

Pastoral Perspective

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

The Suffering of a Servant

Two of the feasts we celebrate this week remind us that the Cross is an essential part of our lives as Christians. On Thursday we note the Triumph of the Cross and on Friday the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. From the day of our Baptism, we enter into the mystery of Christ's own death/resurrection. It is a pattern that we live each day.



To affirm that the Cross is a constant part of our lives does not mean we are a joyless people, nor that we are to seek suffering... rather that it is a part of the cycle of Christian living. We never have to look hard for the cross. It is present each time we say "yes" to others and die just a little to our selfishness. Each time we give ourselves truly in service of others... the Cross is always there.

Inasmuch as we are committed to service, we must expect suffering and not try to run from it. Pope John Paul I gives us a beautiful witness of the resignation to suffering that comes with being the Servant of the "servants of God." He began his first public talk speaking from the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica. In his off-the-cuff description of his election he recalled the encouragement of one of his colleagues seated next to him: "Be strong. If the Lord give a heavy burden, he also gives the strength to bear it." The new Pope said that he chose John because Pope John consecrated him and because he succeeded Pope John in Venice. He chose Paul because: "He showed me and the whole world how to love, serve, work and suffer for the Church of Christ."

In his first formal message to the College of Cardinals and to the world, Pope John Paul I speaks both of the awesomeness of his ministry and of his faith in the Lord's presence and guidance as he takes up this task:

"We are still overwhelmed at the thought of this tremendous ministry for which we have been chosen: As Peter, we seem to have stepped out on dangerous waters. Battered by a strong wind, we turn toward Christ crying: 'Lord, save me' (Mt. 14:30). Again we hear his voice encouraging and, at the same time, lovingly reminding us: 'Why do you doubt, oh you of little faith.'"

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"If human forces alone cannot be adequate to the task before us, the help of almighty God who guides his Church throughout the centuries in the midst of great conflicts and opposition will certainly not desert us, this humble and present-day servant of the "servants of God."

spiration and demands in charity our constant prayers for him and for the Church.

In our own way, on our own journey, in our own tasks, each one of us is called to serve the needs of others... to reach out with the care, forgiveness and healing of Christ. In doing so each of us embraces the Cross. For in dying with the Lord, we shall live with Him forever.

The example of our new chief Pastor gives us in-

More Opinions

From 4 Teachings Not Debatable

Editor:

Father Albert Shamon views the intercommunion positions of Father Cuddy and Father O'Malley as a debate, and overrules the Church by offering "a practical solution to a sticky question." (C-J, 8-9-78). Father William Shannon (C-J, 8-23-78) rejects Church teachings on Original Sin by elevating incompatible opinions of his theological peers. The general failures of priests to serve Our Lord by presenting His Church teachings and to correct erroneous teachings of some priests and religious education teachers, have been more devastating to themselves and the faith of many Catholics than the collective forces of anti-Catholic bigotry and zealotry atheisms.

Neither priests nor even bishops are empowered to permit intercommunion at marriage encounters, charismatic assemblies or other events. Only a bishop can give the approval that enables a non-Catholic to receive Holy Communion in accordance with the magisterium teachings. Priests must present Church teachings, not the products of their heads. The Church Teachings on original sin are rooted

in Scripture (Rom. 5:12-19). Pope Paul VI teaches that original sin, unlike actual sin, "is human nature so fallen, stripped of the grace that clothes it, injured in its own natural powers and subjected to the dominion of death, that is transmitted to all men, and it is in this sense that every man is born in sin. (The Credo of the People of God.)

Contrary to Father Shannon's inferences from the Christian burial rites for non-baptized infants, the Church insists on prompt Baptism, because the Church does not presume that God's infinite mercy includes the redemptive gift of supernatural beatitude. Some Christians sincerely believe that God's mercy precludes the existence of Hell even though Jesus teaches this reality at least 25 times.

Our Lord did not promise to overrule Church teachings and make popular opinions binding, nor to re-label scandalous disobediences as acts of childlike humility. He warned against rationalizing: "Do not swear by your head, you cannot make a single hair black or white. Say 'Yes, yes,' 'no, no,' and whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one." (St. Matt. 5:36, 37.)

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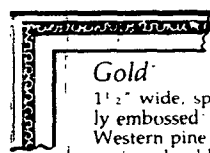
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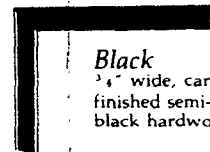
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