

Along The Way

With Bishop Matthew H. Clark



Two weeks have passed since my last column in the Courier-Journal. I missed the first because I didn't realize the deadline for copy was advanced because of the holiday. Last week of course was vacation week for the entire staff.

It's good to write again although I must admit that the discipline of writing — always a challenge to me — becomes more imposing after even so short a break.

The summer has been relaxing, productive and thoroughly enjoyable so far. Let me tell you a little bit about it by commenting on some of the events I spoke about in an earlier column.

Vacation. The week at home was as always a time of peace. We had the family picture done. To the best of my knowledge nobody moved at a critical moment. Margaret, the nine year old became dizzy mid way through the session but she recovered quickly and we continued.

Bishop Hubbard and I resumed a 20-year-old custom and had Friday night supper together at an Italian restaurant in Troy. Spaghetti with marinara sauce and shrimp.

Washington. On Thursday of vacation week our bishops' committee which relates with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious met with the executive board of the LCWR.

Our committee has several new members including myself but we were able to spend considerable time on issues of substance.

I am excited and quite optimistic about the work because I am convinced that we're being invited to a deeper level of renewal as a Church. Religious life is often in the van of such renewal and I think that is now. To me the critical call is that we remain united in those deeper values which sustain our life. If we do, I know that with God's help we can work through all of today's challenges.

McQuaid. To read Fr. Zwerlein's biography of Bishop McQuaid — which is really the story of our mothers and fathers in faith — has been a great summer treat.

Little did I imagine when I began the three-volume work that I would often laugh aloud at the recounting of the events which shaped our early history. But that I do. Sometimes I laugh because of events or comments which are funny in themselves. At other times I laugh because I am reminded in a way that's healthy for me that the struggles we go through as persons or communities are not unique to our age.

Often enough when I read about the challenges, and opportunities, the graces and set-backs, the issues and

questions confronted by those who went before us I remember the fidelity and compassion of a God who leads us in strange ways but who always draws us to Himself.

Two friends. In the past week two persons made a great contribution to my Summer thinking and prayer.

One made a comment about our call always to be as gracious as possible with others. The second person in response to a question I asked said, "You should never pass up an opportunity to teach."

Those comments are both very important to me for reasons I could not explain fully to them or to you. I can say that both comments came into my spirit as very important contributions to questions I have been thinking and praying about this Summer. They have to do with the on going ways in which I respond to the responsibilities and graces of my ministry.

Surely we are called to proclaim the word of God and to speak God's own graciousness to one another. I ask your prayers that I'll grow in my ability to do these things as a bishop should do them among God's people. And I promise my prayers that you'll find your way to do the same.

Peace.

Good News: More Catholics; Bad News: Fewer Priests

By Nancy Frazier

Vatican City (NC) -- There were nearly 10 million more Catholics in 1981 than in 1980, but the world's population growth rate outstripped the church's growth rate.

The total numbers of Catholic priests, brothers and nuns all declined in 1981, but key figures for eventually reversing that trend — the numbers of seminarians, newly ordained priests, and novices for religious orders of men and women -- all showed gains.

These were among the main trends revealed by the Vatican's 1981 Statistical Yearbook, which went on sale in mid-July.

The yearbook showed that the world Catholic population in 1981 increased by 9,720,000, to 794,380,000.

But Catholics were only 17.7 percent of the world's population at the end of 1981, compared to 17.9 percent at the close of the previous year.

The reason was that Catholic population grew by 1.2 percent, while the total world population increased at about twice that rate. According to the yearbook's figures, the Catholic increase in 1981 was only 8.5 percent of that year's total population growth of 114,196,000.

Much of the statistical data in the 359-page yearbook focused on priests and Religious working throughout the Catholic world.

Ordinations to the diocesan priesthood increased by 121 to 3,981 during 1981, the statistics showed.

That gain more than offset a small drop in ordinations for religious congregations, which numbered 1,908, or 19 fewer than the previous year. The combined total of ordinations, 5,889, represented an increase of 102, or 1.8 percent, over 1980.

The total number of priests in the world continued to decrease, however, because of deaths and "defections," the Vatican said.

In all, there were 255,904 diocesan and 155,170 religious priests at the end of 1981. The total, 411,074, represented a drop of 2,526, or 0.6 percent, from the previous year's total.

Data on candidates for the priesthood indicated that the number of ordinations may continue to rise in future years.

At the end of 1981, there were 68,633 major seminarians preparing for the priesthood, an increase of 2,591 over 1980. The gain since 1975, the low point in seminary enrollment worldwide during the past decade, was 8,491. "Major seminarians" are those in the six years of philosophy and theology studies preceding ordination.

The number of novices for male and female religious congregations also rose between 1980 and 1981 -- 11.5 percent for men and 6.0 percent for women.

The number of male novices preparing for the priesthood was up 682 to 6,449, while the number of men preparing to be religious brothers increased 199 to 2,076.

The number of women preparing to become nuns went from 13,932 to 14,772 an increase of 840.

However, the yearbook showed that the total number of Catholic nuns in the world decreased by 8,948, to 952,043. The number of religious brothers dropped by 3,279, to 70,621.

The yearbook showed little change since 1973 in the distribution of clergy in relation to the number of Catholics in each part of the globe.

The largest percentage of priests -- 55.4 percent of the world's total -- was serving in Europe, where 34.4 percent of the world's Catholics live, at the end of 1981. In 1973, 60.1

percent of the world's priests were serving in Europe, which at that time had 38 percent of the world's Catholics.

