

Columnists

A bungled opportunity

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Q: Were you happy about the pope's recent visit?

A.: No. I was disappointed, and continue to be so. The Holy Father's visit and his meetings with so many people were seen by so few. The pope's coming was the decade's event to evangelize, instruct, unify and edify millions. But the viewing of the visit was bungled.

Q: Bungled?

A.: Yes, bungled. The major television networks carried very little excepting little snippets, usually of inconsequential things. The glorious Eucharistic celebrations; the ecumenical prayer service at Charleston; the ecstatic welcome by faculty and students at the University of South Carolina (which consisted of an almost entirely non-Catholic group); the meeting with American priests at Miami and with the entire body of American bishops in California; the special meetings with Hispanics, blacks, teenagers, AIDS victims, Detroit Poles and Canadian Indians; with elementary school children — meetings with nearly 50 groups in all — most of this was unseen, unheard, unnoticed. Why? Because of the ineptness of Catholic communications.

Q: But didn't Mother Angelica have her Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) present the whole visit of the pope?

A.: Yes, together with the bishop's network, Catholic Telecommunications Network of America (CTNA). The combination was wonderful, with commentary between papal events given by Mother Angelica and a superb Father Bonnot who represented the bishops' network. But these reached very few!

While none of the major networks carried the visit of the pope, the entire visit was available on cable channels, when it was so arranged. It is true that many people do not have cable. It is also true that many do. In our own parish of Holy Trinity, Webster, 10 miles from Rochester, we have a high percentage of cable subscribers, and Channel 35 was available to any who knew about it. It was special for the occasion, and would not be much known without special notification.

At my two Sunday Masses with 800 people, I asked: "How many got the pope's visit?" Only about 6 percent viewed the greatest event

On the Right Side

of evangelization, education and inspiration of the decade. Dr. Billy Graham's people are working systematically, preparing for their coming Rochester crusade, starting a year ahead of time. They communicate.

Rochester had cable Channel 35, which carried the papal visit coverage for as much as 10 hours a day for some of the activities of the pope. It was broadcast in Webster and had quite a radius, but it did not reach Hilton. So Father Chester Klocek phoned Mr. Rodriguez, manager of cable channels 12 and 35 and asked: "What about the visit of Pope John Paul II? Aren't you showing it?" Father Klocek was told that he was the only one who had inquired. But because of one priest's concern, Channel 12 gave the papal visit to people in Spencerport, Brockport, Parma and Hilton — the areas west of the Genesee River.

An indignant woman from Auburn phoned me in Webster to say that there was no TV coverage there. Auburn is a city of 33,400 people with a reputed Catholic population of 80 percent. It has seven Catholic parishes. My caller drove to Geneva to watch some of the broadcast.

Not only was a supreme opportunity lost by failing to make TV coverage available and publicized among more people, but few even now have the slightest idea of what they have lost. If a man had a lottery ticket with the number to win \$50,000 and tossed it away not realizing that he had a winning ticket, he would not realize that he had lost \$50,000 and would not miss it. Yet that loss would still be tragically there. And the fact that so many people do not know what they have lost by not sharing in the papal visit does not lessen the real loss to them and to the Church.

Grieve with me.

Is the Church a democracy?

By Father Richard P. McBrien

When Catholics get into arguments — as they occasionally do — about the policies of the pope, the Curia, their bishop or their pastor, someone always feels compelled to remind the others that the Church is not a democracy.

That may be true, but if the Church isn't a democracy, what is it? A monarchy? A dictatorship?

Such an understanding of the Church is simply wrong — historically, theologically, doctrinally and canonically.

Those who believe the Church to be a monarchy with the pope as the sole ruler are innocent, first, of the most basic elements of Church history. Indeed, if Jesus intended the Church to be monarchical in structure, he would have made that clear to his closest disciples, and especially to the Apostles. But, in fact, when the Council of Jerusalem was held in 49 or 50 A.D., it was James, not Peter, who presided. It was James, not Peter, who executed the council's decisions.

For literally hundreds of years, the bishops of Rome did not exercise even the quasi-monarchical authority over the universal Church that modern canon law cedes to them.

Theologically, the Church is neither a monarchy nor a democracy; it is a collegial reality. This means that the Church is a college of local churches that together constitute the universal Church.

In each local church, the unity of the faithful is rooted not only in the presence of the Holy Spirit, in the Eucharist, in the other sacraments, and in the Word of God, but also in the ministerial office of the bishop.

The unity of the bishops is a manifestation and representation of the unity of the whole Church. Their unity finds expression in ecumenical councils, in world synods, in regional councils and in national episcopal conferences.

The Diocese of Rome and its bishop hold a unique place in this college of local churches and of their bishops because, by tradition, Rome is where Peter's ministry and life ended in martyrdom.

But the bishops' ministry and authority do

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not depend on the pope. Vatican II declared that bishops are not vicars of the pope. "Their power, therefore, is not destroyed by the supreme and universal power. On the contrary it is affirmed, strengthened, and vindicated thereby, since the Holy Spirit unfailingly preserves the form of government established by Christ the Lord in His Church" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, #27).

Consequently, if one wants to talk about the government of the Church in modern political terms, it would be far more accurate — though still misleading — to call it an oligarchy rather than a monarchy.

What is clear from history, theology, and doctrine is also clear, finally, in the Code of Canon Law as well. The code acknowledges that the college of bishops is "also the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church" (# 336). So it is not the pope alone who exercises "supreme and full power."

But this is putting everything in a kind of legalistic framework. There is much more to the Church than its governing structures. It is a mystery, a sacrament, the People of God.

Vatican II reminded us that the Holy Spirit is present in the whole Church, "in the faithful of every rank" (Constitution on the Church, #12).

The council proposed that such principles as these be implemented at every level: in parish and diocesan councils, in priests' senates, in synods and in associations of various kinds.

Such instruments of corresponsibility may not show the Church to be a democracy, but they clearly show it not to be a monarchy either.

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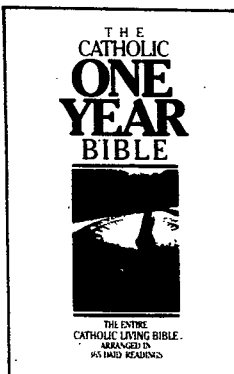


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