

# Recommendations have long history

By Father Joseph A. Hart  
Guest contributor

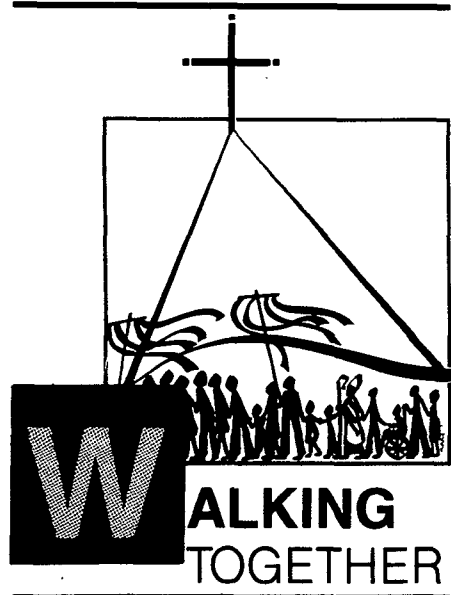
As Bishop Matthew H. Clark has said from the beginning, the purpose of this seventh General Synod is purely pastoral: to arrive at a prioritized pastoral plan in order to help the local church set priorities and allocate funds for carrying out its mission over the next few years.

Its focus is quite narrow. Sometimes, however, the Holy Spirit has other plans.

Most recommendations parishes and communities submitted from their fall synod discussions suggested changes in existing programs or called for new initiatives for our 12-county diocese. In preparation for the General Synod next October, these recommendations will be prioritized and reduced in number during the Dec. 12 regional synods.

However, we received hundreds of other recommendations calling for the bishop to implement changes that only the universal church can bring about — such as the law governing priestly celibacy, for example. We are calling these recommendations "prophetic recommendations" because they come directly from diocesan Catholics under the Holy Spirit's prompting and call for changes in the legislation governing the universal church.

The process of offering "prophetic recommendations" to the universal



church has a long history. In his general audience June 24, 1992, Pope John Paul II said: "It appears from the history of the Church and particularly from the lives of the saints that frequently the Holy Spirit inspires prophetic words meant to foster the development or the reform of the Christian community's life."

Sometimes these words have taken the form of a letter sent by a Christian layperson to the Bishop of Rome. Sometimes a bishop has spoken the prophetic word to the whole church gathered in Ecumenical Council. And sometimes a diocese gathered in synod is so moved by the spirit that it makes a recommendation, which helps the church take a step forward.

Celibacy is a good example. The traditional law of priestly celibacy in the West began as a prophetic recommendation at a local synod. In 306 A.D., the Spanish Synod of Elvira passed legislation decreeing that bishops, presbyters and deacons refrain from sexual relations with their wives.

Starting in this one Spanish region, similar legislation soon was passed everywhere in the western Mediterranean. Nineteen years later at Nicaea in Asia Minor, an Ecumenical Council of the Church forbade clerics everywhere to marry after the diaconate. The rest is history.

One thing is certain: the "prophetic recommendations" of a local synod can carry considerable weight.

One of the chief reasons why "prophetic recommendations" are so very important today is because they are one of the ways we can discover the spirit moving us toward change.

It takes more than the desires of a single diocese to move the universal church. The Catholic Church is not a "congregational church" nor a "synodal church." It is a communion of local churches over which the bishop of Rome presides in love. It is his ministry to keep the churches together in unity and peace.

Major changes in church order usually require a consensus of all the churches, a universal recognition that the spirit is indeed moving us in a new direction. Because we believe that synods are guided by the spirit, the local

church's testimony at a synod is an important indicator in this movement toward consensus.

This should not create the impression that a local church acting alone is powerless. It is not a branch office. It is rather wholly the church of Jesus Christ. It can do many things to alter its course in order to better serve its mission. Throughout history, however, it has voluntarily surrendered some of its autonomy and allowed itself to be restricted in many ways in order to better serve the needs of the worldwide communion of churches.

The local church has restricted itself much as a wife and husband in their relationship restrict themselves in love for the good of their union.

Because we care deeply about the whole church in all its parts, we are prayerfully gathering these "prophetic recommendations" for discussion at the General Synod next October. At that time they will be voted on by all the delegates and forwarded to Bishop Clark for his use in his testimony before his brother bishops.

Our requests may fall on deaf ears or may begin a larger movement toward change. Only time will tell. But history may some day record that what began with the Holy Spirit's prompting at the seventh Synod of the Diocese of Rochester was ratified in an Ecumenical Council of the Church.

Father Hart is director of the diocesan Synod.