In the Americas in 1981, 27.8 percent of the world's priests were serving 49.2 percent of the world Catholic population.

But 16.4 percent of the priests were in North America (excluding Mexico) where only 7.8 percent of the world Catholic population resides, while 11.4 percent of the priests were in Latin America (including Mexico and the Caribbean), which has 41.4 percent of the world Catholic population.

This means that the average priest in Latin America must serve 7.6 times as many Catholics as the average priest in the United States or Canada.

At the end of 1981 Africa had 4.1 percent of the world's priests and 7.6 percent of the Catholic population; Asia had 6.4 percent of the priests and 8.1 percent of the Catholics; and Oceania had 1.3 percent of the priests and 0.7 percent of the Catholics.

The yearbook's regional breakdowns comparing Catholic population to general population showed that the Catholic growth rate basically matched the general growth rate in all major regions except the Americas.

In the Americas, with Latin American countries accounting for most of the difference, the ratio of Catholics to the total population rose from 62.4 percent in 1980 to 62.8 percent in 1981. According to the Vatican figures, U.S. Catholics made up 22.15 percent of the total U.S. population.

In other regions the 1980 and 1981 percentages remained the same: 39.9 percent of the European population, 25.5 percent in Oceania, 12.5 percent in Africa, and 2.4 percent in Asia.

The yearbook did not directly explain the seeming paradox that the total percentage of Catholics in the world declined while the percentages by region remained constant or even -- in the Americas -- increased.

This was because population growth in Asia and Africa, where the percentage of Catholics is well below the world average, outweighed population growth in Europe and the Americas, where the Catholic percentages are much higher.

Diocesan Appointments



Bishop Matthew H. Clark has made the following clergy appointments;

Father Winfried Kellner, from pastor of St. Boniface Church in Rochester, to chaplain at Monroe Community Hospital.

Father Robert Kennedy, from director of continuing education, to doctoral changes at the University of Notre Dame.

Father Richard Brickler, to pastor of St. Boniface Church, from the diocesan Tribunal.

Father Laurence Tracy, to associate pastor of St. Andrew's Church, from the diocesan Department of Justice and Peace.

Blue Collar

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people hurting out there in the diocese. The blue collar ministry will, in time, try to address as many of the problems of the blue collar worker as possible.

The first step this ministry is going to take is to address the immediate need and that is the unemployed. This ministry plans on working as much as possible with the Catholic Family Center Unemployment Committee in setting up parish and regional meetings for interested parishes. This ministry will provide, on a limited basis as time permits, personal pastoral counseling to blue collar

unemployed. We will preach by invitation, in interested parishes, the gospel message to the situation of the unemployed and the mission of the parish. We will assist parishes in setting up meetings for the unemployed and provide mechanisms to meet the specific needs articulated by these parishes.

I want to hear from as many people as possible as to what the Blue Collar Ministry could do in assisting them.

Please write to me at 115 Harpington Dr., Rochester, N.Y. 14624. I ask for your prayers so that the Holy Spirit will speak through each and every one of us.

New Capital Punishment Debate

Washington (NC) -- The Supreme Court, in approving a new set of guidelines for the disposition of appeals by death row inmates, may instead have generated a whole new debate over capital punishment itself and over the delays in executions that are pushing death row populations to record levels.

There seemed to be initial disagreement over whether the high court's July 6 decision in Barefoot vs. Estelle would result in speedier executions. Though the court's new guidelines in effect allow two steps of the appeals process to be telescoped into one, there still are enough grounds on which a death sentence can be appealed to make for a lengthy process between sentencing and actual execution.

The U.S. bishops as a body have been on record as opposed to capital punishment for nearly 10 years. And in 1980 they approved a 10-page statement outlining philosophical and theological grounds for opposing the death penalty as it has been applied in the United States.

Significantly in the nearly three years since that statement of the bishops was approved the number of inmates on death row has doubled. Government statistics showed that there were 567 death row inmates across the country at the end of 1979 compared to a record 1,200 today.

In a sense the Supreme Court brought the problem of lengthy appeals and increasing death row populations on itself. In 1972 it struck down most capital punishment statutes of the time because the arbitrary and capricious way in which they were applied constituted cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Constitution.

But in 1976 the court clarified that the death penalty itself was not cruel and unusual in the constitutional sense and said states were free to enact capital punishment statutes so long as

there was care and evenhandedness in the way capital punishment was applied.

What followed was a series of cases exploring grounds on which a death sentence could be imposed in ways that would not be arbitrary or capricious. In one major case, decided by the high court in 1980, the justices threw out the death sentence that had been applied to a Georgia man convicted of killing his wife and mother-in-law. Though the two women were killed with separate shotgun blasts to the head, the court ruled that strictly speaking the murders did not meet the standards set by Georgia for deciding who should be executed there.

Such strict review of state standards for applying the death penalty meant that lower courts had little choice but to examine a whole range of appeals by death row inmates who contended that their sentences were improperly applied or were otherwise defective.

Several of those kinds of issues come to the high court every year. In the same case in which it passed on its new guidelines to the lower courts, the Supreme Court upheld the practice in Texas of having psychiatrists testify at sentencing trials on the hypothetical likelihood that a defendant might always be dangerous.

It also handed down, on the same day, decisions in two other important death penalty cases, including a ruling that a California judge did not unduly influence the jury when he told it that a sentence of life in prison someday could be commuted by the governor.

Those kinds of rulings, though usually limited to a single death row inmate, to a certain extent still give the lower courts guidance as they try to decide which death penalty appeals have merit and which do not.