

THE POPE

Vocations Are 'Special Sign of Advent'

Vatican City (NC) — Pope John Paul II said Dec. 12 that a vocation to the priesthood or the religious life is a "special sign of Advent."

He asked Advent prayers for vocations while addressing 10,000 visitors to St. Peter's Square during his Sunday Angelus message.

"Every vocation," said the pontiff, "is a precious gift in which the Lord draws near to and meets the entire community of the people of God."

This makes a religious vocation "a special sign of Advent," he added.

Taking as his starting point the second reading of the day's liturgy, in which St. Paul exhorts the Philippians to "present your requests to God in every necessity," the pope encouraged the visitors to pray for "the problem of priestly and religious vocations."

In his brief talk, the pope also asked for prayers for the church in communist-ruled Hungary which, he said, "is confronted with profound social change, accompanied by the phenomena of secularization and of religious indifference."

Later that day, the pontiff visited the parish of the Good Pastor Jesus in Rome. He urged parishioners to be a haven for others in the neighborhood. Speaking to several hundred people in an area where the 30,000 residents are nearly all Catholic, the pontiff said, "I know that your apostolic dynamism notices with anxiety the quantitative discrepancy between the numerical proportion visible in your parish community and the immense human reality in which you are immersed."

"Never tire of looking continually for even the slightest occasions to enlarge your contacts... with that great human reality," the pope said.

On the previous day, the pope had welcomed the

bishops of Malta on their ad limina visit to the Vatican.

In Malta, a small island nation in the Mediterranean Sea south of Sicily, the church came into increasing conflict in 1982 with the socialist government of Prime Minister Dom Mintoff. During the summer Mintoff announced that he had asked the pope to remove Archbishop Joseph Mercieca, the nation's ranking prelate. Mintoff said he made the request because the archbishop had failed to denounce a proposal by the opposition Nationalist Party to make June 29, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, a national holiday.

During the papal meeting, the pope told Archbishop Mercieca and Bishop Nicholas Cauchi of Gozo, "I am close to you in your pastoral solicitude for Malta, avoiding as you rightly do activities of a purely political nature and proclaiming the word of God in all its relevance for each individual and for society itself."

Fr. Paul J. Cuddy



On the Right Side

Christmas Confessions

Our diocesan Priests Council met on Dec. 7 at St. Jerome's, Rochester, and discussed three methods of the Sacrament of Penance. They considered: 1. The Old Way, i.e., making a personal private confession to a priest and accepting penance and receiving absolution. 2. A Penance Service with prayers, scripture and hymns, followed by a private confession. 3. The Jamboree Reconciliation services, wherein the people, hearing there will be a big General Absolution given at a stated time and place, join the church for the big impersonal absolution.

The theory is that the Jamboree Reconciliation is given because there are not enough priests around to hear confessions. However, an essential element in this service is that the penitent go to confession later on, making his confession personally, when there are priests available. Let's quit kidding. The problem of not being able to go to a priest is rare.

On Nov. 29, 1954, I was transferred from Lackland A.F. Base, Tex., to Nouasseur Air Depot near Casablanca, French Morocco. Christmas was near. As I settled in for the regular routine — Mass, confessions, instructions, counseling, rapport with the troops, correspondence, staff meetings, etc. — the thought kept coming: "What of Christmas confessions? I am alone." During WW II before dangerous missions I would give General Absolution to our troops since individual confessions were impossible. But at Casablanca we had no battle necessity.

Help Group

Families and Friends of the Mentally Ill and Emotionally Disturbed will meet 7:30 p.m., Monday, Dec. 27, at Reformation Church, 111 N. Chestnut St., for a small group discussion.

At 7 p.m. Christmas Eve I went to my office in the Dallas hut on the base to hear confessions. At least 100 GIs descended for confession. Liturgists with fancy ritualistic proclivities might be dismayed at my procedure, but I think Our Lord was pleased. These men, most in their late teens and early 20s, knew how to go to confession, accurately telling the last time they went and telling their sins clearly, succinctly and humbly. I gave each his penance and a speedy absolution. The flood finished shortly before Midnight Mass.

In the 1983 Synod of Bishops document, "Reconciliation and Penance," John Paul II is quoted: "Much has been done to highlight the Church's practice in the community aspect of penance. These initiatives are useful. We cannot however forget that conversion is a particularly inward act in which the individual cannot make the community a substitute for him. In faithfully observing the centuries-old practice of individual confession with personal act of sorrow and the intention to amend and make satisfaction, the Church is defending the human soul's individual right: man's right to a personal encounter with the crucified, forgiving Christ, saying through the minister of reconciliation: 'Your sins are forgiven.'" (Origins: p. 578.)

In 1955 Vatican Council was seven years off, and I did not know of Communal Penance and absolution outside of battle. Today I would give the communal absolution but leave no doubt with people that they must go to private confession later, if they have grave sins. In retrospect I think Our Lord was greatly pleased to meet these lovable soldiers, pouring in from every side, tumbling out their sins so earnestly and candidly, quite unconcerned about a community to repent with. They were just glad to be able to go to confession and receive absolution as individuals.

Bishop Clark Will Preach At B'rith Kodesh Sabbath

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will preach at Sabbath Eve services at Temple B'rith Kodesh, 8:15 p.m., Friday, Jan. 7.

The service will open the exhibit of the winners of the Father Henry Atwell Memorial Photographic Competition. The winning photographs will be on display at Temple B'rith Kodesh for the following three weeks.

Father Atwell, a close associate with the Rochester Jewish community, and

particularly Temple B'rith Kodesh, was a strong advocate of interfaith cooperation in the community.

The winners in the competition are: Michael A. Schwarz, Gannett Rochester Newspapers, first prize; B. Burr Lewis, Gannett Rochester Newspapers, second prize; Ann Lennox Bergmanis, third prize; Schwarz and Jim Laragy, Gannett Rochester Newspapers, honorable mentions.

Other photographs in the exhibit were taken by Reed Hoffman, Bruce Chamber and Dan Newberger. Among the judges is Howard LeVant,

Harold Wilke To Speak Feb. 2

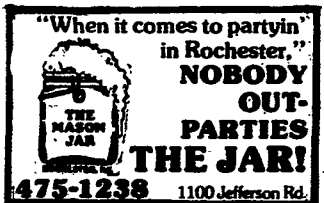
Dr. Harold Wilke, nationally known author and minister to persons with disabilities, will pose the question "Is Our Theology Disabled?" 3 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 2, at Colgate Rochester/Bexley Hall/Crozer Theological Seminary.

His address is open to all denominations and faiths in the area.

Dr. Wilke was the keynote speaker at an interfaith conference opening the International Year of the Disabled in this community two years ago.

The February lecture will cap a two-day visit to the area as part of a course at the seminars on "Ministry with Handicapped Persons and Their Families." It is being sponsored by the seminars in cooperation with the Religious Service Advisory Board at Monroe Developmental Center.

Dr. Wilke's talk will be free. Further information is available by calling the chaplain's office at MDC, 461-2800, ext. 444.



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