

Religious Rights Effort Had Start in Rochester

In a manner of speaking, persecuted Soviet Christians owe a great deal to the Diocese of Rochester.

It was the 1969 appointment by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen of Anglican Father Michael Bourdeaux to the faculty of St. Bernard's Seminary which provided the latter the time to "reflect on what needed to be done," for Christians in the Soviet Union, and ultimately to the establishment, later that year, of Keston College in England.

Keston College is a major research and news center for information about persecuted Christians in the U.S.S.R.

Dr. Bourdeaux this year won the prestigious Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion for his work disseminating the stories of such persecution.

And in an interview last week, Dr. Bourdeaux acknowledged that it was the St. Bernard's sojourn which gave him the opportunity to collect his thoughts and to



DR. BOURDEAUX

strike out in the new direction which resulted in Keston College.

In Rochester to deliver this year's Otto A. Shults Lecture on Spirituality of St. Bernard's Institute, Dr. Bourdeaux brought back to the diocese a plea for Christians and persons interested in human rights to take up the cause of those Christians in the Soviet Union being

persecuted because of their religious activities.

Such persecution "has significantly increased in the past five years," he said, further describing it as "a terrific wave."

He particularly asked local Catholics to "be informed" of the situation. "Be informed," he said. "You need to be informed in order to pray. And informed prayer takes action."

"Do more to support the persecuted Catholic Church in the Soviet Union," he urged.

On gathering information, Dr. Bourdeaux singled out three publications: "The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania," an English translation of underground journals circulating in Lithuania, published in the United States; "Christian Prisoners in the U.S.S.R. 1983/84," authored by Dr. Bourdeaux and published by Keston, which includes the names and stories of 24 Roman Catholics who are either now or who have recently been in prison; and

Keston News Service, a mailed information service containing stories of persecution of Christians.

The recent moves by the Soviets against believers is somewhat of a puzzle, he said. "Why? Nobody knows for sure. The government is acting like a wounded beast, behaving as if it were under siege."

He did opine, however, that the election of Karol Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II may have been seen by Soviet leaders as evidence of the Catholic Church's intention to marshal its forces against Communist ideology.

With that election, "the Church in Eastern Europe has taken tremendous heart," he noted.

He said he sees the election, as "the clear interven-

tion of the Holy Spirit in the affairs of men." He described the election as "against all the politics of the time."

Also, dating from about the time of the election, Dr. Bourdeaux said he sees a "tremendous spiritual revival" among Christians in the Soviet Union, even under the current persecution.

The second thing Dr. Bourdeaux would encourage diocesanans to do is to "get spiritually involved with people under communism, to acknowledge the religious revival and indeed support it."

This, he said, is done by writing letters of support either to religious prisoners or to their families. Such letters, he said, should "only go to people who have asked for them;" and, he said,

"There are religious groups not seeking outside intervention," in cases of persecution.

He said that such information is clearly stated in Keston College publications.

Among the religious bodies being persecuted, but not wishing intervention, he said, are Soviet Moslems, particularly Crimean Tartars. Also, "Ukrainian Catholics keep their activities secret, underground," he said.

He said that Soviet "Baptists have the best organized network" of Christian support, with Adventists also well-organized.

The information address on Dr. Bourdeaux's work is Keston College, Heathfield Road, Keston, Kent, England BR2 6BA.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

Exodus In the Eyes Of Isaiah

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mk. 1/1-8. (R1) Is. 40/1-5, 9-11. (R2) 2 Pt. 3/8-14.

In Scriptures there are four exoduses: (1) from Egypt; (2) from Babylon; (3) from earth to heaven (the Paschal Mystery); and (4) from spiritual slavery (a baptism of repentance).

The first two in the Old Testament were types of the last two in the New Testament. The first and the third readings of Sunday's liturgy provide the link between the Old and the New Testament readings.

