

# Along The Way

With Bishop Matthew H. Clark



## Ministry of the Priest in the Diocesan Church

(This is the second in a three-part series on Bishop Matthew H. Clark's speech to the diocesan clergy conference.)

Dear brothers: I am coming to discover more and more that priestly ministry is heart-changing. We know that through the merciful love of God we are privileged to be part of the life giving ways in which He changes people's hearts. What we may need to dwell on more are the ways God challenges and changes our own hearts through our experience of ministry and, most especially, through His holy people.

Hear the words of Pedro Casaldaliga, Bishop of the Diocese of Sao Felix Brazil:

"To the extent that the Church is known as the people of God, it is recognized as being 'particular' as well as 'universal.' Vatican II helped me, along with many others to discover the Good News of the Particular Church, however imprecisely. Only late have I come to understand that the 'signs of the times' should be complemented by the 'signs of the places.' Just as the new understanding of the nature and mission of the Bishop transformed the ecclesiology of Vatican II, so my own episcopal ordination, and my consciousness and experience as bishop, has profoundly modified the ecclesiology I once professed and lived by. My recent theological and pastoral readings; the widespread attempts at founding *comunidades de base*; the overcoming of the heaven/earth dichotomy between a church that walks in the clouds and a humanity that steps into mud puddles; a new, critical outlook that decentralized my view of the Church — Vatican monolith; my own "incarnation" among the people in whom I believe, with whom I suffer and to whom I commit myself right here in the region of Mato Grosso, between the Araguaia and Xinjen Rivers: All of these have been bringing me around to a new stance, to a new commitment vis a vis the real daily mystery of the Particular Church." (Casaldaliga, Pedro, "I Believe in Justice and Hope," *Fides/Claretian, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1978*, pp. 188-189.)

These words express well the powerful excitement which comes to a person open to the "signs of times" and the "signs

of place." Such open attentiveness draws us into the daily renewed mystery of God's love for his people and demands of us continued generous efforts to search out that truth and to express it in language of contemporary men and women.

That is what he says we must do. I am very much challenged by my understanding of how he suggests we might go about it:

"Those 'on top' (I even include myself, somewhat in that group.) will have to get used to listening to what their brothers 'on the bottom' have to say. And those who are 'on the bottom' will have to be more free, frequently responsible and risk taking, in exercising their right to speak up to those above them and alongside them. And those below have to concede to those about their own freedom and responsibility, and their special ministry of feeding God's flock..."

"And both of us will have to get used to walking together, side by side, on the same level of fraternal communion, without so many aboves and belows, accepting in practice the fundamental equality of all the baptized, favoring in fact the exercise of pluralism within the unity of faith, and pleasing God and man by giving free rein to the enriching interplay of a dialogue between the Church and the world.

"This fraternal attitude of listening and dialogue and freedom will in no way prejudice the hierarchical structure of the Church although it will restrict it to its proper confines, as a safeguard and stimulus of harmony in faith and clarity within the body, and of apostolic service to the community of believers..." (Ibid., pp. 192-193)

If all of this seems peculiar to the Amazon Region of Brazil, let me quote the first pastor of our Church, John Paul II, as he spoke to the bishops of France:

"I encourage your pastoral bravery which is already great, I know... You are right to live closer to your people... It seems to me that your fundamental task as bishops at the present time is that of helping your priests to live out their priestly ministry in a new fashion by which I mean calling more and more for better and better collaboration with the laity, without

any confusion of persons or functions." (John Paul II, "The Laity's Role in Pastoral Life", address to Bishops of Central France, March 23, 1982; "Origins," Vol. 12 No. 14; Sept. 16, 1982, p. 215.)

The Holy Father in the same address affirms the fact that baptism and confirmation "constitute a calling, a deputing to play one's part in every sector of the life of the community; prayer, witness, apostolate and all manner of service." (Ibid., p. 216)

He adds:

"We are not, therefore, talking about a need which arises simply out of the shortage of priests and religious, although this shortage may be a stimulus to awareness of it. In every Christian community, no matter how restricted, there are opportunities which are waiting to be seized." (Ibid., p. 216)

The Holy Father cites Paul as an example of one gifted for arousing and encouraging the diversity of gifts among the laity; he calls the laity to greater generosity with these gifts and then offers to all of us priests the following words of challenge and encouragement:

"She (the Church) looks, too, to priests to give still broader acceptance to this vision of the Church, to awaken the laity to the vocation which is properly theirs and give them real responsibilities! Many priests suffer from being on their own, from facing tasks which are beyond their strength, and this is understandable. But have they known how through their trustfulness, to create a climate which would allow the laity to offer their help?" (Ibid., p. 216)

One last quote sends us together in an exciting direction:

"On the practical level, it is also important to bring more imagination and daring to the concept of possible areas of participation by the laity, since these are far from being fully explored." (Ibid., p. 216)

Two bishops, one in Rome, the other in Brazil, offer a vision which calls us into a deeper union with the people we serve so that from that union we might be strengthened in ministry. They remind us that to be fully with them is central to our service; to call them to ever deeper and more active responsibility is to serve the life of the Church.

