

Pastoral Perspective

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Simple Christian Living

The following of Jesus, while it is every Christian's vocation, is not confined to hearing and putting into practice His teachings. More comprehensive than that, we who follow must also embrace Christ's whole lifestyle. And if there is one word to describe Jesus' own way of living, I think it would be "simplicity."



We live in a world that is far from simple. Complex machinery balances our checkbooks and monitors our hearts. Some of the many meetings I attend make the search for a simple solution into a monumental problem. A maze of red tape and endless forms are to be filled out whenever we want to purchase a car, buy insurance, or correct an error in computer bookkeeping. As citizens of a highly technologized world, we have lost touch with the earth; we need to rediscover the simple things of life, those ways of living that make the world a good and healthy place to be, ways that are radically Christian.

Take love as an example. Love is simple. To open one's arms in respect, acceptance and welcome is probably the highest Christian virtue. Jesus could dine comfortably in the homes of wealthy Pharisees or of thieving tax collectors because of the simple love in his heart. How complicated fear, prejudice and hatred are! One fear fosters another, and both feed the insatiable hunger prejudice creates, a hunger to be reinforced and perpetuated. Hatred breeds hatred and fosters more fear. Those who do not love twist themselves into a knot that prevents them from discovering the richness and giftedness of each person.

Laughter is another example. Laughter is simple. To take with a grain of salt the world around us, but



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especially ourselves, opens the way to an honest relationship with God. The story of Jesus' welcoming the little children is the perfect illustration. The mothers and the apostles were too complicated by selfish concerns and rationalizations: "have him touch my child," "he is too tired." But Jesus and the children can just laugh with each other because they are free to meet each other just the way they are. Laughter is simple; grumpiness, orneriness, selfish insistence on one's own way is a tightly knotted ball of string that only feeds our unhappiness and makes us lonely.

A third simplicity is truth. To live and tell the truth is simple. Dishonesty, cheating, competitiveness, double standards and trickery require a complex interworking to keep the deceit from being discovered, and eventually one finds oneself chained: caught, and with no way to escape. But the truth makes us free: the truth of Jesus who came to reveal the hidden face of God and who reveals our hearts in the simplicity of his love.

Finally, trust is simple, the kind of trust Jesus had in His Father. His divinity was not grasped at; rather he emptied himself in trust that we might be rich. Distrust and protecting one's own turf is a complicated and exhausting business that gains a person only repeated frustration and worries. The lilies of the field are splendid enough by relying totally on the Father's care.

Sometimes when I see how complicated we make life for ourselves, I understand why Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and compared the crowds to sheep without a shepherd. If only we could discover the simplicity of living, the simplicity of true Christian living: a love that embraces friend and stranger alike, the laughter that understands with a compassionate heart how funny we humans really are, the truth that reveals Life's deepest secret, and a trust that "for those who love God, all things work together for good." (Romans 8:28)

More Opinions

From 14
Differs With
Columnist

Editor:

Despite a long accumulation of differences with Father Paul J. Cuddy, quite unrelated to his ongoing debates with Jesuit Father O'Malley, I fear nothing to lose in rebuttal. He cannot cast me with heedless priests - I have never been in a seminary. Or fallen away priests - I have never read the National Catholic Reporter. With Vandals who rob the faithful of historic rituals - a good traditionalist would not qualify. Or choir directors, good or bad, progressive or otherwise - not guilty of burning hymn books, with or without pastoral permissions.

I cannot prove it, to borrow a line from "On the Right Side," Courier-Journal, 6-28-78, but writers Father Cuddy and William Buckley have much in common besides the titles of their columns and a reverence for convention. I find that Father Cuddy evokes many more or less happy recollections of the church of my youth: Roman

priests in Roman collars called Father, nuns in flowing black habits with yard-long beads called sister. The Notre Dame Victory March, Al Smith, novenas, indulgences, Forty Hours, Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, no meat on Friday, Easter Duty, Monsignor Fulton Sheen and the Catholic Hour, Holy Name and Altar Societies, Pius XI, the Baltimore Catechism, Latin Masses, Confession, Communion on the tongue, Communion rails, Lourdes and Fatima, John F. Kennedy.

