

Editorials

Help on Way

A letter elsewhere on this page points up the fact that Christmas, that is the celebration of Christ's birth, just isn't allowed in some places on this earth. Needless to say, that is a very unfortunate situation.

And what makes it worse, it is only one example of lack of religious freedom on this planet. Freedom of Faith, a new ecumenical organization concerned with such injustices, has pointed out five deprivations of freedom.

As one might expect, two of the five come from the Soviet Union — the refusal to give permission to a group in the village of Hotovitz in the Ukraine to hold worship services in the church, and the recent arrest of the leader of the All Union Church of True and Free Adventists.

A case in Argentina concerns the government's banning of the Jehovah's Witnesses by executive decree. The fourth case involves a government shutdown of a Roman Catholic radio station and a

publication owned by the Prelature of Malaybalay, the Philippines. The fifth case deals with the recent sentences of three to five years given to two Presbyterian ministers in South Korea for criticizing the government of President Chung Hee.

If protesting such policies seems useless, we have a suspicion that help is on the way in one Pope John Paul II who in our humble opinion will attempt to mobilize world opinion against deprivation of human rights.

The latest indication of this direction comes from the pontiff's own words in announcing his reason for coming to this hemisphere for the CELAM meeting in Puebla, Mexico.

According to Pamela Mendels of Religious News Service in Rome, the pope said one of his reasons was that half of the world's Catholics live in Latin America. And it must be remembered that CELAM will discuss the social problems of the area's 370 million Catholics, many of whom live under government oppression.

If this pope is going to be a highly visible and political pontiff, as we are guessing, then CELAM would be an ideal forum for any promulgation in support of human rights. Think about it.

We have an idea that Pope John Paul II intends to mobilize that vast bloc of people the world over who believe in human rights but who are too fragmented by national, religious and sociological interests to represent much of a threat to the dictators and their ilk.

If we are right, then it should follow that totalitarian leaders, Communist, fascist and otherwise, will be spending a great deal more time on the defensive than has been their style to date.

The Censors

Report from Cracow: A Christmas message from Pope John Paul II to the people of his home archdiocese was edited by Polish Communist censors, according to the deputy editor of the Catholic diocesan newspaper of Cracow.

The editor, Krzysztof Kozlowski, said the censors had excised all references in the message to Poland's patron, St. Stanislaus of Cracow, long a national symbol.

Kozlowski said he could not understand why the references were censored.

Enough to nettle one, isn't it? Almost as bad as Vatican worriers censoring messages of Pope John Paul I before printing them in the Vatican Observer.

Fitting

Thanks to Father Alvin Illig, executive director of the U.S. Bishops Committee on Evangelization for this ponderable thought:

"The Church exists for sinners, not for angels."

Word for Sunday

By Father Albert Shamon

Epiphany — Lighting The Way

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mt. 2:1-12. (R1) Is. 60:1-6. (R2) Eph. 3:2-3, 5-6.

Next Sunday is the great feast of Epiphany. "Epiphany" means "to manifest," "to show." To see in the dark one needs light. A star lighted the way to Christ for wise men, the Gentiles.

The first reading depicts Jerusalem as a city all lit up. Many a time I have flown at night. On the plane I always try to sit near a window to be able to look out. At night one cannot see much until he hears a city. You can first spot it by a glow of light that punctuates the darkness, like a sunburst. Then as the plane flies over the city, it appears like a Christmas tree lit by a thousand tiny colored lights. Isaiah described Jerusalem like that, shining in the glory of the Lord amid the enshrouding darkness.

His image reminded me of still another happening. I have read stories of travelers losing their way in a dense woods, wandering aimlessly in stygian darkness. When almost at the point of despair, they chance upon a gleam of light. They hurry toward it and discover it comes from a forester's cottage. What joy! What jubilation! They know they are now saved. For the Jews exile in Babylon was darkness. When Isaiah wrote, this exile had ended, some of the exiled had returned, and Jerusalem was being rebuilt. For Isaiah, this city rebuilt was lighting a beacon on a mountain, beckoning Israel's sons and daughters to return home from afar. But Isaiah also foresaw the Gentiles

coming to her, bringing riches and proclaiming the praises of God. Only now, the new Jerusalem is the Church and the path to her is by the light of faith.

St. Paul in the second reading speaks of the Gentiles' conversion as "God's secret plan." Sometimes we may wonder why it was so hard for the Jews to believe that God meant salvation also for the Gentiles. Until a few decades ago, was it not hard for most Americans to give equality to the blacks? Yet racial prejudice is hardly a hundred years old. Think of the Jews. For nearly 2,000 years God had spoken to them alone! For them, He crushed mighty Egypt, annihilated cruel Assyria, toppled the towering turrets of Babylon. If deep-seated prejudice can be spawned in a hundred years, can we not understand how God's "favoritism" could have fostered Jewish exclusivism?

To hammer away this adamant bias against the Gentiles, God raised up Paul. In a letter probably written while he was in prison for daring to bring a Gentile into the Temple precincts (Acts 21:2ff), Paul bluntly insisted: "The Gentiles are now co-heirs with the Jews." The first Council of the Church was called to make it clear that Gentiles did not have to become Jews first to be saved.

