

## Pontiff's Column

As Pope John Paul II convalesces this summer, and refrains from pursuing his ordinarily rigorous schedule of addresses, the Courier-Journal will temporarily suspend its practice of publishing excerpts from his talks.

Fr. John Reedy



Looking for the Lord

## An Apology To a Bishop

It's not easy to remember, but I have to keep reminding myself that the goodness, the holiness of a person, has little to do with his ideology or the way he does his job.

My latest reminder: An NC News story written, under incredible difficulty, by retired Bishop Romeo Blanchette.

Bishop Blanchette resigned, for reasons of health, from the Joliet Diocese in 1979. He was suffering from the deteriorating condition known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Through many years of covering the meetings of American bishops, I saw a lot of Bishop Blanchette. He would always get into the meeting room early enough to capture a seat next to a microphone, directly in front of the chair, where his claim of the floor could not be ignored.

Through those years, the record would probably show that he offered more interventions than any other bishop who was not an officer of the conference.

And, in the latter years, almost every one of his interventions was greeted by a groan — or a tolerant grin — by those of us at the press tables. (Though the bishops tend to be more deferential, I'm sure that many of them hid the same response.)

Bishop Blanchette seemed to be a good, sincere man, but he was totally predictable, and he seemed to be totally inflexible, totally opposed to any change in the life of the church.

No matter how insignificant the matter, if it represented an effort to modify policy, liturgy, discipline, catechesis — or almost anything else — we expected to see the slender Ordinary of Joliet at the microphone, ready to stick his finger in the dike to hold back the sea of change.

Often he lost, but that never discouraged him. He would be back at his microphone at the next meeting, ready to continue his battle.

I remember thinking, "Lord, I'm glad I'm not working in the Joliet chancery, or, for that matter, living in the Joliet diocese."

This judgment was based not on a knowledge of Bishop Blanchette as a man, as a person, but on his policy positions.

He is now without speech and totally immobile. He communicates by blinking his eyes, signalling agreement when someone

reaches the right letter in spelling out a word.

In this incredibly difficult method, he dictated an article of about 750 words which he entitled, "A Bit of Humor."

In it, he pokes fun at himself, at the helplessness of his condition. He describes an experience in which, when a young woman aide tried to keep him from falling, they both wound up on a nearby chair, he on her lap.

He wrote that when inhalation therapists pound on his rib cage to loosen the phlegm in his chest, he tries to think of the rhythm of bongo drums.

He describes his amusement at nurses cutting his fingernails, when their own nails were so long "a bald eagle would love to have them."

Bishop, my apologies for all those patronizing judgments of mine about your interventions. I still think you were wrong on many of them. But, before God, none of those issues comes close, in significance, to the joyful witness of faith you have communicated with your blinking eyes.

Sister Margaret Mary Mungovan, RSM



Viewpoint: Sisters Reflect

## Hispanic Ministry

The touch of the Holy Spirit may be experienced years before the response is possible. Who would have recognized in my teenage desire to study Spanish, His call to serve the Hispanic members of the Body of Christ many years later?

Thirty years of teaching in the schools of the diocese brought me great satisfaction, but Pope Paul VI's plea to North American religious to help relieve the shortage of personnel in Latin America reawakened in me the desire to speak Spanish now with a specific purpose.

Little did I realize as I headed for Chile ten years ago, that I would be as much served by the Chileans as I would serve them. I saw in South America the Beatitudes lived out. I learned about hospitality and love as I never had before. Many of the values I associated with being a good Catholic American I found were not so important beyond our borders, while some that make the Chileans such a loving, faith-filled people are not part of the American scene.

Since 1978, I've been enriched by working in the United States with two other groups of Hispanics: the Puerto Ricans in the Rochester diocese and the Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in California and, more extensively, in

Texas. I've discovered that the characteristics I so admire in the Chileans are found in all the Hispanic people with whom I've ministered.

Working with them, I've been able to see "from the inside out" what so many view "from the outside in," getting a distorted notion of why people who seek a better life on our soil don't buy the whole American package at the same time. I've listened to such complaints by "Anglos" as: "Those people ought to learn to speak English if they are going to live here." "Why do they have to have a Mass in Spanish?" "Why don't they stay in their own country and not force us to support them?" etc.

My own experience of having been a stranger in a foreign land and having been accepted in the spirit of the gospel makes me more keenly aware of the anti-gospel attitudes expressed above. My apostolate both in Chile and here has been the building up of Christian community and the service of the sick, the elderly and all in need of prayer ministry. The call still goes out in both North and South America for workers in the Hispanic fields of the Lord's harvest. One can respond while remaining in the home diocese, by serving in a diocese where religious personnel is scarce, or by reaching beyond our shores to Latin America itself.

Sister Margaret Mary Mungovan, RSM, is a missionary to Mexican-Americans in McAllen, Tex.



## A Chile Summer

Sister Margaret Mary Mungovan, RSM, who shortly will return to missionary work in Santiago, Chile, shows a Chilean handmade purse to Sisters Jane Schur, center, and Anne Marie Lennon who both will spend a month in Chile in a congregation-sponsored Third World Experience.

## Mercy Sisters Meet For Sesquicentennial

A delegation of 70 Rochester Sisters of Mercy are in Pittsburgh to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the congregation.

The gathering, Mercy 81, has also drawn 1700 other sisters from North and South America. Pittsburgh was chosen as the site of the meeting because the first American convent of Mercy was founded there in 1843.

A major feature of the meeting will be the distribution of the Mercy Core Constitutions, the second draft of a document it is hoped will describe the congregational charism as it is

manifest throughout the Mercy foundations in the Americas.

After another year of consultation, the Core Constitutions will be sent to Rome as a canonically acceptable statement of the Mercy ideals.

Rochester Sisters of Mercy who have helped write the document are Sisters Marie Joseph Crowley, Mary Edmond Gauthier, Mary Judith Heberle, Michael Lappetito, Gratia L'Esperance, Ann Miller, Mary Florence Sullivan, Joseph Mary Switzer and Kathryn Wahl.

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