

Authority can be misunderstood

By Father Joseph A. Hart
Guest contributor

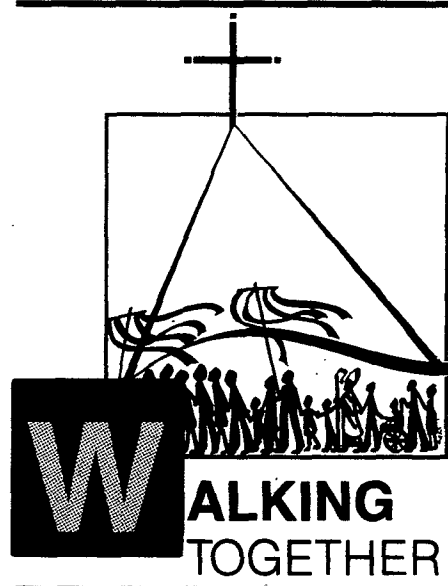
"What's the magisterium?" one of the delegates asked a longtime friend at the May 22 Cayuga-Seneca Regional Synod. "There seems to be some confusion in my group. Some people seem to think that it's only the pope."

Their small group discussion must have centered on Theme Five's recommendation calling for a diocesan-wide program to help people better understand the magisterium's teachings — especially those of the Second Vatican Council as they are presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (soon to be released in English).

The word "magisterium" — it comes from the Latin for "teacher" — has in 19th and 20th century theology come to refer to the teaching role and authority of the pope and bishops.

As the pastor of our local church and successor of the apostles, Bishop Matthew H. Clark is our teacher in the Catholic faith which comes from the apostles. He uses his "magisterium" when he himself preaches, oversees our faith communities' preaching and teaching, or issues pastoral letters on such diverse topics as AIDS or the role of women in the church and society.

Because in exercising this role he has gifts of the Spirit that we do not possess, Bishop Clark's voice is not just one among many in our local



church. As our apostle, teacher and guide, his magisterium is due special respect.

However, because his concern for the Gospel cannot stop at our diocese's borders, Bishop Clark also exercises his magisterium when he gathers with the U.S. bishops to issue pastoral letters on issues of national concern, such as those on war and peace or the American economy.

His concern is also for the universal church. Consequently, he exercises his magisterium in a collegial way when he teaches in union with all the other bishops throughout the world or physically gathers with these bishops in an ecumenical council.

Vatican II (1962-1965), our most recent council, tried to use this collegial magisterium to present the apostolic faith in new ways so that it could be understood by a new age. According to many parishes' Synod recommendations, this Council's teachings are still not well understood.

What about the pope's magisterium? Because he continues to exercise the apostle Peter's worldwide ministry in the church, Pope John Paul II is understood to exercise a universal magisterium; that is he is pastor and teacher of all the Catholic faithful. Because of this role, his teaching — his papal magisterium — is also due special respect.

Recently Cardinal Basil Hume of Westminster, England, put it this way: "I rejoice that the Holy Spirit is given to the Holy Father in a way that it is not given to me, except in so far as I am a part of the college of bishops. He has a guidance which I don't have. If I did not believe that, I would cease to be a Catholic." (*Tablet*, Feb. 27, 1993: 268)

The apostle Peter understood his role in the early church as being the first witness to the Resurrection and keeping the church together in faith and love. He did not do all the teaching but let others, such as Paul, adapt the Gospel to the understanding and needs of the far-flung communities in which they found themselves.

In carrying Peter's role today, the

pope is likewise very careful not to usurp the teaching authority of the local bishops who teach in union with him. This is why the long-awaited *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, according to its preface, is not meant to be a personal handbook for the world's Catholics but a text addressed to the world's bishops.

According to the pope, it is the various bishops' task to adapt this text to the people's needs and circumstances prevailing in their dioceses. How one preaches and teaches the same Gospel, the same apostolic faith, will be quite different in Nakuru, Kenya, and Elmira, N.Y.

The Second Vatican Council underscored the point that the magisterium is a service to the church, "a *diakonia* or ministry" (LG 24). Service is often difficult and time consuming. It would be a shame if our bishops avoided the challenge to adapt this catechism meant primarily for bishops and simply pretend that it was meant for everyone and announce — as one mid-western bishop has already done — that "each administrator, catechist and teacher should be provided with a copy. Pastors should aid those parents who desire one to obtain a copy of the new catechism."