Matthew, who wrote long after St. Paul, told the story of the wise men to teach the same truth — namely, that God wills the salvation of all men, even the Gentiles! Matthew foreshadowed in this story what would happen to Christ: most of the leaders of the Chosen People would reject Him; whereas sinners and pagans, represented by the wise men, would accept Him!

How grateful ought we to be to God who chose His people, not to exclude us, but to cause through them the Light to arise that was to enlighten all men!

and Opinions

Christmas Locked Out

Editor:

There is no Christmas in Communist occupied nations!

A. Zmuidzinas
Rasa Krokys
L. Ismanas
Pauline Klimas

Missioner Thanks Bishop

Editor:

I was saddened to learn that your fine bishop, the Most Rev. Joseph L. Hogan, was about to retire. His stepping down will be a loss not only to the people of Rochester but to Catholic missions scattered throughout North and South America.

Bishop Hogan is a "mission-minded" man, who never forgot Our Lord's injunction to spread the Gospel. We of the

Edmundite Southern Missions had particular reason to be grateful for his interest and support. He came down to visit our Alabama missions on four separate occasions, most recently in April 1977. And every time he did so, he left us renewed in spirit and readier to do God's will in reaching out to those in need.

Through the years, Sisters from your diocese have been the mainstay of our work in Selma, Ala. They staffed Good Samaritan Hospital, ran St. Elizabeth's School and helped manage the Mission Office. Today there are eight Sisters from Rochester (seven Sisters of St. Joseph and one Sister of Mercy) working with us both in Selma and in our missions along the Gulf Coast. Every one of them speaks highly of Bishop Hogan as a spiritual leader.

Moreover, a lot of our strongest lay supporters are also from your diocese. This is further evidence of

the impact this "Mission-minded" bishop has had on his flock.

Let me close by expressing once more our gratitude to Bishop Hogan for all he has done, and our hope that in his retirement he will find renewed health and all the other blessings he deserves.

Father Paul Morin, SSE
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Give Help To Jailed

Editor:

In recent years much has been said about the need to protect the civil rights of institutionalized citizens, including those confined in nursing homes, mental hospitals, schools for the mentally retarded, juvenile detention facilities, jails and prisons, resulting in various legislative proposals to upgrade institutional conditions.

Whatever may come of such proposals, the

loneliness that prevails in these facilities cannot be legislated away. An Attica prison inmate and a penal of mine often writes of how prison is "a gloomy, depressing place." He painfully recalls the sight of a big, 6 foot, 2 inches tall guy who breaks down and cries like a baby because he is lonely and fearful, to illustrate his point that "a prison is people, not just brick and mortar and iron bars."

He also believes that institutional reform "cannot be achieved without the personal involvement of ordinary citizens." Such a message is important because so much despair is the result of confined people being removed from the lives of others.

Citizens who extend themselves on behalf of institutionalized people will find tremendous personal satisfaction and will contribute towards alleviating a tragic situation which prevails today.

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Guidelines

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Expressions of opinions should be brief, no longer than 1½ pages, typed, double-spaced, with names and addresses.

We reserve the right to edit as to length, offensive words, libelous statements, or to reject altogether. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and letters will reflect the writer's own style.

We encourage readers to submit opinions but since we try to print letters from as many different contributors as possible we will publish no more than one letter a month from the same individual.

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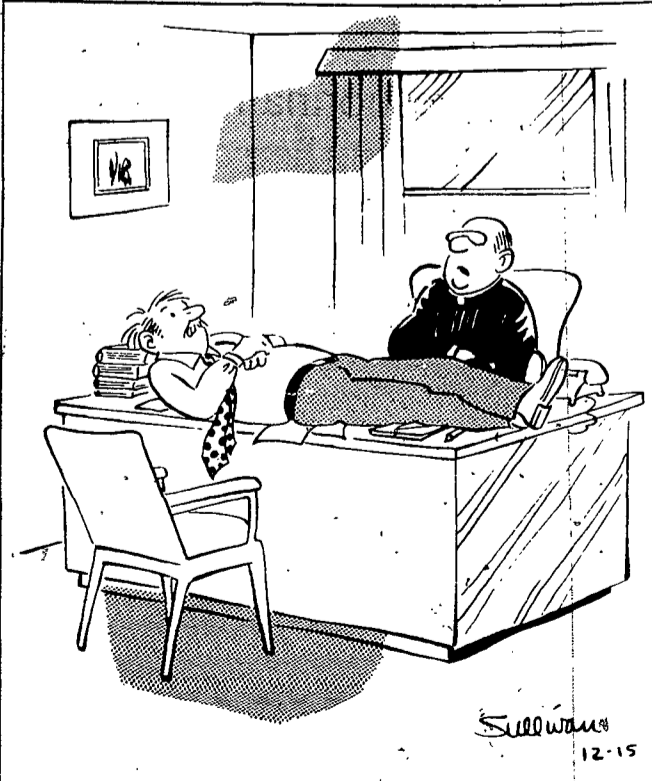
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"I APPRECIATE YOUR CONFIDENCE, MR. LOOMIS, BUT I'M NOT A PSYCHIATRIST."