

Columnists

Bishops and priests: before and after

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

For those of us who have some years, it is interesting to contemplate the "before and after" of Vatican II. Before Vatican II, we priests accepted the fact of differences: differences between bishops and pastors, between pastors and assistants, and among the three according to relationships. A bishop was a bishop, a bit like the commanding officer in the military, as befitted the Church militant on earth. The same thing applied to superiors of religious orders and communities of both men and women.

Odd things have happened. Recently, I read an article on the problems of publishing a Protestant hymn book. Some pacifists are violently against including "Onward Christian Soldiers" because they say it has too blatantly military implications. Then we have the sex loonies who want to emasculate the English language, and are vocal and organized against the fatherhood of God and sundry biblical realities that refer to maleness. (I have been wondering who proposes marriage these days. Is that still a masculine responsibility, or is that open to both genders? Perhaps some readers will enlighten me. Address correspondence to Holy Trinity, Webster, N.Y. 14580.)

As commanding officer, the bishop had his advisers, as did the superior of religious orders. But it was his responsibility to size up the needs of the diocese, even as a military CO sizes up the needs of his army and the nature of the enemy, and to assign his priests where he considered them most useful for the Church.

After Vatican II, bishops became kind of supervisors, kind of like the vice president of a corporation. His board would study the needs of the diocese, then send out to the priests profiles of the parishes opening or bureaus being expanded. This is something like a labor market wherein we look over the help wanted board and apply for the opening we like. Thanks be to God, the bishops still retain the final say, as befits their offices. Both methods of assigning priests have their strengths and weaknesses.

These ruminations came to mind as I reread an old letter written in 1953, 35 years ago: TO BISHOP KEARNEY, MAY 9, 1953:

"On January 7, I left St. Andrew's Seminary for a 17-months recall to the Air Force at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio. This June

On the Right Side

7, 1953, is the terminating date. Of late I have prayed and weighed about staying on in the "indefinite" category, i.e. until the Air Force thinks we are not needed or until we should withdraw. I have been contented in the service, both with the work and the life. My work has been fruitful and I have sufficient rank, major, to secure the works of the Church. So, I am requesting permission from you to apply for further duty in the Air Force. However, if you wish otherwise, I will be equally contented to return to whatever work you wish me to do.

"Since last writing you, the pressure has let up somewhat. The Women's Air Force, dropped from 1,700 WAF trainees to a present 700, which is a relief. However, the Officer Candidate School, of which I am the Catholic chaplain, is to zoom from a present 400 to a June load of 1,200 young men in training. The jail remains numerically stable, but always unpredictable in human relations. A month ago, a prisoner who is a pretty good Catholic despite the fact that he 'stabbed a guy,' came in all upset by a telegram from his wife: 'She wants more money urgently. I gave her \$150 three weeks ago. What's she doing with it all?' At his request I wrote the wife, asking her to write friend husband and give some explanation. The next week, I saw him all at peace with God and man. 'What's the scoop, Joe?' I asked. 'It's all OK, Father. Everything's all right.' 'What did she need the money for?' I asked. 'Well, her father is to be executed this week, and she needed the money for the execution. Why didn't she say that in the first place?'

"I ask your blessing and also say sincerely that I will be satisfied with whatever decision you make."

Bishop Kearney was always proud of the Rochester diocese's contribution to the military chaplaincy. He sent a kind letter of encouragement and his permission to stay.

Carrying out our Easter faith

By Father Richard P. McBrien

"And if Christ has not been raised, then empty is our preaching; empty, too, your faith ... you are still in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:14, 17).

Why should St. Paul have made such an assertion if — as many Catholics and evangelical Protestants continue to believe — we were already redeemed, once and for all, by Jesus' death on the cross?

Paul was right and many of us are mistaken. The mystery of our redemption is not limited to Jesus' death on the cross, nor is the crucifixion even the centerpiece of mystery. Easter, not Good Friday, is its climactic moment.

And yet for many Christians the resurrection still serves only as a kind of epilogue to what Christ did for us on the cross. For such Christians the fact that Jesus rose from the dead proved that it was truly a divine person who "humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8).

But this scenario rests on a partial reading of the New Testament and a limited understanding of the early Church's faith. It was not until Jesus had received the fullness of life that is properly his as Son of God and Son of Man that his redemptive work was complete.

