

Along The Way

With Bishop Matthew H. Clark



Since May, the rosary has been a special grace for me. Our pastoral letter on peace, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Gift and Our Response," is, I believe, the occasion for that.

The letter is strong and clear on prayer as essential to the work of peace. It speaks of that conversion of hearts and minds which makes it possible for us to enter into a closer communion with Our Lord (#290). It names Jesus as the one who is our peace and as the one from whom we learn the way of peace (#290).

Paragraph 292 says, "The Lord's promise is that he is in our midst when we gather in prayer. Strengthened by this conviction, we beseech the risen Christ to fill the world with his peace. We call upon Mary, the first disciple and Queen of Peace, to intercede for us and for the people of our time that we may walk in the way of peace. In this context, we encourage devotion to Our Lady of Peace."

Since May, I have made that intention when praying

rosary -- and I tell you in all seriousness that it has been an exciting experience.

Among other graces, it has made me more aware than I have ever been before of 1. the need I have for ongoing conversion and 2. how much I need that kind of conversion if ever I am to be the peace maker we all want to be.

On the slightly painful side, the prayer of the rosary helps me to know better with the knowledge of experience what the "disarmament of the heart" mentioned in our letter means. I am much more aware of my daily failure to respond to others in the peaceful spirit of Christ.

In this kind of prayer what there is in me of unreconciled anger or resentment toward others, or any lack of peace with them, stands out in high relief.

On the more consoling side, it has deepened my ability to appreciate the presence of a peaceful spirit and the yearning for peace in others. I find myself more able to recognize the ways I can hurt others and more ready to try to make things

right when I do hurt them. A final grace I remember at the moment is a greater ease in praying the psalms. Somehow the great variety of human experience held up the Lord in these songs of praise come much more alive for me now.

I have asked you often in these months to read our pastoral letter, to pray and to work for peace. The experience shared in these reflections is meant to indicate that with you I, too, am trying to respond to this call of the Church.

The prayer of the rosary has been a great joy for me as I have tried to respond to this invitation of the letter to ask the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace.

A postscript: Someone observed to me this week that many in our faith community -- especially among our young people -- do not how to pray the rosary. If you are among them, please let me encourage you to learn the prayer.

If you know the prayer, but have not prayed it recently, let me invite you to consider offering it from time to time for -- Peace!

Pope Praises U.S. Catholic School System

Vatican City (NC) -- Pope John Paul II praised the U.S. Catholic school system and the nuns who developed it.

"To women Religious is due a very special debt of gratitude for their particular contribution to the field of education," he said Oct. 28 to a group of U.S. bishops.

"Their authentic apostolate was, and is, worthy of the greatest praise," he said. "It is an apostolate that requires much self-sacrifice.

"It is thoroughly human as an expression of religious service: an apostolate that follows closely human and spiritual growth, and accompanies children and young people patiently and lovingly through the problems of youth and the insecurity of adolescence toward Christian maturity," he added.

The U.S. bishops were making their five-year "ad limina" visits to Rome, required by each residential

bishop in the world to report on the status of his diocese.

The pope asked the bishops to consider how many married couples of this generation can point to nuns who helped them mature toward marriage and parenthood.

"And how many priests, brothers and sisters found edification in the witness of sacrificial love exemplified in religious life, and in the encouragement necessary for them to embark on the preparation for their own vocation?" he asked.

The pope said that "Catholic education constitutes a privileged chapter in the history of the church in America" and praised its contribution toward preparing the laity to understand the Second Vatican Council.

"The blessings of the council were effectively brought to bear in the lives of many because years of generous Catholic education had prepared the way," he said.

He also credited Catholic schools with fostering vocations to the priesthood and religious life and for producing "upright men and women" who contribute to the well-being of America and through Christian charity help their brothers and sisters.

The pope also stressed the importance of Catholic identity in Catholic schools and said "the whole structural system will have value to the extent that the formation and education given by the teach-



Honored Guest

Pope John Paul II sits in the audience for a concert of music by 19th Century composer Hector Berlioz in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican. Rome and Turin orchestras performed Berlioz's Te Deum in honor of the 25th anniversary of the pope's appointment as bishop. (NC Photo)

ers conform to the principles of Catholic doctrine."

"At every level of Catholic education," he added, "the importance of the Catholic teacher and Catholic doctrine is felt."

