

The Sacred Heart And the Holy Year Of Redemption

By Bishop Edouard Gagnon
Pontifical Commission on
the Family

The solemnities of the Body and Blood of Christ and of the Sacred Heart of Jesus are important moments in the Jubilee Year of the Redemption. Pope John Paul II uses these occasions to explain in his very personal way the treasures of grace which flow from the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus for our own conversion and for the salvation of the world.

The Holy Father has never hidden his gratitude for having inherited from the traditions of his people a personal devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. He found in this devotion the inspiration for his vocation and his pastoral work.

It was surely before the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, I think, that, while meditating on Peter's profession of faith and the prediction of the Passion (Mt. 16:14-17:13), he understood how this special calling rests on acceptance of God's plan for redeeming us by the

Cross. He wrote, "The universal ministry that belongs to the Bishop of Rome takes its origin from the events of Redemption and has been put by the Redeemer Himself at the service of this ministry which occupies the central place in the whole history of salvation."

When speaking about what the "centrality" of the Redemption means to him, Pope John Paul points out that the cry, "open the doors to the Redeemer," was the first invitation which he addressed to the world after his election. In the official document promulgating the Holy Year, he said, "from that moment his feelings and thoughts have been ever more directed toward Christ the Redeemer and His paschal mystery." Since the sacrilegious attempt on his life, I have a feeling that the call to accept redemption has become even more vibrant, more compelling, in the Holy Father's writings and discourses. So it is that the Pope

invites us during the Holy Year to make the ordinary happenings of our Christian life into something extraordinary by placing them in the powerful current of the love of Christ the Redeemer.

Even without using the words "Sacred Heart of Jesus" and "Immaculate Heart of Mary," the sense of urgency with which the Holy Father begs all humanity to recognize and accept God's love is a revealing sign, it appears to me, that he speaks from the depths of Christ's Heart and with the anguish of Mary's Heart on Calvary, when she accepted Jesus' invitation to be our Mother. "We are at an historic moment," writes Pope John Paul,



"and the Holy Year challenges modern man. . . The reality of Redemption is constantly offered to us in the Church, but everyone has to make it his own, as a charism, at the hour of grace which the Lord sets before him at a certain key moment in his life. We are now to experience a capital spiritual improvement which must be favored and prepared for without delay at all levels of the Church in its entirety."

Indeed this Holy Year, if we seek and live its true meaning as found in the Pope's writings, will confirm the People of God in the conviction that devotion to the Heart of Jesus is more relevant than ever.



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Diocesan Pastoral Council Meeting

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challenged biases I had." The bishops' effort has shed the light of the Gospel and the Church shine on the radically new way of doing war through nuclear weapons."

He characterized the letter as "a document that really can teach, not just as a challenge but as a help. . . to construct a world of peace that finds all its roots in a change of heart."

"I beg you to read it," he said. "I beg you to read it." He told the council that the other afternoon he watched John Wayne's movie "Flying Tigers" on television, and "so much of that movie made me think about the letter." He characterized the movie's dialogue as replete with the "jingoism and racism and war propaganda that I sucked up like a vacuum cleaner when I was a kid."

No more, he said. And, "I

think this is a very important moment in our lives."

Shirley Toole, described by the bishop as "one of the most remarkable chairs I've ever run into," delivered what she called her "swan talk," before relinquishing her post.

"I've had a wonderful time," she said. She told the new council that the old guard had wrestled with the Nestle boycott, had encouraged the development of Bishop Clark's pastoral on women in the Church, "The Fire in the Thornbush," had pressed for the establishment of the diocesan Board of Education, and had approved the new mission to the diocese of Tabasco, Mexico.

And she issued a challenge to the new council to further social justice questions.

Bishop Clark, again addressing the council, outlined

for that body the areas in which he hopes to draw on the assembly's "wisdom."

He cautioned that his words were "a little out of season," but that plans are in the works for major observance of the Holy Year of Redemption in the diocese, for a large push in the area of evangelization, and for a general parish renewal.

He said on the last point, "Basically it is in parish life that people meet Christ and we need to strengthen that." And on the first, "I'm concerned that we don't start the holy year with a whole new agenda, but rather that we deepen what we already have."

Referring to council action on social justice questions, the bishop said, "There is no way that these questions are ever going to be easy on us."

"There is a price to be paid in areas where values are not totally clear," he said.

Among the issues the council will debate in its first regular meeting in September will be a proposal, filed by Chris Felo for the Commission on Young Adult Ministry, to add a special representative to the DPC for young adults from the commission.

The proposal states: "The Commission on Young Adult Ministry, within the Division of Special Ministry, has been in existence for over a year now, having been created by the bishop following the recommendations of a special task force which he created two years prior to look into the problems facing young adults in the Church. One of the problems found by the task force was that young adults often feel they have no voice to those in authority in the Church.

"Thus, one of the main functions of the commission is to speak out for young adults and plead their causes. One of the main forums for

dialogue in the diocese is the DPC. As such, we in the commission feel that we and the DPC have much we can learn from each other."

The proposal also asserts council representation is disproportionately older than 40.

The council elected a new executive committee last week. Committee members are: Gerald F. Driscoll, chairperson, from the Northeast Region; Patricia Defendorf, vice chairperson, Steuben Region; Joseph Brophy, committee member, Northwest Region; John Dengler, committee member, Southwest Region; Sara McLaughlin, committee member, representing the role of women; Robert O'Gara, committee member, Tompkins/Tioga Region; and Father Paul Tomasso, committee member, priests' representative.

DPC Grads

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tendance has improved; and people are speaking out more, are better informed, and more concerned." She listed several items to illustrate her point: the council's interest in the national Parish Project; the development of a diocesan directory of services; a new thrust to regionalism; and tackling such issues as the Nestle/Stouffer boycott and the development of the U.S. bishop's pastoral on war and peace.

As she left her post, Sister Ann encouraged the new council to "try to listen to the concerns of the diocese—they're not all the same. And in the future, continue to look at the renewal of parish life.

One of the greatest accomplishments the council can perform, she said, will be to help the diocese plan for the future.

Shirley Toole became on Saturday the last of the five-year veterans to leave the council; and the day before, at least, she planned to "sing and dance" her way through the meeting.

Serving as chairperson for the past two years, Mrs. Toole has been able to view the council and its work from two distinct vantage points, as both member and as leader.

"I feel the DPC is vital in the diocese," she said, "it's the organized way the whole people of the diocese get to talk to the bishop."

"It's been a terrific experience, and very rewarding for me."

Mrs. Toole said she considers the founding of the Tabasco mission, the establishment of the diocesan Board of Education, and, internally, "the growth of the Ministerial Review Committee" to be among the DPC's greatest moments.

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