Indeed, the Holy Spirit could not even be given until Jesus had been raised and glorified (John 7:39; 16:7). The first thing the risen Lord did when he appeared to his disciples behind locked doors was to breathe the Holy Spirit upon them (20:19-23).

Far from being only an epilogue to the crucifixion, the resurrection was at the heart and center of the Church's faith from the very beginning. The Church's faith in the saving power of Christ's death on the cross emerged after, not before, its faith in the saving power of his resurrection.

Gradually the earliest Christians came to see that the saving event of the resurrection could not have occurred if Jesus did not first die. "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit" (John 12:24).

Essays in Theology

But as important as Easter and Good Friday are, even together they do not exhaust the mystery of our redemption. We have also been redeemed by the whole of Jesus' life and ministry. And beyond that, by his ascension, by his glorification in heaven, and by the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The mystery of redemption is a mosaic of saving events. Although each piece is essential, it is Easter, not Good Friday, that occupies the center.

A whole and healthy Christian faith is not obsessed with suffering and death. It affirms and celebrates life. We are not supposed to be a morose and pessimistic people, but a people alive with joy and hope.

Surely, the cross will always be a major Christian symbol, but the One who hung upon it is risen. He isn't still nailed to it. And neither are we.

Significantly, Paul introduced his famous hymn to Christ (Philippians 2:5-11) with these words:

"Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vain glory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but everyone for those of others" (2:3-4).

The Church's Easter faith has meaning only to the extent that we actually live in accordance with "the same attitude that is ... in Christ Jesus" (2:5). Right belief (orthodoxy) without right practice (orthopraxy) is worse than no belief at all, for "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Extend birthday or anniversary wishes to family members and friends through our memorial gift program.



89 Genesee Street Rochester, New York 14611 (716) 464-3238 Can we count on you?

Advertisement for J.A.M. CONSTRUCTION featuring vinyl siding for \$3,500, free gutters, and windows for \$225 installed. Includes contact information: 544-3445.

FIRST COMMUNION DAY...

Truly a day to remember in the life of your child — with quality studio portraits.



SPECIAL OFFER

1 - 8 x 10; 2 - 5 x 7 and 9 wallet size color portraits made from a selection of proofs.

\$39.95 REG. 79.95

Call For An Appointment Today: 546-2360

STUDIO HOURS:

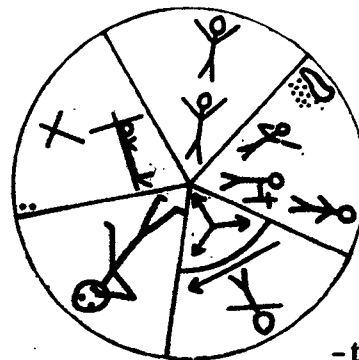
Tues-Sat., 9-5pm; Tues. Eves till 8:30pm; Closed Mondays



Varden STUDIOS, INC.

28-30 South Union Street Rochester, New York 14607

(Portrait Certificate)



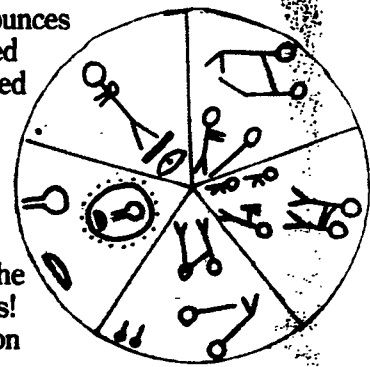
The GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD - AND RETOLD

Easter. The Resurrection. Truly the greatest story ever told has been just told and retold.

After the Maasai tribe in Tanzania heard this great story, they developed a unique way to retell it: a two-sided "Gospel" disk, with each developed of the circle depicting a piece of His Good News. The Maasai even wrote down the significance of each panel.

The top panel in the disk above announces Jesus' Resurrection. "Even though they killed Jesus," the Maasai Gospel tells us, "God raised Him from the dead and He promised that if we learned to live as Jesus did, He would raise us up from death to live with Him forever."

Help keep this, the greatest story ever told, being told - and retold - among the Maasai and others throughout the Missions! Support missionaries through the Propagation of the Faith!



The Society for The Propagation of the Faith

... all of us committed to the world mission of Jesus

Fr. Robert C. Bradler 1150 Buffalo Rd., Dept. C Rochester, New York 14624

YES! I want to make sure the greatest story ever told is told and retold throughout the Missions! Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$100 \$50 \$25 \$10 \$5

Form fields for Name, Address, City, State, Zip.