

Pastoral Perspective

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Three Rs for Summertime

For many of us, the weeks of July and August promise a little letup from the pace and pressures of our ordinary schedules. The welcoming sun, the fresh outdoor air offer a real opportunity to "catch our breath," to renew our spirits, to get a new perspective on our winter-weary lives. So I want to propose "Three R's" for Summertime; three ways to refresh ourselves during this season: Rest, Reflection and Re-creation.



REST — Some among us have the gift and good fortune to plan adequate rest-time into our daily schedules. Most of us, however, do not. Rest, real physical and spiritual repose, for most of us, is a nonentity.

Time for sleep gets crowded out by over-activity and noisy surroundings, and on those too-infrequent occasions when we do get a space of time for physical rest, our minds and spirits are so burdened with cares that our efforts to rest become instead a fitful, restless experience. It is interesting that this is not only a contemporary problem. The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes records the frustrating observation that there is no rest for humans "day or night" — and it does no good to seek since "one never finds." (8:16f)

The Bible, as a whole, however, communicates a strong call to rest, to "Sabbathtime." This call comes out of the simple law of nature, implanted in us by God, that every living creature that works needs the refreshment and restoration that rest provides. From the very beginning of their history, the chosen people were instructed to "sanctify the Sabbath" (Ex. 20:8), to set aside a day of rest and consecrate it to the Lord. This command held even during the harvest-time which was a season of vital activity for them. Rest, thought of in this way, is more than a mere stopping of ordinary business. It is an integral part of our total life of creative activity. The observance of rest is an imitation of God who, after He had completed the work of creation, rested on the seventh day. So, to rest is to reveal our likeness to God and this rest becomes a sign of our special relationship with God as His own people. It is a sign that we trust him as a Father, that we know we are dependent on Him for our life energy, and that we cannot do our life work well without using our time as he would want us to.



My own experience testifies that a lack of rest, in fact, causes tension and confusion which makes wise and peaceful response to God very difficult on a daily basis. Thus, without a healthy rhythm of rest we cannot expect to carry on the work of God in a manner worthy of Him.

REFLECTION — An important dimension of any time of rest is REFLECTION. To stop is not enough; to stop and look at what we are doing with our activity is what is necessary. So many sights and sounds continually barrage our consciousness that we often are not even aware of what we see and hear. Without periodically taking a good look at ourselves in the light of God's truth we gradually lose awareness of our real goals and the best means to attain them. We get caught

up in our projects and businesses and involved in our various relationships in a way that clouds our ability to make sound judgments and keep our priorities in order. Reflection time is time to stand before the mirror of God's wisdom and test what we see in our lives — in our external behavior and our internal attitudes — against the vision that Jesus gave us in His life. How do our lives look in the light of His? When we are truly at rest, we can reflect on some of these questions:

- Who am I called by God to be at this time in the given circumstance of my life?
- How do I use most of my time? Is it consistent with what God wants of me?
- Who are the people in my life that are most important to me? Who am I most responsible to?
- What are the activities that flow from my responsibilities? To my family? To my associates at work? To my various friends and support communities? To God's people who are in need?
- Do I provide adequately for my personal needs?
- Develop my best gifts? Allow myself opportunity to maintain my strength, both physically and spiritually, in the midst of my activities?
- Do I give myself adequate time to re-create? To play? To celebrate life?

RE-CREATION — Reflection on our lives invariably brings us around to the realization that we need to involve some kind of playtime in our lives. We need to travel to new places — places where we go only because we want to, not because we have to. We need to be with people we enjoy, people who allow us to be ourselves and to lay aside our professional roles. We need to laugh and talk nonsense. We need to waste time, to do things that business never allows. We need to experience ourselves in different relationship with the people that we live with. We need to play games, to be fanciful, to forget our adult concerns. We need to lay aside our inhibitions and our fears. We need to be like children at times, to be light of heart and unaffected in the ways we act before others. We need to enjoy, to celebrate all that we have and are in our lives as God's children. The wise and holy Abraham Heschel once wrote: "To be really alive, to be holy, one needs discipline, artistry, and a little foolishness."

Let this Summertime help us to be really alive!

Unborn Life Is Sacred!

Following is the text of Pope Paul's address at a general audience on June 7.

Two thoughts are in our spirit today: the vision of St. Peter's Basilica, as full as a joyful hive of children, boys and girls, innocent and happy; youth; and then the oppressive memory that just yesterday the law legalizing abortion has gone into force in Italy.



We cannot shirk the duty of calling the negative reservation regarding this law in favor of abortion, which, as we said, has become operative also in Italy. It is a grave offense against God's law on this extremely important subject of the defense due to the innocent life of the child right from the mother's womb. We will merely recall now what the Church, the interpreter of the natural law on this point, and of the divine law as always has authoritatively affirmed: "In-

nocent life, in whatever condition it may be, is from the first instant of its existence protected from any direct attack. This is a fundamental right of the human person" as our venerated predecessor, Pius XII states, and as our Vicar General for Rome, Cardinal Ugo Poletti, reminds us in his statement of yesterday. It will be the duty of all, and especially of those who profess

to be Catholics, to obey this fundamental teaching with the observance due to it.

This teaching is grave, but it is still, and more than ever, a teaching of love. Of love for human life, considered in-itself. The authority that Christ, and the Church with him, claims over human existence, is a profession of esteem for the life of man in his littleness, in his childhood, in his innocence. Who does not remember the episode, so beautiful, so kind, so evangelical, narrated by the evangelist St. Mark with the usual forcefulness: "And they were bringing children to him (Jesus), that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them."

Nor does St. Matthew fail to stress the sympathy, the affectionate preference of the Lord for children. Listen: "At that time Jesus declared, 'I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou has hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will . . .'"

This thought, which reverses the primacy of the great in favor of the humble, is forcefully expressed by

the Blessed Virgin in the song of the Magnificat: "He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away." This thought returns in the dramatic scene of the Last Judgement: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world . . . Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

Real pity for the difficulties and troubles of human life does not consist in suppressing the one who is the fruit either of sin or of human sorrow. It consists rather in relieving, consoling and alleviating suffering, misery, the shame of weakness, or of human passion: but never killing human life! This we ought to reflect on when confronted with the sad and ignoble recourse to legalized abortion.

We must remind the young, everyone, of the dangers and disasters of passion replacing love; and of the inviolable dignity of human life, even in its most secret and humble stages; and promote every possible and worthy assistance for needy motherhood. Everything that is done in this order of love pity and saving of the life of even one of the least and perhaps unhappiest of our brothers or our sisters in "humanity," Christ, let us remember, will count it as done to himself!