is St. Augustine who expresses incisively in two words, incapable of comparison as they are, to sum up the divine and human history of the Gospel: mercy and misery.

This, indeed, is the Gospel; the Lenten Gospel; a triumphal Gospel and a Gospel for everyone; to come to oneself in order to come back to God.