

Papal Delegate Stresses Spirit of Vatican II

Excerpts from an address by Archbishop Jean Jadot, apostolic delegate to the United States, at the meeting of the bishops last week.



JEAN JADOT

John Paul II delivered his first speech as pope of Rome and apostolic delegate to the United States at the meeting of the bishops last week.

"Above all," he said, "I want to insist on the importance of the Second Vatican Council. It is a formal declaration that it be put into effect." The Holy Father insisted: "We consider our primary duty that of promoting, in a prudent but energetic action, the most effective execution of the Council and the directives of the Council. Above all, we must develop the development of a proper mentality. First it is necessary to place oneself in harmony with the Council. One must put into practice what was stated. What was implicit should be made explicit in the light of the experimentation that followed and in connection with emerging circumstances."

At the heart of the Holy Father's first message is the call to renew and strengthen meditation on the nature and mission of the Church, particularly as set forth in the Magna Carta of the Council, Lumen Gentium. The Pope stressed that the Council Fathers "urged a deeper reflection on the 'expressions of collegiality' which 'with Peter and under Peter' binds together the bishops."

A primary concern of the Holy Father is that fidelity to the Second Vatican Council characterize the Church. In speaking of bishops, clergy and religious, the Pope spoke about the laity: "For the faithful, as the word itself indicates, fullness should be a natural responsibility of being Christian. They should profess their faith with a prompt and loyal mind. They should witness both by obedience to

a service station, a social gathering or a political campaign) where only through them can she become the salt of the earth... Every layperson, by virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him or her, is at the same time a witness and a loving instrument of the mission of the Church itself, that is, of Christ himself.

Vatican II stresses episcopal collegiality. It also recommends a greater participation of priests, religious and laity in the activities of the Church.

This is seen in the liturgy, religious education, parish and diocesan life, charitable activities, social programs of the Church and ecumenical ventures. Such participation also embraces evangelization and the promotion of Christian values in all secular pursuits. It means experiencing the trials of seeking to assure justice and peace in the world and creating a public order open to the spiritual and religious dimensions of humanity.

This intelligent and dedicated participation is often called "shared responsibility." In all honesty, one must acknowledge that the expression and, even more, the reality behind it sometimes cause difficulty. And perhaps with good reason. The best of intentions may not be accompanied by realism, patience or a clear theological perspective. Such intentions may give way to an aggressiveness provoked by frustrations coming from different sources altogether.

It can happen that conciliar directives concerning the nature, the mission and the activity of the laity as well as their place and legitimate role within the structures of the Church may be little known or even distorted. We do well to read again and study the documents of Vatican II. They should be read in their entirety and not only in a fragmentary way.

We need a clear un-

derstanding of the nature of the Church. It is at once a spiritual reality and a social institution.

Many difficulties associated with shared responsibility disappear once an ecclesiology more faithful to Vatican II becomes the basis for the involvement of the laity and religious. Such a lucid ecclesiology seems needed in the United States. This country has a cherished tradition of democracy. In such a system, there is the temptation to employ the political process as a sole value. Especially does this occur when large groups are invited to participation in government or when the various intermediary communities assume proper responsibility in accord with the principle of subsidiarity.

Political sciences and sociology shed light on the way to proceed. They search out the rules which govern the activity of human society. But when it is a question of the Church, one may never lose sight of the divine plan: "the Church in Christ is a kind of sacrament that is at the same time the sign and the means 1) of intimate union with God, and 2) of the unity of all mankind."

The Church is not a political system. Rather, it is the seed and the beginning of the Kingdom of God. Its end is not the social order as such. It looks to holiness. According to Gaudium et Spes, "to the extent that earthly progress can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God... For here grows the body of a new human family, a body which even now is able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age."

Problems also arise when we have to determine how to set collaboration in motion. We must avoid the pitfalls. Think, for example, of "rubber stamp" committees or those which exist only on paper, of working committees which

take up time and energy better used elsewhere, of the endless meetings, of the dissolution of personal responsibility in favor of committees not sufficiently representative or competent, of bureaucratic indecision, etc.

After a period of trial, structural reforms will obviously become necessary. But, what is important, as John Paul II said, is "the development of a proper mentality."

Allow me to express my deep conviction that shared responsibility requires as a prerequisite the development of some basic moral attitudes. Reading attentively Lumen Gentium, especially paragraph 37, we discover enlightening directives. The Fathers of the Council suggest five qualities to be cultivated in the Church: truth, courage, prudence, reverence and charity.

With experience, a natural product of age, the competence of the laity will render precious service. For, according to Lumen Gentium, "Every layperson should openly reveal to his pastor his needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which befits a child of God and a brother or sister in Christ. Any individual person, by reason of the knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which he may enjoy, is permitted and sometimes even obliged to express his opinion on things which concern the good of the Church. When occasions arise, let this be done through the agencies set up by the Church for this purpose."

Manifestly, the Fathers of the Council refer here to parish councils and to other bodies where people meet with bishops and priests. "A great many benefits are to be hoped for from the familiar dialogue between the laity and their pastors... In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each one of its members, can more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world."

The prudence recommended by the Fathers of the Council is not the kind of fearful and timid precaution that delays a decision or its execution. It is rather the cardinal virtue that Aquinas regarded as one of the principal sources of the moral life.

We are doing our best to resolve these difficult problems. I suggest that we also place them in the hands of Our Lady. At the wedding feast of Cana, the mother of Jesus delicately intervened in the "decision-making process" with great finesse due not only to her motherly heart and her feminine insight but also to her spirit of faith. She did not hesitate to state the situation as it was, to rouse attention to a human problem: "they have no more wine." She recognized the right of her Son to make the decision without formalizing it when Jesus responded to her: "woman, how does this concern of yours involve me? My hour has not yet come." But she courageously suggested a solution. With reverence she facilitated its implementation: "Do whatever he tells you."



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Rebirth At 96

Father Richard F. Wagner, a Josephite missionary stationed in Mobile, Alabama, congratulates Mrs. Emma McAbay shortly after she was baptized at the age of 96. Her grandmother was born in 1890, lived in slavery and died at the age of 105. Father Wagner, a Rochester native is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Wagner of Wyandham Road.

Papal Seal Will Remain Same

Vatican City (RNS) — The papal seal for Pope John Paul II will remain essentially the same as the coat-of-arms of the pontiff used as Cardinal Archbishop of Cracow, Poland, the Vatican announced.

The papal seal, which bears an image of the triple pontifical crown and the keys of St. Peter, is intended above all to be an expression of "the

central mystery of Christianity, that of the Redemption," the Vatican explained.

The seal contains a large, off-center cross and a capital "M" in its lower right hand corner. The "M" is meant to recall "the presence of the Madonna beneath the cross and her special participation in the Redemption," according to the Vatican announcement.

Speech Clinic

Special tests designed to detect communication problems in children less than three year old will be given Nov. 29 in the Nazareth College Speech and Hearing Clinic. Two sessions, 10 a.m. until noon, and 1-4 p.m. are free and open to the public. Sister Mary Clare Torpey, clinic director, said that pre-

speech skills develop in the first year of life, and tests can determine whether they are developing properly. Other tests for children one to three show whether speech skills are emerging normally. Appointments may be made by calling 586-2525, ext. 367, weekday mornings.

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