

Editorial & Opinion

Recognizing the demands, challenges to today's shepherds

Monday evening.

I write this week from Washington, D.C., where I am participating in the fall meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

We began our general meeting this morning and will continue our sessions through Thursday noon. I arrived in Washington yesterday for two related meetings. The first was a day-long program of study and discussion about "A Shepherd's Care: Reflections on the Changing Role of Pastor," a recent publication of our committee on priestly life and ministry. The second was an evening meeting of our conference committee on priestly formation.

I found the session about "A Shepherd's Care" to be a most rewarding one. As its subtitle indicates, it is not a theoretical or abstract document, but one that was developed from comments on the lived experiences of pastors in the Church in the years following Vatican Council II.

The document recognizes, among other developments in the ministry of pastors:

1) The change from being a leader of devotion to becoming a leader of the prayer of the community and a developer of spirituality;

2) The change from being a teacher in the pulpit and classroom to being a teacher in the wide-ranging circumstances and groups with which today's pastors must become involved;

3) The change from being a general practitioner of pastoral care to becoming a more specialized minister to specific groups with particular needs;

Along the Way



4) The change from presiding in a community that already has a strong identity and cultural support to being a builder of community in a culture that does not support the venture; and

5) The change from being the sole person in charge to a more participatory style of leadership.

This brief summary, imperfect as it is, may give you some sense of the kinds of demands to which our pastors have given such generous response in the last 20 years. Any one of these changes would be difficult enough, because each demands new skills and calls for the development of new ways of relating to people. But our pastors have been asked to cope with them all, and they have done that exceedingly well.

One of the ways in which I found the program especially helpful was the way it called us bishops to reflect on our relationships with our pastors and to share with one another the concrete ways in which we do that.

I was given an unexpected and enjoyable opportunity for such reflection when I was asked to participate on a three-bishop panel addressing that precise question. It was an unexpected opportunity because I was a last-minute replacement for a bishop who could not make it on time. It was most enjoyable because it forced me to focus on the issue more than I had done in some time.

This is not the time to list the many ways in which the panel responded to the question, but I look forward to speaking with our Diocesan Priests' Council, sharing with them what was said that day and hearing their ideas about how I can better be brother and friend to them. It won't be the first time we have had that discussion, but my hope is that our common reflection on "A Shepherd's Care" may help us come to a new level of mutual understanding and affection.

I would like to ask your prayers for that intention. I also invite you to reflect on your knowledge of and appreciation for the complex and demanding ministry of the pastor in today's Church. My judgment is that our pastors are a dedicated, hardworking group of individuals who carry on their ministry in a manner that makes all of us proud.

If you make a different judgment about your pastor, I ask that you try hard to understand him as a person and to appreciate the demands he faces. Secondly, I ask you to offer him your support and assistance.

Peace to all.

The Editor's Desk

Premature optimism?

Despite the upbeat tone reported in our November 5 article "Preliminary results positive for '87 Thanks Giving Appeal," we are now learning that at least a few parishes are experiencing problems — and in some cases, big problems — meeting their appeal quotas. Although the in-hall portion of the campaign is over, some parishes are still as much as one-fourth short of their goals.

One could propose any number of factors — the stock market, for example — as contributing to this situation, causing prospective donors to be wary or conservative in making pledges. I've also heard people complain that too much money is being spent on television commercials and that diocesan requests for money never end.

Regardless of the cause, some people are choosing not to contribute, to contribute less than they have in previous years, or to delay in contributing. The result is some very nervous pastors and a potential for further restrictions in the diocesan budget.

The budget cuts forced by the TGA shortfall of 1985 have already caused the elimination of some important programs and the curtailment of others. There is no fat in the current budget, and if the TGA were to fail in raising needed funds, more services would have to be eliminated or restricted.

