



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

Of grace and growth

I had always presumed that if I ever got to Chavez Ravine in Los Angeles, it would be to watch the Dodgers play baseball. As it turns out, my first visit there will be on the evening of September 16 to participate in a Eucharistic liturgy presided over by John Paul II. That liturgy will gather over 60,000 people, among whom will be all of the bishops of our country.

We bishops will spend that morning and share lunch with the Holy Father at one of the seminaries of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. At that time, we will have some conversations with him about moral teachings, the local church, vocations and a selection of pastoral issues.

I look forward to both parts of that day and with you pray that all of John Paul's time among us will be a time of grace and growth, not only for the Church in the United States, but for John Paul himself.

Anticipation of the visit has been helpful to me, because it has provided a concrete event around which to pray and think about themes very important to me and, I think, to our whole community of faith.

It has led me to consider such questions as these: Who is the bishop of Rome and what is his distinct ministry to the Church? Has the shape and form of that ministry changed over the years, or has it remained precisely the same since the time of Peter? What particular tone or style does John Paul II bring to his ministry that makes him like and/or unlike John Paul I, Paul VI, John XXIII? Or are there any differences among them?

Thought and reading about these questions have been helpful to me, as I try to prepare my own spirit to draw as much as I possibly can from what I am sure will be the rich grace of those days of special presence.

Even the controversies generated by the visit offer invitations to see the deeper meaning and lasting values behind passing human events. Among those that have caught my attention are: What really is my attitude towards the Jewish people? Do I really try to understand the profound significance the horrors of the holocaust have for them and should have for us? Is the large amount of money needed to finance the pope's journey a countersign? And if it is, how can we do such things in a better way?; What does it mean to be American and Roman Catholic in our culture? And where are the points of tension in that for me — for my brothers and sisters?

These are some of the ways John Paul II has already helped me to reflect on matters of the heart. I am sure others will emerge during and after the visit itself.

If there is one last way to mention, it is the moral force of the bishop of Rome in the world and the enormous capacity of the one called to that ministry of service to influence human affairs. Pope John Paul II clearly understands that, and has devoted oceans of energy to live it out.

I encourage you to continue your prayer that God will bless these special days, and make them an occasion for deeper understanding, mutual support, healing and a renewal of confidence about the future. Peace to all.

The Editor's Desk

Ridiculous or sublime?

This was a peculiar weekend. One third of the nation seemed morbidly obsessed with the gruesome details of Elvis Presley's death, while a far smaller fraction of the populace evoked the flower-child "spiritualism" of the 1960s. I — along with many of you, I presume — simply tried to avoid endless media reports on the activities of both groups.

Of the two, however, I by far preferred the "harmonic convergence" people. They looked pretty silly sitting on various beaches, meditating with their eyes closed as nature gave the TV cameras some of the most beautiful sunrise footage I've had occasion to view. I can't understand how a historian in Colorado founded a "religion" based on beliefs common to Indian peoples long ago slain. And why, I wonder, did he settle on a minimum of 144,000 devotees as the "critical mass" of human energy required to establish the new-harmonic order?

But inasmuch as I couldn't take them seriously, I sympathized with the beach meditators; their objective was a universal peace to be accomplished by faith. I hope the pundits won't get so caught up in ridiculing these eccentric idealists that their message is ridiculed as well. The world certainly would be a better place if everyone "tuned in" to the environment, love and interplanetary brotherhood — though I'm not sure what that could mean for a planet that considers itself the only child of God's vast universe.

In my column of August 13, space constraints forced me to eliminate references to a Congressional initiative regarding the fairness doctrine. The nature of this column is primarily opinion rather than information, and I had assumed subscribers would have already learned the specifics of the doctrine's demise through other media. Considering the dearth of coverage devoted to it — an indicator of the media establishment's views on the subject — that probably was a poor assumption. And when a reader called to inquire, I remarked that, in this case at least, brevity does not correspond to clarity.

For the record: Since the late-1930s, the fairness doctrine has existed simply as a Federal Communications Commission regulation; it has never had the force of law. Not long ago, Congress attempted to legislate the doctrine — thereby stripping the FCC of control over the regulation's lifespan — but the bill was vetoed by President Reagan.

The doctrine's supporters in Congress vow that they will try again, and I suggest that readers express their points of view to their congressional representatives.

C-J Letters

Christ created male-ordered roles

To the editor:

The letter of Sandy Zecchino (C-J July 16: "Columnist's argument against women priests found fallacious," chiding Father Shamon I found somewhat amazing. She admonishes Father: "Do not worry over the decline in the number of priests. The Church will survive because Jesus told us it will. Only 'those of little faith' cry out to Him for help.")

Yet Father's faith apparently is mindful of the Lord's words, "The harvest is good but laborers are scarce. Beg the harvest master to send out laborers to gather his harvest." Father directs us to the thinking of the Church and Christ found in scripture. God the Son asks for the sacrificial love of total, lifelong commitment with single-minded attention unhindered by the undertow of family obligations. A consumer society finds that too dear! Reshaping criteria to draw the more unsacrificial people is a recipe for disappointment. And leaving criteria to unknowledgeable, unwise, and oftentimes very misdirected "base communities" can be, in the long run, a naive recipe for ecclesio-genicide not genesis.

Regarding women responding: It's been noted Mary sat at Christ's feet to bask in the beauty of His teaching while Martha tended table. Mary certainly was irrepressibly drawn, and He lovingly defended that. Yet we do not find that He "called" her or any other woman to a male-ordered role.