## Why born, if not to follow Christ?

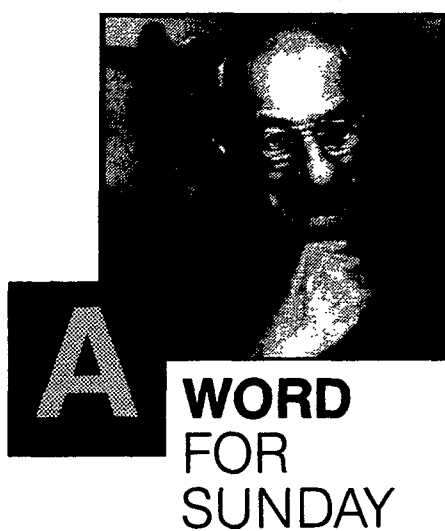
By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 23:35-43; (R1) 2 Samuel 5:1-3; (R2) Colossians 1:12-20.

The church year ends with the feast of Christ the King. The first reading gives us a picture of Israel's greatest king, David. When the Israelites asked David to be their king, they gave three reasons: he and they were blood brothers; he was their military leader under Saul and was always victorious; and God had called him to be their shepherd and commander.

David symbolized another and a greater King of the Jews. The second reading calls him "the image of the invisible God," because in him everything was created; the preserver, for "in him everything continues in being;" and the redeemer, for heaven and earth were reconciled "through the blood of his cross."

The Gospel tells us that Jesus is this King of the Jews. His throne is the cross; His crown, thorns; His title, "King of the Jews;" and His work: to make peace between heaven and earth



through the blood of His cross.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius contain a meditation called "On the Two Standards." One standard is Christ's, the other Satan's. St. Ignatius was a soldier. He pictured Christ as the head of a vast army, of saints and scholars, virgins and martyrs, heroes who died to preserve their virtue.

Satan heads an army comprising

sinners of all ages: fallen angels, the proud, impure, murderers of unborn babies, degraded and disgusting creatures, turned beasts by sinfulness.

On the plains of the wicked city of Babylon, Satan sits on a lofty throne — engulfed by fire and smoke — busy sending the wicked to every corner of the earth to corrupt men, enslave them and draw them to eternal damnation.

He tells them how to do this: first get men to set their hearts on money because this will make them vain and ambitious. And vanity will lead to pride, the source of all sin.

His soldiers eagerly do his foul bidding. And what reward does he offer? The most unbelievable in the world: an eternal hell of torments.

Opposite Satan, on the plains of Jerusalem, stands Christ the King. He, too, sends his subjects into the world, but not alone ("I am with you"). And He sends them on the glorious mission of drawing all people into His kingdom of life, love and truth.

He, too, tells them how to do this: get people to see that money isn't everything; that they should not be concerned about what other people

think; and that they should be content with what they are and have.

And what will be their reward? An eternal joy and happiness beyond all imagining. Jesus called it "paradise" in speaking to the thief.

We have 10,000 roads down which we may travel. It makes no difference which one we take. But at the end of those roads we will meet one of two faces: either the beatific face of Christ the King or the miserable one of Satan.

It makes no difference what road we take, we are going to face one or the other. No escape can be found. No man can serve two masters. He must choose. We cannot drive in neutral. Ask Our Lady for the grace to march under the standard of Christ the King.

In Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, Gareth wanted to go to King Arthur's court, but his mother, Bellicent, told him he was too young to leave home.

Gareth answered: *Man am I grown, a man's work must I do/Follow the deer? Follow the Christ, the King./Live pure, speak true, right wrong./Follow the King — else, wherefore born?*

Yes, why born, if not to follow Christ the King?

**Southview Physical Therapy and Sports Rehabilitation**  
*Feel the Difference!*

SOUTHVIEW PHYSICAL THERAPY MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN RELIEVING:

- Neck & Shoulder Pain
- Low Back Symptoms
- Tendonitis & Bursitis
- Knee Problems
- TMJ Pain

WESTFALL PROFESSIONAL PARK  
880 Westfall Road, Suite D  
Call For Information

Marian Carracino, PT  
Director

271-3380

Imported Specialties • Seafood and Smoked Fish

**PITTSFORD FISH MARKET**

Pittsford Colony Plaza — 3400 Monroe Avenue

SPECIALTY SAUSAGES & EUROPEAN STYLE COLD-CUTS

**FOR ALL YOUR SEAFOOD NEEDS DURING THE HOLIDAYS**

DAILY SPECIALS ON OUR FRESH & SMOKED FISH

Hot Fish To Go Nick Vasalos

**OPEN 7 DAYS • 381-8190**

Fresh Fish • Live Lobster • Frozen Seafood