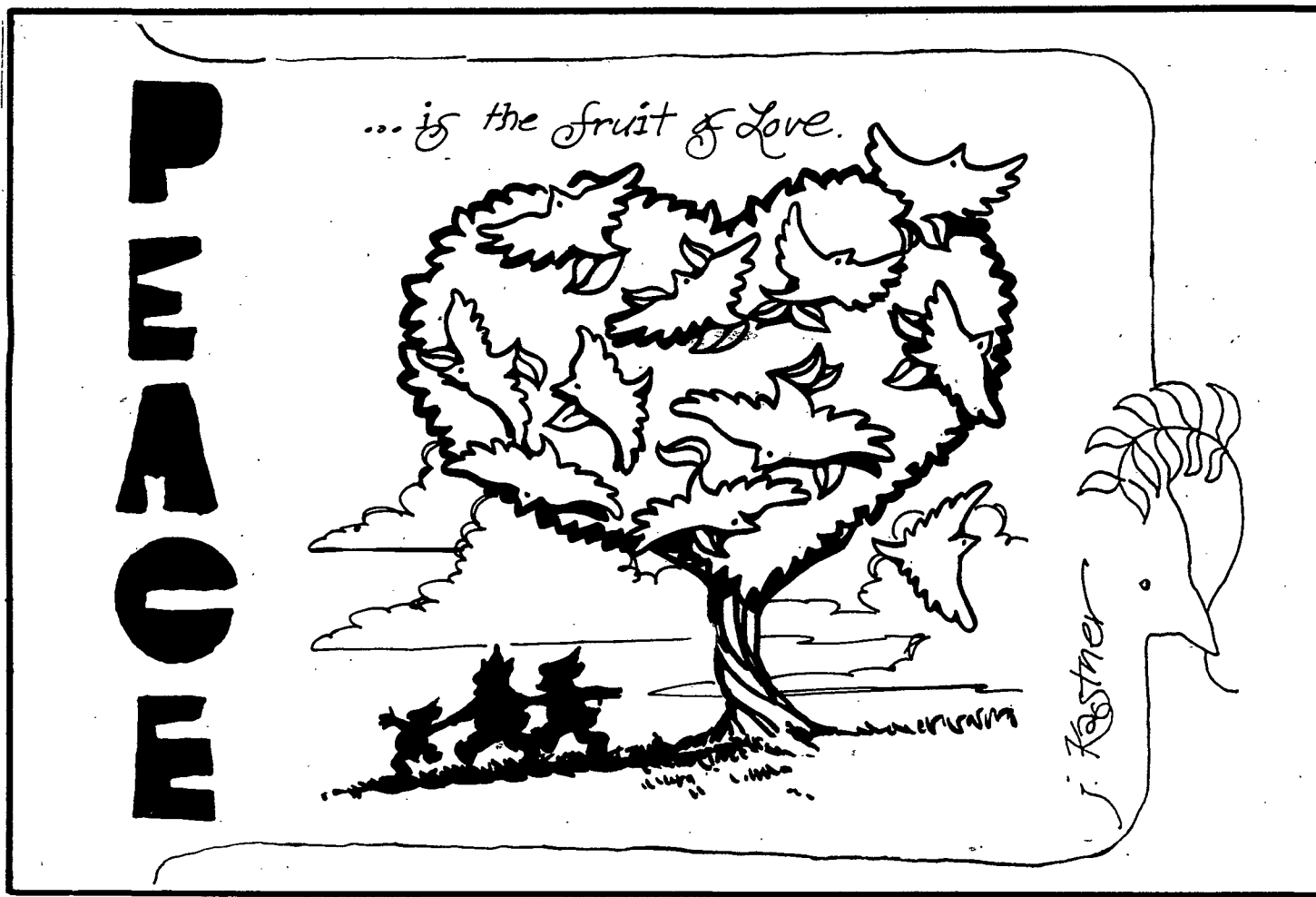
That's not an especially positive way to look at the matter, but it may be the only way to get the message across. The TGA helps a lot of people — from those struggling to feed their families to the staff at your local parish. And it deserves your support.

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 ex-pressed 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.

We reserve the right to edit all letters. Mail them to: Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY, 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.



Letters

Catechists appreciate series on aspects of religious education

To the editor:

We would like to thank you for the extensive coverage you gave to the area of religious education for three consecutive weeks. The articles were well-written and covered all aspects of religious education, including programs, personnel, volunteer service, curriculum and catechist formation.

We feel that religious education is one of our most valuable ministries, and reaches out to meet the needs of the adult, young adult, and child in our Church community.

The emphasis you placed on religious education has made it truly unique and lasting.

The Northeast Region of Religious Education

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above letter was sent on behalf of the religious educators of: Church of the Assumption, Fairport; Holy Trinity, Webster; Church of the Resurrection, Fairport; St. Paul, Webster; St. Rita, Webster; St. John of Rochester; Holy Spirit; St. Ambrose; and St. Jerome.

Becket Hall director recommends new study, challenges columnist's view of today's youth

To the editor:

As the director of Becket Hall, the diocese's residence for young men discerning a vocation in ministry, I read with interest the articles of your columnists, Bishop Clark and Father Cuddy, on the subject of vocations (C-J Oct. 15). I would like to recommend to them both, and to your readers, the new work by Dean Hoag, *Future of Catholic Leadership: Responses to the Priest Shortage*. His research confirms Bishop Clark's suggestion that our laity do not yet sense the impending shock of priestless parishes because it has not yet hit home. It is only when we have Sunday without Mass and deaths without the priest present that people will experience what Hoag has been documenting.

His data leads us to ponder if this is not a time for critical reflection on the nature and term of priesthood and ministry. The statistics may, after all, not indicate that something is wrong in the Church, but that something is right with it.

On the other hand, I believe his research shows that the causes of this phenomena are far more complex than believing that the young women and men of today don't meet the stan-

dards of the men of World War II.

Father Cuddy does a great injustice to our present young adults when he so often compares them to, and tests them with, men, older than their fathers, whom he knew in the '40s.

My experience during the last decade at Notre Dame, the University of Rochester and now Becket Hall indicates to me a group of men and women who have never known sisters in religious habit, nor ever learned the Angelus — whose vocabulary is computer-friendly, and whose reading is rich and wide. Yet they are excellent human beings, exemplary Christians, generous, idealistic, sensitive, searching for life's meaning in a more realistic way than we did.

I believe the apostolate of awakening and calling forth vocations to the priesthood of the baptized as well as the priesthood of orders is not helped by stereotyping or patronizing young adults — nor by exaggerating their virtues or faults. The priests and ministers of the 21st century must be women and men of their time and culture in order to speak to their contemporaries, i.e. "to teach as Jesus did."

Father Daniel P. Torney
Director, Becket Hall