If the Gospel's preaching and teaching is truly a service, then we owe it to our people to give them what they truly need and not a handbook meant primarily for the magisterium.

All memories should affect the present

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

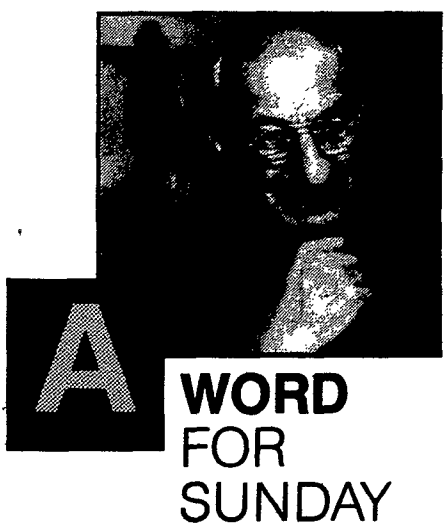
Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 6:51-58; (R1) Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16; (R2) 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

When the Puritans under Oliver Cromwell led King Charles I to his execution on Jan. 30, 1649, Charles uttered one last word: "Remember."

Aristotle said memory is the soul's scribe. It is a gallery lined with pictures of past events and scenes on which we have gazed. It is a filing cabinet into which all our past experiences are stored. And recollection is simply going, like a librarian, in search of some past event we need to recall.

People make the same old mistakes when they don't remember. When enemies attempt to destroy a nation, they strive to make its citizens forget the past. The nation's heroes are either vilified or consigned to limbo. At the entrance of the Auschwitz concentration camp are encscribed the words: "Who forgets history is condemned to repeat its errors."

Thus Moses' last word was an appeal to remember: "Remember



how for 40 years now the Lord, your God, has directed all your journeying in the desert ... Remember the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt ..." (R1). No gratitude, no fidelity, no hope would exist without remembering.

Jesus' last message was a commission: "Do this in memory of me." The feast of Corpus Christi was established precisely because Christians

had forgotten the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Father Frederick William Faber said that the sin of the angels was pride. The sin of man is amnesia, forgetfulness. One of today's crying needs is to renew our devotion to Christ present in the Eucharist.

Memory is powerful. It has often carried our nation through war's horrors. "Remember the Alamo." "Remember the Maine." "Remember Pearl Harbor." Lest we forget, Memorial Day was born. Stone shafts were erected, such as the monument at Concord Bridge, so that we might never forget where first was fired the shot heard 'round the world.

How right Sara Teasdale was when she wrote: "Oh, better than the minting/Of a gold-crowned king/Is a safe kept memory/Of a lovely thing."

Jesus gave us the holy Eucharist to keep our memories alive. The Eucharist is a past memory, remembered daily. Like any memory, it should affect the present — but even more than the memories of the imagination. For the Eucharist is not only a recalling of a great act of love; it is a recalling of Him who gave His life

out of love for us. The Eucharist makes present, really and truly and substantially, Him who had given His life for our salvation.

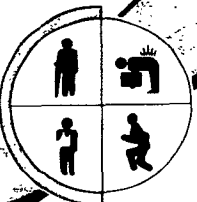
We need today to reaffirm our faith in Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. We need to reaffirm it with daily devotion to the Mass. We need to show it in the reverence with which we receive the body and blood of Christ, with every genuflection we make, with our demeanor and behavior in the Blessed Sacrament's presence.

The Hebrews who gathered manna daily knew how it sustained their physical lives. Do we see the Eucharist as even more vital for our spiritual lives? Many grapes make the one wine and many grains of wheat the one bread. Do we see the Eucharist as indispensable for pumping the love into our hearts that makes unity between people a possibility?

Greater than the hunger for food is the hunger for life without end. Do we see the Eucharist as the pledge of eternal life? "If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever." Have we forgotten this?

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Kids' Chronicle Answer Key

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|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. ✓ Galations | 6. — John |
| 2. ✓ Titus | 7. ✓ Romans |
| 3. — James | 8. ✓ Colossians |
| 4. — Revelations | 9. — Matthew |
| 5. ✓ Timothy | 10. ✓ Ephesians |

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