

'Spiritual Experience' Led to 'Food for Poor'

A spiritual experience while on an airplane trip when he "was overcome by a power that was much greater than I" led Ferdinand G. Mahfood to found Food for the Poor, a Pompano Beach, Fla., based organization whose purpose is to aid the needy in Latin America.

Mahfood will be in the diocese March 5-7 to speak about his organization at several places.

A Catholic layman, Mahfood ran an export business in Florida and his visits to Central America and Haiti took him to places seldom seen by tourists.

On a flight back from one of these visits in 1975, he read a book called "Something More." He re-read it soon after on another flight, to Chicago, and the final chapter which is on the Holy Spirit "hit me."

"As I sat there reading, somehow the Holy Spirit came out of the pages and into my body. Tears started to run out of my eyes like a river. I started crying. I was overcome by a power that was much greater than I," Mahfood said.

"During the experience, I was asked a very simple question. A very loving voice, in a whisper, asked, 'Will you go to Mass every day for the rest of your life?'"

Mahfood obeyed and then found himself wanting to do something for the poor of



Mahfood and friend.

Central America and Haiti. He spoke to his brothers who were his business partners and they supported him. He received permission from the Internal Revenue Service to form a tax deductible organization, which was to be Food for the Poor, Inc. He officially began work in 1982 and since then has raised and distributed \$11 million in food and supplies, the organization reports.

FFTP says it has one of the lowest operating costs among

charitable groups. It reports that it spends between 2 and 4 cents of each dollar in operational expenses, as compared to up to 40 percent costs in some other organizations. One reason for this, he says, is that his family supplies much of the administrative personnel.

As part of his visit to this area, Mahfood will speak at 7 p.m., March 7, at St. Theodore Church in Spencerport, as part of the parish's Renewal Week.

Webster Churches Set Lent Programs

Webster — The Webster Council of Churches is sponsoring a Lenten Series, p.m., the Sunday of Lent at Webster United Methodist Church, 147 E. Main St. Father Charles Johnson, director of Social Ministry, will speak on economic justice and the U.S. Catholic Youth Council, National Service, March 2, Rev. Ken Deane, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Webster, will address the topic of "Human Dignity and International" March 10. Mrs. Gail Kowalski, representative of the General Ecumenical Ministries office and

longtime religious activist, will speak on finding peace and justice. March 17, Mrs. Eleanor Moore of Third Presbyterian Church will speak on the subject of "The Power of the Word." A special service for the Lenten season will be held at the Webster United Methodist Church, 147 E. Main St., on March 24. The service will be at 7 p.m. and will feature a special service for the Lenten season. The service will be at 7 p.m. and will feature a special service for the Lenten season. The service will be at 7 p.m. and will feature a special service for the Lenten season.

'Right Wing' Complaints Called Factor in Removal Of Book's Imprimatur

Washington (NC) -- "Extreme right-wing" complaints to the Vatican were a contributing factor, but not the decisive reason, behind Vatican instructions in 1984 to remove the imprimatur from "Christ Among Us," according to Archbishop Peter L. Gerety of Newark, N.J.

In a written report on the facts surrounding the controversial case, Archbishop Gerety quoted from a Feb. 28, 1984, letter he received from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, instructing him to withdraw his imprimatur from the book.

Archbishop Gerety said Cardinal Ratzinger had written that he wanted the imprimatur removed immediately and the action widely publicized. The cardinal, the report said, wanted this done in light of a fundamental unsuitability of the book as a catechetical text "and also in the light of numerous serious complaints made by clergy and lay people alike from all over the United States."

Commenting on the cardinal's words, Archbishop Gerety said, "The only people who have complained about the book in this country; as far as I know, are the extreme right-wing groups who have been giving some of us bishops so much problem in other areas also."

He said that while Cardinal Ratzinger had cited the complaints as a factor in his call for withdrawing the imprimatur, the doctrinal congregation also was "most anxious to make it clear that their decision was taken not

because of pressure from extremist groups but for substantive reasons with which my (theological) advisers and I are in general agreement."

On April 16 last year the archbishop announced that he was withdrawing his imprimatur, official church permission for a book to be published, from the book.

"Christ Among Us," an introduction to Catholicism for adults by Anthony Wilhelm, had been published with an imprimatur since 1967 and had sold some 1.6 million copies.

Archbishop Gerety also said he believed the facts outlined in his report "will demonstrate the wisdom" of the congregation's decision, "given the apparently narrow meaning the congregation now attributes to the imprimatur."

The archbishop's comment on a new, narrower interpretation of the imprimatur reinforced complaints made last year by several U.S. Catholic organizations that Vatican actions on imprimaturs suggested unannounced changes in the way the rules were being interpreted.

Open House For Nurses Scheduled

The Department of Nursing of Nazareth College will hold an open house for registered nurses interested in the college's upper-level baccalaureate nursing program, 7:30-9 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 28 in the Department of Nursing Lab, Rm. 236, Smyth Hall. Diploma and associate degree graduates of nursing programs in the area are invited to attend. Another evening open house is scheduled for Tuesday, April 2.

Representatives of the Department of Nursing will discuss admission requirements; curriculum design; opportunities for part-time or full-time study; and managing work, study and family responsibilities.

