

Contemplation Is Secret of Renewal

Following is excerpted from Pope John Paul II's recent address to a group of women religious in Nagasaki.

It is very true to say that in this great country with its teeming millions of hard-working people, the Church is like a mustard seed, or the little yeast that a woman places in several measures of flour until the whole dough is leavened. Your role is less conspicuous and more hidden than in many countries where Catholicism is more widespread; but it is no less important even though the methods of evangelization have to be very different.

In this situation, the testimony of your lives takes on a particular importance and value: even though it is not always possible to proclaim the Good News in words, it is always possible to present it through one's life. Moreover, many ancestral values of the Japanese people constitute stepping-stones for the Gospel: love of work, openness to others, the high level of human culture and above all the innate sense of recollection and contemplation, which is the distinctive mark of the peoples of the East.

The contemplative dimension is the true secret of the renewal of all religious life, and it is an element to which your fellow citizens are particularly alert. Foster that dimension always. Make your houses centers of prayer, of recollection, of personal and community conversation with the one who is and must always be the one to whom you talk most throughout your busy days. Do not be led astray by the temptations to activism and distraction that the modern consumer society brings in its train, with all its materialistic overtones.

Without prayer, your religious life lacks meaning. It loses contact with its source, becomes emptied of its substance and cannot reach its goal. It is prayer that keeps you in contact with Christ your Spouse. The incisive words of Evangelica Testificatio deserve to be pondered: "Do not forget, moreover, the witness of history: faithfulness to prayer or its abandonment are the test of the vitality or decadence of religious life."

With these words in mind, I address a special greeting and a word of encouragement to all the sisters who live the cloistered life in this country. You are living deeply "at the heart of the Church." Your intense and unceasing prayer, based on a rich spiritual and doctrinal heritage, is both a gift to the world and a challenge to that same world. It is also an answer to all those people today who are anxiously seeking for methods and experiences of contemplation.

The evangelical witness that you give by your consecration, lived in the practice of the counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, and by the witness of the spirit of prayer that animates your communities, finds a fresh and particularly fruitful expression in your apostolic activities. I am thinking especially of your work among the poor, the sick, the children and their families, in the vast field of teaching and catechesis. Your devotion to the training of the young is always very relevant. These activities of yours are a special means of evangelization, of true human advancement.

As you know, the religious life has no meaning except within the Church and in fidelity to her directives. So always be ready to welcome the teachings of the Magisterium, and, in accordance with your particular charism, be ready to collaborate in the apostolic work of your local diocese, under the direction of your bishops united to the Successor of Peter and in union with Christ.

Family Life Office Plans Workshops

The Family Life Office, in an effort to inform diocesans about the variety of programs they offer and to find out what future programs they would like to see, have scheduled five workshops in different locations.

Each session will consist of a 13-minute filmstrip called "Sounds of the Family," a brief report on the results of the family ministry task force's survey on parish leadership and information on more than twenty organizations or programs offered by Family Life.

Drug Programs Offered

Young people today who do not experiment with drugs are in a very small minority, according to the Drug and Alcohol Council.

The chances are that sometime sooner or later, the opportunity will be there and the time will look right for your child to experiment," said Dan Schey, educational coordinator for the council.

To prepare parents "to be forearmed with valid information and the right level-headed attitudes," the Drug and Alcohol Council is offering a Drug Education Program for Parents.

The drug education program will be offered twice in the coming months; the first program scheduled for April 14, 21 and 28.

The sessions run from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. and take place at Council headquarters, 396 Alexander St.

The second program is planned for May 5, 12 and 19, from 10 a.m. to noon. Fees are \$25 per person, \$40 per couple. For more information those interested may call 244-3190.

They are Marriage Alive, Love and Marriage, Marriage Enrichment, Parenting Seminar, Parents Talk Love, Parents of Teens, Divorced Catholic Groups, Separated Seminar, Pastoral Care for the Sick, Dying and Bereaved, Beginning Experience, Family Weekend, Marriage Preparation, Natural Family Planning, Family Life Committee Training, Catholic Family Center, Christian Family Movement, Marriage Encounter, Families For Prayer, Spiritual Singles Groups, Family Vocations Sunday, Parish and ORE Programs.

The seminars will take place from 2 to 5 p.m., Sunday, April 5 at St. Peter and Paul Church, Elmira; 7:30-9:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 29 at Holy Trinity Church, Webster; 7:30-9:30 p.m., Thursday, April 30 at the Pastoral Office, 1150 Buffalo Road; 7:30-9:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 6 at St. Patrick's School, Seneca Falls; and 7:30-9:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 13 at St. Mary's Church, Dansville.

The public is invited.



Words of Our Lady

"Here I will demonstrate, I will exhibit, I will give all of my love, my compassion, my help, and my protection to the people. I am your merciful mother, the merciful mother of all of you who live united in this land, and all of mankind."