Each conveyed a special meaning, yet few spoke beyond a generation or two. Most were unknown for the first ten centuries while none reached the vastness of the earth untouched by Roman Legions or Roman missionaries through all the centuries - Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and, more pointedly, the contemporary world where conventional symbols are meaningless to millions.

One must question the wisdom of resurrecting signs which are ungrounded in the customs and beliefs of a people. How few could stand the test. Reconciliation, Eucharist, the Sign of the Cross, for example.

What about the secular world? Are there marks of deeds which cause Christians, Catholics in particular, to be distinguishable, to be known? Apart from the flourishing Communist parties of Catholic Europe, for instance. From the universal agonies and guilts of humankind - extermination of the Indian, black slavery, the Holocaust? From two world wars including Hiroshima and Nagasaki? From Vietnam? From current stockpiling of nuclear armaments foretelling a final holocaust?

There is hope. Set in contrast to old ways, we have in our hands the radical guidelines of Vatican II. Long in preparation through the writings of popes, bishops and theologians dating to the days of Leo XIII, the Council was neither an accident nor the brainchild of an aging John XXIII, its disparagers not withstanding.

New symbols will evolve to proclaim the Good News in word and deed to all ends of the earth. New signs will proclaim our love for one another - and for humankind.

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Latin Not
Universal

Editor:

I appreciate the Latin language as much as anybody and enjoy its use even in the Latin liturgy when pastorally feasible, but I certainly am tired of the fallacious argument of its "universality" as advanced again by Father Paul J. Cuddy in his column of July 19.

There are millions of Catholics, in union with Rome, who are not of the Roman rite and for whom Latin has never served as a symbol of universal unity. There are, for example, the Copts of Egypt (who use Coptic and Arabic as their liturgical languages), the Ethiopians (Ge'ez) and the Syrians (Syriac, Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish). When visiting Lourdes, how "thrilled" would a Malakanese Catholic (who prays in Malayam Indian and Syriac) be to recite the Creed in Latin with his co-religionists? Or a Greek? Or a Russian?

Clearly, Latin is not a universal symbol of Catholicism, but only of

the Roman rite, which is but one of at least 15 major rites of the Church. To equate the Roman rite with Catholicism on the grounds that Latins constitute the largest group numerically is the height of ignorance, chauvinism and outright disunity and disenfranchises millions of Eastern (and non-Roman Western) Catholics, including the Ukrainians right here in the Rochester diocese. The Vatican II Decree on the Eastern Churches clearly states in Article 3: "These churches are of equal rank, so that none of them is superior to the other..."

In Father Cuddy's case, the Vietnamese Catholic recognized the Latin language only because French colonial missionaries of the Roman rite were the ones to establish Christianity in Indochina. Had those missionaries been Chaldeans or Melkites or Armenians, the Vietnamese would never equate Latin with the Church but would more than likely have used their vernacular from the beginning.

Now, as far as using Latin in the Roman rite is concerned, the myth is that it was outlawed by Vatican II. But Articles 36, 54, 63,

101 and 116 of the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy clearly state that Latin (and Gregorian chant) are to be given "pride of place in liturgical services." Let Father Cuddy remember that the "Vandals who took over much of the Liturgy of the Church" were the ordained clergy. I find it difficult to believe that it was the choir directors who established the use of the vernacular as the norm.

Even though Latin was not outlawed, however, it is questionable whether its general use by most American Catholics best serves their pastoral needs. A reasonable person cannot be convinced that "Scapulis suis obumbravit tibi Dominus, et sub pennis ejus sperabis: scuto circumdabit te veritas ejus" will offer more spiritual comfort to the average American than "The Lord will cover you with his shoulders, and under his wings you shall find refuge; his truth shall surround you with a shield." It seems evident, then, that there can be only two reasons for the general use of Latin: 1. nostalgia, or 2. exclusivity by an educated elite.

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