## Haitian Poverty IS Political, Rochester Pilgrims Aver

The extreme poverty in Haiti is a political issue, a group of Rochesterians recently returned from a week's sojourn there said last week.

The group, 18 members of Corpus Christi Church, delivered parish funds to a Catholic medical center in Haiti and toured the island known in the international community for its poverty, illiteracy and government by dynast president-for-life Jean Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

The pilgrims, headed by Father James Callan, pastor, brought money and hospital gowns, to Centro de Medico, a Catholic clinic, health care center and day care facility in Brooklyn, an enormous slum in the swamps outside Port-au-Prince, the country's capital.

The hospital gowns were

prepared by parishioners and embroidered by Mary Locke. This was the fifth year the parish has contributed to the health facility there.

According to Julie Augsbury, director of the Corpus Christi Child Care Center, "The poverty of Haiti is a political question."

Christine Garrison said that it was both the tool and the outcome of Haiti's "repressive" regime.

Haitian economy, Ms. Augsbury said, is based on growing tobacco and sugar cane, and mining aluminum — all for export to the United States, through U.S. corporations.

James Smith, another member of the group, said that the Haitian government, in the face of U.S. corporations' need for more growing space, will tell peasants that

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they have no clear title to their land. The U.S. corporations, then, are able to "come in and burn fields — raping the land."

"And when you've lost your land, you've lost your job, your livelihood," Ms. Augsbury said.

The average wage in Haiti is \$2.60 a day, she said.

The group visited not only Brooklyn, but also Catholic missions around the country.

Smith said that he entered the country "concerned how Haitians view Americans, since the rise of President Reagan." He said he was told by a priest there, that Haitians "are all aware of a difference, and look less favorably on the U.S."

Ms. Augsbury said that several Haitians to whom she put a question, "wouldn't talk about Reagan." Indeed, the group was viewed in some quarters as "rich Americans," Jane Ballard, another member of the group, said.

The group was also subjected to some mild harassment on the part of government security forces, Ms. Augsbury said. She described an identification and clearance system through which the group had to go in its travels about the country.

Their bus driver, she said, had to surrender his license at

one checkpoint, and was occupied for a good deal of the trip, going to other checkpoints trying to retrieve it. He was eventually told the license was lost, having been previously assured at several stops that he could get it back at a certain time at another checkpoint.

The Church suffers from this sort of thing as well, Ms. Augsbury said. At one mission in which the clergy are trying to develop lay leadership and base communities, posters proclaiming solidarity among the oppressed were confiscated by government security police.

Lay leaders are arrested, and in one celebrated case, tortured by security forces.

Why does this sort of thing go on, the group was asked.

Ms. Augsbury opined that Haitians are subject to three pressures: "They are caught up in a struggle just to survive; they have a long culture of fatalism, starting with the colonial Church and (now evidenced by the practice of) voodoo; and simple terror, they are afraid."

They are also afflicted, Ms. Ballard said, with "lassitude — even the dogs.

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## Racism 'Obvious' In U.S. Treatment Of Haitians Here

One of the chief architects of the now long-debated reform of U.S. immigration law, said last week that the U.S. treatment of Haitian refugees, particularly those who reached Florida during the Caribbean "boat lift" of three years ago, demonstrates "obvious racism."

Father Theodore Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University and chairman of the select committee which several years ago made recommendations on immigration reform, said that the political climate which accepts refugees from Cuba as political refugees, and yet denies entry to Haitians with the same status, shows racism.

"If it were up to me," he said in an interview last week, "I would give amnesty (to the Haitian refugees) tonight."

The courts are still debating the rights and the status of Haitian refugees. Several men in the Rochester area are awaiting the outcome of the legal wrangling as they progress through Immigration and Naturalization Service procedures.

Father Hesburgh said that the wave of Cuban immigration "cost the U.S. \$1 billion. The Haitians are only one small part of that chapter. The nitty-gritty is that today, the arrivals are under control."

"There is obvious racism when two groups, each seeking freedom and economic opportunity, and one is wel-



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comed and another is not," he said. Haitians are black.

The Holy Cross priest also said that he isn't "pleased at all," with the progress of immigration reform legislation.

He said last week that enacting it has been messed up because "there's something about immigration reform that brings everybody out of the closet. It's incredible when you think about who comes out."

The priest, in Rochester for the annual Notre Dame Club dinner, said immigration reform is based on a "tripod" of principles: "Amnesty for those aliens working now in this country, not felons; employer sanctions...; and some way of knowing whether they're citi-

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