

'You Are the Light of the World'

Following is excerpted from an address given by Pope John Paul II to a group of newly-ordained priests in Nagasaki, Japan.

Every priest can say: "The Lord has anointed me." The Lord has anointed me, first of all, from all eternity, even before I came to be, when he called my name. "The Lord called me from the womb," says Isaiah, "from the body of my mother he named my name." A complete understanding of a priestly vocation requires that we go back to this anointing of God's preferential love for a certain person even before his existence, and to the call that God addresses to him because of this love.



A priest can also say that the Lord has anointed him when, in childhood or youth, his heart responded to the Lord's call: "Follow me." It is not always easy to pinpoint this moment and identify the event through which the call came: the example of a priest or a friend? The discovery of a void that only complete service of God can fill? A desire to respond to material, moral or spiritual distress in a way that is fully effective? But whatever the circumstances, it is God who has called. Whether or not the priest can fix the day on which he staked his life by yielding to the Lord's influence — what the prophet Jeremiah calls the Lord's seduction — he should be aware that God has called him.

Thirdly, a priest can say that the Lord has anointed him on the day of his ordination, the day he finally and forever becomes a priest of Jesus Christ. It is the day of a literal anointing by the hands of a Bishop. We priests should always keep that day in mind. Paul urged

Timothy: "Rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands." We should always remember our ordination, so as to rekindle constantly our first fervor and to draw strength from the memory, in order to live a life consistent with its profound significance. For today's anointing is for you, my beloved sons, the passing, the outward sign of a permanent mark on your personalities. It is the sacramental sign of a grace by which Christ the Priest consecrates you for a special mission at the service of his Kingdom, making you priests of Jesus Christ forever.

What are you called to do as priests? Another passage in today's liturgy gives the answer: "You are the light of the world."

It is disconcerting for us, aware as we are of our littleness and sinfulness, to hear addressed to us the clear words: "You are the light of the world." The Apostles must have trembled at hearing them. So have thousands of people since then. And yet the Lord spoke those words to people whom he knew to be human, limited and sinful. For he also knew that they were to be light not by their own strength but by reflecting and communicating his light, for he said of himself: "I am the light of the world."

Every priest finds that he can give light to people in darkness only to the extent that he himself has accepted the light of the Teacher, Jesus Christ. He is, however, wrapped in dangerous shadows and incapable of enlightening others when he departs from the one source of all true light. Therefore, beloved sons, you must always remain close to Christ the Priest by listening assiduously to his word, by celebrating his mysteries in the Eucharist, and by intimate friendship with him at all times. People will recognize your communion with Christ by your capacity to be true light for a world all too often in darkness.

Fr. John Reedy



Looking for the Lord

Bishops And Budget Proposals

The U.S. Catholic Conference, according to its news service, has launched a major campaign against many of President Reagan's budget proposals which would hurt the poor.

The conference, "the public policy arm of the U.S. bishops," opposes budget proposals which relate to such programs as food stamps, CETA (the training and employment act), aid to families with dependent children, Medicaid, housing, etc.

Now it happens that I also oppose almost all of these budget proposals — for the same reasons that the U.S. Catholic Conference does. But I see a problem in this kind of political action on the part of the American bishops.

The problem has to do with the nature of the authority exercised by the bishops in their public policies and statements.

Solicitude for the poor and the powerless is clearly a moral issue; it's an integral part of the Gospel the bishops are obliged to proclaim.

Undoubtedly, this is why they are taking their present position.

On the other hand, the particular proposals being discussed represent detailed, complex legislation and programs. Each of these programs has its own history of growth and effectiveness. Each has its own impact on

it, on other spending priorities.

It's not disrespectful to recognize that very few members of the bishops' conference have the detailed knowledge needed to form an enlightened judgment on the specific budget proposals.

As citizens, of course, the bishops have every right to formulate their own judgments on the best knowledge they have. They also have a right to express those judgments to their political leaders. We all have that right and responsibility.

But when they speak and act as a conference of bishops, they appear to be invoking their religious teaching authority. This is why they speak on matters of doctrine and moral issues.

Yet, a great many of the Catholics whom they lead, for various reasons, support the budget cuts proposed by President Reagan.

Where does this leave these people in relation to their religious leaders? Where does it leave the teaching authority of the hierarchy?

This issue has troubled a number of the bishops for several years. It's not that there's much disagreement on the religious principles and values they proclaim. Instead, it's a discomfort with the detailed subject matter and the manner in which they take stands on public issues.

They wonder if statements on such issues do not undermine their teaching on matters on which they do have

As a practical matter, I would prefer to have the conference speak forcefully, effectively and consistently on the values involved. Collectively and individually, the bishops should insist that citizens who profess to accept the teachings of Jesus simply cannot support funding programs which are callous toward those of our neighbors who are hungry or thirsty, who are sick without the means of treatment, who are locked into a cycle of poverty which strips them of self-respect and human dignity.

How the citizens, through their legislators, respond to these needs is a political decision on which most bishops have no more authority than most other citizens.

Their staff people — some of whom do have expert knowledge — could testify and lobby for specific proposals without claiming to speak for the body of bishops.

Many who oppose this position argue that it would strip our religious leaders of any real effectiveness in helping our nation to formulate ethically-responsible policies. I don't see that there's all that much effectiveness now; I suspect there might be greater moral effectiveness if they restricted their statements to those values and issues on which they clearly have religious authority.

MORNING OF RENEWAL

Father Robert Kennedy, director of the diocesan Department of Liturgy, will present a Morning of Renewal, from 9:15 to noon, tomorrow, April 9 at the Cenacle, 693 East Ave. The program includes Celebration of the Eucharist, refreshments, conference and discussion. Further information and reservations are obtained by calling the Cenacle Ministry Office (716)

Cathedral Schedules Holy Week

The Holy Week schedule at Sacred Heart Cathedral will begin with the blessing of Palms and a procession. Bishop Matthew H. Clark will celebrate the 11:15 Mass and the adult choir will provide the music.

At 8 p.m., Tuesday, Bishop Clark will bless chrism and other sacred oils for sacramental use during the coming year. The Chrism Mass will be concelebrated and representatives from parishes in every region will participate.

The bishop, together with the Cathedral staff, will concelebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper at 7:30 p.m.,

Thursday. On Good Friday the youth group SHAG will present the Living Stations at 2:15 p.m. At 3 p.m. the Solemn Liturgy of the Lord's Passion takes place with Bishop Clark presiding.

The Solemn Easter Vigil and Mass of the Resurrection will be concelebrated at 7:30 p.m., Saturday. This Mass fulfills the Easter Sunday obligation.

Easter Sunday Masses will be celebrated at 7, 8:30, 10 and 11:15 a.m. and 5 p.m. The 11:15 Mass of the Resurrection will be celebrated by Bishop Clark. Music will be provided by the adult choir.

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