Matthew has Christ say of Himself, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." An authority that could have made some superbly obvious provision for woman's ordination. Where is it? Can a real God be thwarted by mere men? Ms. Zecchino draws interesting and misleading impressions with uncited statements from Dr. Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza's "scholarly reconstructions of Christian origins" proposing that "early Church writings reveal that women preached, baptized and celebrated the Eucharist." That certainly would be a perhaps irrefutable bombshell were (the women's actions) done with the approving knowledge of the universal Church. Where is this bombshell? Extant writings that exhort and condemn such practices can hardly be cited as proving women's original "rightful places." Also, the shared charisms and ministries that she mentions did not require ordination. Anyone can preach and prophesy as a gift, but it has nothing to do with ordination and Eucharist. One need not be ordained to minister to fellow beings rendering service for God. But to minister to God within Eucharist is God's purpose and choice. This is beyond existential to mystical, from a mystical God.

However, all this is now viewed as opiate rubbish to liberationists inspired by bolshevik materialists. Zecchino also writes, "Apparently the early Christians did not demand a

physical resemblance to Christ of their ministers. They ministered to each other — so great and profound were their charisms!" There were groups of sects called Christian that were not the Church universal. Some very strange groups like the Gnostics and Montanists, Marcians, Coleridians existing from (the middle of the second) century until the (fifth century) had females as "priests" and "bishops." But the universal Church remained bonded to her revealed vocation to be the people uniquely "called out" from the prevailing surrounding cultures, from the old covenant to the renewed covenant. Nearer our times the Old Catholics broke from the Church because of Vatican I. Of that group the Polish Mariavites decided on females as priests and bishops in opposition to Old Catholics. Recently after 60 years of living with this they have reversed because they have come to believe it is destructive of Catholic faith. The Episcopal Church of America is being watched by world Anglicanism with interest, and in some places reportedly with horror, as it is necessary to announce beforehand who is to celebrate so that the walkouts of those convinced the consecration is invalid will not take place during the service! Would we want to risk the peace of the Real Presence with doubts?

Gene Charles
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Society suffers from sexual confusion

To the Editor:

A writer (C-J Letters July 16: "Columnist's argument against women priests found fallacious") argued for "Women priests" with the help of these words: "Apparently the early Christians did not demand a physical resemblance to Christ in their ministers."

The "early" Christians knew that only males could bear any "physical" resemblance to Christ. They also knew that, if those "ministers" were priests, they had to be male.

Thus the "early" Christians had to reckon with sexual identity. That identity today has been erased from the minds of many men and women. Here is a visible reason for the change. No man has ever possessed a womb; women always have. To the extent that women cease using their capacity to

be mothers, they become equal to men in talent, capacity for learning and job-holding.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Harvard historian and adviser to President Kennedy, was so impressed by this lack of sexual identity that he wrote: "Today men are more and more conscious of maleness not as a fact but as a problem." He continued, "Outside the home one sees a similar blurring of function. While men design fashions and brew up cosmetics, women become doctors, lawyers, bank cashiers and executives." Therefore, why not priests?

What has this disregard of sexual identity done to women's mindset? Listen to what Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, the psychologist, said: "Women now fill many 'masculine roles' and expect their husbands to assume many of the

tasks once reserved for their own sex."

Psychiatrist Dr. Theodore Reik (also noted) this psychological destruction of sexual identity. In his job to minister to a mind diseased, he wrote: "Women are afraid they might be considered only women."

A closing quotation from Dr. Schlesinger helps me to answer the question "What about women priests?" He wrote: "Today women hold the key positions of personal power in our society and use this power relentlessly to consolidate their mastery."

Can we wonder in the lack of today's sexual identity and women's "mastery" in society, that some of them insisted on being "ordained?"

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Grasp the cleansing graces of reconciliation

To the editor:

This is in response to a letter by Jerry Paladino, (C-J July 23: "Are today's Catholics really holier?") On Sunday evening, I returned from the five-day Congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelization, which was held in New Orleans. Over 40 Christian denominations were united under the Blood of Jesus. The great thrust throughout those days and evenings was "The Call to Holiness?" One of the first speakers presented our position under the Blood of Jesus and our condition which is in need of daily repentance. This was carried through

by the main speakers.

Why have we stopped remembering what we were taught before Vatican II about Jesus's institution of the sacrament of reconciliation and those precious graces that wash us clean? Jesus has won the victory, and the graces are there in the confessional. Why not grasp them?

The bishop who spoke at the congress' Sunday morning Mass made the statement, "Can you imagine what could happen if those other denominations had the Eucharist?" May we not add "and the sacrament of reconciliation as well?"

Pope Paul VI's letter on "Evangelization in the Modern World" was quoted by Catholic and non-Catholic speakers. Many times we were reminded that Jesus commissioned each and every one of us to evangelize. We were sent home with a strong exhortation to live His word, and Father Tom Forrest, CSSR, often repeated the phrase, "Move it out!"

Let's all Catholics open ourselves to all His available graces and do it together!

Dorothy Frederick
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A question of fairness

To the Editor:

Just wondering: How come those goofy "clown Masses" and those wild charismatic things have the green light from Rome, and the beautiful, mystical Tridentine Mass is verboten? I dunno, that just don't sound right to me. Nope, it just don't sound right to me.

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C-J Letters Policy

The Courier-Journal wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome all signed, original letters about current issues affecting Church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the Church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions of the letter writers.

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