"At every level, up to and including the university level, there is the need for an institutional commitment of the Catholic school to the word of God as proclaimed by the Catholic Church," he said.

Our Father Our Mother?

New York -- The National Council of Churches released a new book of Bible readings Oct. 14 that seeks to minimize "male-biased" language in the Scriptures. Titled "An Inclusive Language Lectionary," it calls God "Father (and Mother)" and changes many masculine terms to sex-neutral ones. The new lectionary, announced at a press conference in New York, contains readings for the liturgical year beginning in Advent 1983. Similar translations are to follow for the second and third years of the three-year lectionary cycle.

Synod Approves 63 Propositions

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Vatican City (NC) -- The 1983 world Synod of Bishops gave 63 propositions on the church and reconciliation to Pope John Paul II Oct. 29, ending 30 days of prayer and discussion on the issue.

The propositions themselves were not made public, but a Vatican summary of them said they have "an eminently pastoral character," are geared toward "illuminating the action of the church" and are "criteria for pastoral action."

The propositions were approved overwhelmingly by the more than 200 prelates from around the world gathered for the synod. Archbishop John Roach of St. Paul, Minneapolis told NC News Service.

The 63 statements, developed around the synod theme of "Reconciliation and Peace in the Mission of the Church," underwent a preliminary vote with amendment process before they came up in final form for a simple up-or-down vote by the assembled bishops. They were discussed at length in small groups, divided by languages, but were not debated on the assembly floor before the final vote.

Several synod sources indicated that there is nothing in the synod propositions as they now stand which changes current church teaching on the sacrament of reconciliation.

ENEMIES: The Druze, Maronites

By NC News Service

The current turmoil in Lebanon between the Maronite Catholics and the Druze, two traditional rivals, is part of a centuries-old struggle for cultural autonomy and political control of territory.

As is common in Arab countries, people identify socially through their religion, making religious affiliation the main factor in partisan political movements.

In Lebanon there are 300,000 Druze in a total population of 3.2 million.

The Druze are a religious sect that split from other Islamic groups in 1017.

The secretive group takes its name from a Turkish sailor, Nashtakin Al-Darazi, who later abandoned the original Druze faith. He was either killed in battle or executed for heresy in 1019, according to varying accounts.

The sect was organized by Caliph Al-Hakim Al-Amrallah, who disappeared shortly after proclaiming a new era of divine knowledge.

The Druze faith preaches a doctrine of dissimulation whereby a believer who resides among a community of a

different sect may conform to the practices of his host community while remaining a Druze at heart.

Dissimulation has allowed the Druze to adapt to diverse situations and a sizeable number currently live in Israel and are the only Arabs allowed to join the Israeli army.

For the Druze, God can change through successive incarnations from being affable to being amorphous to being self-disclosing. The wider beliefs of the Druze, however, remain shrouded in mystery.

The Druze scriptures are withheld from 90 percent of the sect's followers. Only the "uqqal" (wise ones) are permitted to read the manuscripts, which continue to be copied by hand in Arabic.

Those who are not uqqal are known as the "juhhal" (ignorant ones). The Druze believe in reincarnation while at the same time taking a pragmatic approach to life which centers around preservation of self, family and land.

The Druze arrived in what is now Lebanon and Syria in the 11th century, seeking a place to practice their religion without persecution. In the 17th century they joined forces with the Maronites, who also came to what is now Lebanon

in search of freedom to practice their religion, to fight the armies of the Ottoman Empire.

The Druze's three major strongholds were the Chouf and Metn mountains and the western slopes of Mount Hermon. But the Maronites also sought refuge and religious freedom in these areas, eventually leading to conflict and a series of bloody massacres in the 19th century.

The seeds of the conflict were sown when Maronite peasants rose against the feudal sheikhs, who were mostly Druze.

In the course of the rioting, massacres occurred, mostly carried out by the Druze sheikhs and their partisans against the Maronites.

French intervention then led to the disappearance of the old emirate of Lebanon and its feudal order and the creation of a more centralized government under a Christian -- but non-Lebanese -- governor. Many Druze emigrated to Syria, leaving the Maronites with a population majority.

But the Druze who stayed behind continued to feel that their community is the founder and guardian of the Lebanese identity, whereas many other religious communities in Lebanon, such as the Shiite and Sunni Moslems, directed their loyalties to outside political forces.