The first reading is the beginning of the Book of Consolation, found in the prophet Isaiah. All 66 chapters of the Book of Isaiah were not written by one and the same author; very likely, there were three authors of the book. Chapters 1 to 39 in general were written by the prophet Isaiah, the first or Proto-Isaiah, who lived between the years 742-687 B.C. Chapters 40 to 55 (the Book of Consolation) were written about 548-539 B.C. The author of these chapters was an unknown prophet who, because he came in the spirit of Proto-Isaiah, has been called Second or Deutero-Isaiah -- just as Jesus called John the Baptist another Elijah (Mt. 11/14), because he came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Lk. 1/17). The concluding chapters (56 to 66) were probably written by a third author called Third or Trito-Isaiah.

Sunday's first reading is from Second-Isaiah. God's people had been in the Babylonian Captivity -- some of them for nearly 60 years. The prophet hears a voice saying to him, "Comfort, give comfort to my people." They needed consoling -- captivity in those days was a hell on earth. The comforting

message was soon going to end -- "her guilt is expiated."

Then the prophet hears another heavenly voice crying out, "Prepare the way of the Lord." The Lord is coming -- coming to free His people, coming to lead them out of Babylon. It won't be a hurried exodus as from Egypt. No bloodshed, no haste, no fierce deserts to cross. The valleys shall be filled, the mountains leveled, the rough ways made smooth -- making the return journey to Jerusalem an incredible achievement, revealing the power of God!

And Jerusalem shall see the exiles returning; and all through Judea they will shout the good news: "How powerful is our God! Look and behold, He is bringing back our people like a shepherd his sheep."

So, twice, God had freed His people: from Egypt and then from Babylon. As Second-Isaiah looked back to the first exodus from Egypt and saw a replay here in Babylon -- only on a higher key; so Mark looked back to the Babylonian exodus and saw in Christ another exodus, being played on a still higher key.

Second-Isaiah was speaking of liberation from political and physical slavery; John the Baptist came, a voice crying, bringing a message also of consolation; this time, not from a political and physical slavery, but from a worse slavery, that of sin! "John the Baptist appeared...proclaiming...the forgiveness of sins." Who can forgive sins, but God? Hence John pointed to one coming "more powerful than I."

Advent celebrates the coming of the Lord at the end of time. But He comes now, inviting us to penance, to the sacrament of reconciliation for the forgiveness of sins, so that we may be prepared for His final coming. Yes, may we ready the way for the Lord, may we let Him into our hearts.

VOA Home Slates Sale, Announces New Grants

Residents of the Volunteers of America Adult Home at 95 W. Main St. will hold a Christmas Crafts Sale 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Friday, Dec. 7.

Proceeds from the sale go to the residents, with a small percentage to cover the cost of the materials. All of the items for sale are made by the residents.

The VOA also announced the recent receipt of a \$2,400 grant from the Curtice-Burns/Pro-Fac Foundation, and a grant from the Davenport-Hatch Foundation, both of which are for a current project of replacing floor coverings.

Christmas Volunteers Needed

The Christmas Bureau needs 50 volunteer drivers to deliver special gifts and cheer baskets to area elderly and infirm from 8 to 11 a.m., Thursday, Dec. 20. Volunteers are asked to donate one hour of their time to assist. Anyone interested should call 271-0868 between 9 and 11 a.m. daily.

Women's Clubs Plan Party

The Rochester Federation of Women's Clubs will have its annual Christmas party at noon, Thursday, Dec. 13, at the Mapledale Party House, 1020 Maple St. Speaker will be John La Rue, program director of Good Days and Special Times.

Chairwoman is Agnes Hape; co-chairwoman, Ann Peacock. Hostess clubs are the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Pritchard Rallings Auxiliary 1248 and Beta Sigma Phi. Anyone wishing reservations should call 342-8248 by Dec. 6.

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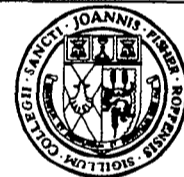
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