

Pastoral Perspective

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

My Days in Rome

The "ad limina" report which I shared with you in the April 19th issue of the Courier-Journal had been sent to the Consistorial Congregation in Rome two weeks before. The Apostolic Delegate Archbishop Jean Jadot requested a copy for his own use. I can



imagine that he would find it helpful reading prior to his visit to a diocese.

I had asked Father Robert McNamara, our diocesan historian, to help me prepare for my visit by gathering some materials about the history of the "ad limina." His work proved very helpful.

What began as a custom was eventually confirmed by law which required of each Ordinary of a diocese these things: a visit to the basilica of St. Peter and St. Paul, a meeting with the Pope, and a written report. The first legislation for the whole Church was issued by Pope Sixtus V in 1585. For over 300 years this document "Romanus Pontifex" formed the main rule and norm for the visits. The present discipline is found in a decree issued by Pope Pius X in 1909.

Bishop Harrison from Syracuse and I arrived in Rome on April 18 and were met by Father Joseph Hart of our diocese who is doing graduate work in Systematic Theology at the Gregorian University. The next day the Bishops of New York State met with Cardinal Cooke to prepare a greeting and message to Pope Paul. The Holy Father greeted us warmly the next day and spent an hour with us. We were all deeply impressed with his fatherly concern for us. He greeted each of us personally and presented us a package containing rosaries, medals, prayer books and a beautiful volume of photos highlighting the main events of the Holy Year. I was most blessed when he said to me: "Bishop Hogan, you have a very fine diocese and you have two Auxiliary Bishops."

Let me share with you our greeting to the Holy Father:

"Most Holy Father, we deeply appreciate this opportunity of visiting with you. We thank God for the leadership and encouragement that Your Holiness has given to all of us.

"We are pleased to be the first group of bishops from the United States to be received by Your Holiness in this Ad Limina year.

"The Province of New York, Region II, which includes eight dioceses is coterminous with the civil jurisdiction of the State of New York and reflects most of the problems faced by a highly diversified territory with urban, suburban and rural components. The pattern of pastoral care which emerges as a result must necessarily reflect the diversity as well as the unity of our efforts to make the Lord and His Church present, meaningful and effective in the lives of a varied population. We find our strength in the ever growing liturgical life of the Church.

"We might indicate three major overall areas of concern as we strive to care for the needs of the people of New York State. First is the need for the continuing evangelization of our Catholic people; secondly, the extent of the total pastoral service of this large community; thirdly, the relationship of the Church with governmental and other structures in our society which have so great an influence on the lives of Catholic men and women in our area.

"An example of the commitment to the continuing evangelization of the People of God in our area is the dedication of the Church in New York to the goal of total education of our faithful. Through one of the most highly developed systems of Catholic school education — which we are pledged to maintain and enhance — and through our catechetical and religious education programs which seek to touch every member of the Church — the message of the Lord's Gospel will be proclaimed to all the community of the Church and beyond it.

"The multitude of social services which our dioceses provide through Catholic Charities and related agencies is an example of the extent of the total pastoral service which we are called upon to offer. Respect for the rights and the human dignity of every man and woman has moved us deeply into a role both as advocate for the poor and the powerless and as provider of services to families and to community, in the care of children and of the aging, in work with youth agencies and in hospitals and in the broad field of social development. Our people also have a growing concern for the poor of the world and they generously support the mission activity of the Universal Church.

"Of course, the Pastoral Offices in each Diocese must be constantly improved to provide proper service to our parishes and to the various elements and segments of the Catholic population. We believe that in this connection, the work of our Matrimonial Tribunals has been enormously aided by the use of

'He recalled with fondness the memories of his visit to New York and the United Nations. He had observed evidence of deep faith among our people. He encouraged us to be good Bishops and teachers and guides of our people, to work in unity with the See of Peter.'

the so-called "American Procedural Norms." We are all most hopeful that these Norms may be continued and made permanent so that the bond of marriage will be safe-guarded without hampering our efforts to arrive at just and equitable decisions for those whose marriages are accused of nullity.

"Thirdly, as an example of our pastoral concern in matters relating to the government and civil society, Your Holiness is aware of our continuing struggle against the terrible evil of abortion. Thanks be to God, the Catholic Church in our area has spoken clearly and forcefully in favor of the rights of these most powerless creatures, the unborn children, and the people of our Region have united in an ecumenical effort to reverse the inhuman legal decisions and their tragic effects. At the same time we are engaged in revitalized programs of education and pastoral care to counteract the promotion of the abortion mentality in our society.

"During the past five years the bishops of the Province of New York have been increasingly involved in the work of the State Catholic Conference in providing guidance and direction to the Conference and its Committees as they cope with the concerns of the Church in public affairs. Regularly, the bishops meet together by themselves and also with clergy, religious and the lay leaders to discuss pastoral and social issues and to formulate plans of

action. Most recently these meetings have considered such subjects as Communications, the National Catechetical Directory, Youth, the Parish, the pastoral care of the Aging, the Parish and Family Life. Of course, numerous committee meetings take place among our diocesan representatives of Education, Catholic Charities and Health Services who are concerned with the varied services such as I have already mentioned.

"It is through this close association and communication among the bishops and all of the faithful that we hope to further develop the strength and influence of the Church in New York State in the service of the Lord and all our brothers and sisters in His one human family.

"Most Holy Father your courageous witness of faith and love confirms us in our efforts to fulfill our pastoral responsibilities and once again we express our heartfelt gratitude. We humbly ask for the Apostolic Blessing of Your Holiness upon us and our people."

The Holy Father spoke to us in English and in Italian. He apologized for his command of English. Yet, we found it clear and precise. The parts in Italian were translated by a California priest who had been with the Pope for 12 years. As in recent audiences with Bishops of other countries, his remarks struck a balance of words of encouragement and of caution. He recalled with fondness the memories of his visit to New York and the United Nations. He had observed evidence of deep faith among our people. He encouraged us to be good Bishops and teachers and guides of our people, to work in unity with the See of Peter. He cautioned about abuses that come from failure to follow the Papal Norms for general absolution and for First Penance and Communion. He concluded with his blessing for us and our people and told us that he had offered his Mass that morning for the Church of New York State.

Before our audience we had a concelebrated liturgy at the Tomb of Peter, and on Friday we met again to concelebrate at the Tomb of Paul. I offered both Masses for all of you whom I love so deeply. I prayed, too, for the people of Italy who are living in the tension of political unrest. I am sure the daily papers have alerted you to this situation.

Thanks again to Father Hart for the added inspiration of a visit to the Missionaries of Charity (Mother Teresa of Calcutta is their foundress) who give such living witness to the Gospel in their care for the homeless of Rome. Each evening they search out the destitute who often sleep in garbage bags in the alleys and doorways. The Sisters bring them to their convent to give them food, lodging and medical care. They are an embarrassment to the government which should be providing for them. The Sisters have as their own home a converted chicken house. Many of our American students are helping the Sisters in this great mission. Among them is our own Father Hart. If you can find your way to help this great apostolate, the address is:

Sister Frederick
Missionarie Della Carita Di Calcutta
Salita S. Gregorio Al Celio, 1
00184 ROME, ITALY

I conclude my report with an expression of gratitude:

To the Lord who accompanied me on the journey and brought me safely home.

To all of my Pastoral Family who prepared the 'ad limina' report and the secretaries who typed it.

To the management and staff of the Courier-Journal who so generously published the report and mailed it to every Bishop in the country.

To all whose generous offerings made the trip possible — especially the priests of the diocese.

To all of my people who through the Christian witness of your lives really wrote the report.

Pope Paul's column this week appears on page 6.