NFP Offers Info Sessions

Natural Family Planning of Rochester has scheduled two information sessions, both from 7:30 to 9 p.m., Monday, March 4 at St. Mary's Hospital, East Auditorium, and Friday, March 8, Rochester General Hospital, Main Conference Room.

The sessions are free but pre-registration is required. Further information is available from Marian LaPorta, NFP community education coordinator, (716) 464-8705.

PRAAYER

The Desire to Be Present to the Lord

Part 2 of a 2-part series

By Brother Patrick T. Flanagan SJ

Take a passage of Scripture, read it and reflect on it. Let it filter through you and notice to what words, ideas, feelings, you are drawn. Pause at whatever attracts you and dwell on it. One may find it helpful to fantasize in prayer. Let your self be with Jesus in a given situation, with Mary, Joseph, Peter, James, John or any of the men and women disciples in the Gospels. In your fantasy you may wish to relive the event or even update it. Apply your senses — let yourself be at the place, see it, hear it, taste it, smell it, sense its atmosphere. Stay where you are attracted as long as you are being nourished.

You may wish to ask questions of the Lord or of those saints recorded in the Scripture. Look for ways to shape your desires into questions. God delights in responding and in various ways. When a question is presented to the Lord, Mary or one of the saints, attempt to be as still and as open as possible and to listen to the response. Sometimes this leads us to an experience as instanced in Eph. 3:14-21; Luke 11:1-13; John 15-vs. 9-17.

When others come into your prayer, the sick, the suffering, the poor and the hungry, commend them to the Risen Jesus.

The major issues and events of our times are important to bring into our prayer, such as peace in the world, a real and sincere nuclear disarmament program; that all people live in a just society, for a better sense of values and priorities in our lives. Our personal concerns, of course, should be presented to the Lord.

Experiences in prayer can lead us to responses similar to Matt 5:1-16; John 13:1-17, and Acts 10:39-43.

Conclude your prayer in gratitude and slowly recite the Our Father. After concluding, you may wish to briefly jot down the high (or low) points of the prayer time, especially what came to you while listening. This review may provide key points for further reflection and prayer.

While praying, should any distractions arise, it is recommended to attempt to come back to the awareness of being present to the Lord and to repeat your petition for the specific grace you are presently seeking.

Scripture is not the Lord, but it is a privileged place to meet Him. However, we must pay attention to Scripture in the same way, as in the contemplation of nature one pays attention to trees or a sunset. One must have a contemplative attitude toward Scripture; let the Scriptures be themselves, listen to them and ask the Lord to reveal Himself while we are listening. The simple act of looking at the Lord in a Scriptural event is in itself productive prayer. This contemplation produces, all by itself, sprouts of love, affection and desires, and these, in turn, lead the person to look more closely at the Lord. This closeness can gradually bring about a new trust in Him. You allow yourself to be carried by the Lord.

What does contemplation of the Lord do to me? I am

only free to respond or not respond when I am aware of the reaction I experience when I begin to pay attention. Noticing this reaction is fundamental to growth in the spiritual life. Then you are faced with a choice. This is the choice to express, or not express, your reaction to the Lord. This expression is basically a sharing of oneself, and the decision to express is a decision not to keep one's affective life isolated from the Lord but to share it with Him. A person who wants to share his feelings will gradually find that he has deeper feelings to share. Desire and a willingness to let their feelings emerge are all that most people need to begin to share their feelings in prayer.

Feelings are important to prayer. They can lead to affective prayer, which is to be cherished. It is a very special prayer because it usually comes from the heart more than from the head. It can be the means of the growth of our relationship with the Lord. It can lead to the development of a deep personal love of Jesus.

But let's go back a bit. What do we mean by "relationship with God?" We mean something that is, first of all. It is established by the creation of the human person and exists even when the person is unaware of its existence. I am a creature whether I know it or not and God is my creator. God knows me as His son or daughter even when I did not know Him as my Father. Jesus knows me as a brother or sister even if I am unaware of our relationship.

Our faith tells us that God is continuously creating and renewing us. Life itself communicates Him to us. Sunsets tell of His grandeur; blizzards of His power. Friendship communicates to us the experience of love. We are being spoken to continuously. A particular religious experience is an experience of explicit communication between both parties, God and the pray-er; the person knows that God is communicating with him or her at the moment.

Contemplation, then, leads to, or rather is, an experience of transcendence — that is, forgetfulness of self and of everyone and everything else, except the contemplated object. The reaction of absorption, joy, pain, sympathy, love and gratitude that are associated with contemplation are not willed. They are elicited from us by what we see, hear and comprehend; they are basically spontaneous responses to people and things outside of ourselves.

Simply put, the desire to be present to the Lord, to be in His Presence, is the wonder and beauty of prayer.

The awareness of the Presence of God helps me in the handling of problems in my life. It can provide me with peace, that safe feeling that goes with true faith. That Presence establishes that communication and helps me become aware of the Lord in my life. It helps me to pray in gratitude. It helps me to say thank you, Lord, for the wonder of myself and for the wonder and beauty of your creation. A heart of desire can lead to affection which can be the means of a growing development of friendship, possibly even discipleship.

COURIER-JOURNAL

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Vol. 96, No. 22 February 27, 1985

Courier-Journal (USPS 135-580)

Published weekly except week after July 4 and Christmas, by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy 35¢. 1 year subscription in U.S. \$15. Canada and Foreign \$20. Offices: 114 South Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607. (716) 454-7050. Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, N.Y. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.