PRAY THE ROSARY DEVOUTLY EVERY DAY

- LEARN • HEED
- PRACTICE and SPREAD THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA
- GOD WILLS IT
- OUR LADY WISHES IT
- OUR HOLY FATHER ASKS IT
- HELP RETURN THE WORLD TO JESUS THROUGH MARY

To help spread Our Lady's message via this series of Her quotations, please send contributions to:

Mary Kelly
c/o Blue Army
7 Harwood Lane
East Rochester, NY 14445

Sister M. Josepha Twomey, SSJ



Viewpoint: Sisters Reflect

Prison Ministry Fulfilling

"Sister, I have noticed that many of your friends are criminals." To a prison chaplain, that statement is not only true, it is a compliment!

Because of the conditions in which they live in prison, many find it difficult to trust anyone. Some have experienced love and trust in their families, in school, and in their neighborhoods; some have not. As a chaplain, I try to treat a man with respect as I know Christ would. Perhaps a smile, a hello, perhaps providing a birthday card for him to send to someone, concern for him may spark a bit of trust. Once the foundation of trust has been established, a chaplain attends to many facets of an inmate's life: his relationship to himself, his relationship to God, the Church and the sacraments, the scriptures. Important, too, are his self-image, his worth as a child of God, his family life, his relationship to others inside and outside the facility, and his future after incarceration.

"There is good in everyone" may be an old adage, but there are many people who have never been shown the good in them. Once a man begins to open up, a chaplain can begin to point out to him that God loves him and forgives him, and that he, too, must forgive himself.

though many others will not.

A chaplain uses many means to influence an inmate: liturgy, homilies, personal interviews, Bible studies. Presence in the office is important but so, too, is moving around and being visible throughout the institution. With a large population of men, visits to the cell blocks, the hospital, the shops, the mess hall, the visiting rooms, the special housing units, the recreation yards, the field house — enable the chaplains to meet many more and many diverse men than staying in the office would.

A chaplain deals with different problems of different men: the poor self-image of one; the deep sense of guilt of another because of the hurt he has caused his victim and his loved ones; isolation from real life; living where you can trust no one; the pain of a man whose wife is suing him for divorce; the feelings of and abandonment of a man whose family and friends have cut him off since his coming to prison; the grief of a man whose mother has died or whose younger brother has been killed; the anxiety of a man who has no home to return to or no job waiting for him and who, consequently, has to remain in prison until he finds one or both; the feelings of a man who goes to his parole board and gets hit with another year or more; the fear of a man whose physical safety has been threatened; the insecurity of a man who

places himself in protective custody and remains 23 hours in his cell every day; the anguish of a man whose depression is so deep that he threatens or even attempts suicide.

A chaplain must also be aware that the walls and concrete, the gates and the locks, the cells and the bars, the noise and the tension are not only the conditions in which our men live but are also the conditions in which our officers and civilians work. Our staff has all the joys, sorrows, pressures and strains as anyone who lives in today's world. When they put in an eight-hour work day in prison surroundings, their lives can have much added tension.

In spite of the difficulties, there are many bright moments of humor and laughter and teasing that make things lighter: the inmate who barks at Sister's boots because "they look like two poodles;" the officers who are Red Sox fans and who don't let Sister forget that her Yankees lost — again; the lieutenant who, when he sees Sister coming, opens the gate the entire width of 15 feet "out of respect;" the eight officers and civilians who volunteer to be on Sister's cheerleading team for a donkey basketball game to support the local Catholic schools; the simple "thank you" letter from a former inmate who is now making a success of his life "on the streets;" or the man from Rochester who is doing 20 years to life who notices "that many of your friends are criminals."

Yes, they are. Those men who live here and the people who work here love and hate, laugh and cry, sing and swear, play and fight, hope and despair, succeed and fail. They are human beings who God loves and whom I

— a woman — am privileged to serve as a chaplain.

Sister M. Josepha Twomey, SSJ, is associate chaplain at Elmira Correctional Facility and Reception Center and Camp Monterey.

Memorialization

The memories you have are something you'll always treasure. But with each generation, the gap with the past widens and the story of a whole lifetime can be lost forever.

The National Heritage Foundation, established to preserve our American heritage through literature, is now offering a family biography service to record your irreplaceable memories of parents, grandparents, a spouse or other close relative. Each history is carefully researched by a skilled biographer to tell the individual's life story.

Beautifully written and artistically reproduced, the biography is a unique tribute to a life that was important to you. It's a keepsake that will grow more valuable with time, providing your family with a deeper sense of its own heritage.

The Family Biography was developed for families like yours and we are pleased to make it available to our community. For more information, feel free to call us.

Please contact me about a biography

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

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