

COLUMNISTS

Bishops entrusted as heads of local church

I want to continue the reflection on the liturgy and moral life that I've been writing about through the summer, but this morning I'm thinking about Bishop Joseph Hogan, who died yesterday. He was a great churchman and friend to many of us. The Church of Rochester owes much to him and his leadership. His conviction and understanding of both the universal church and our diocese helped to form all of us as our local church responded to the vision of the Second Vatican Council.

This double goal of reflecting on the Eucharist and remembering this wonderful man can be combined, I think, by recalling for a few minutes the connection between the celebration of the Eucharist and the office of bishop.

We know today that the name of the bishop has to be mentioned in the canon of the Mass. This practice reflects the very beginning of the church, when it was only the bishop who presided when the community gathered. The eucharistic celebration manifests the nature and structure of the church in profound ways. The tradition has held that in one sense the only true Eucharist is the one over which the bishop presides. For us, the growth of the number of parishes has meant that presbyters, or priests, most often preside at Eucharist. We forget that priests preside at Eucharist as delegates of the bishop.

The role of the bishop in the Eucharist is so important that as the practice of priests presiding at Mass grew, it used to be the case that a portion of the eucharistic bread consecrated by the bishop in the



the
moral
life

By PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SSJ

cathedral was sent to individual parishes and put into the chalice at every Mass. This was part of the reminder that it is the bishop who is the "ordinary" presider at every single Eucharist.

This central role of the bishop in the celebration of the Eucharist is the heart of all the other aspects of his ministry. The bishop is entrusted with all aspects of leadership of the local church, or diocese. This is because as presider at the Eucharist, he is charged with the principle role of maintaining all the baptized in the communion of the faith. This communion of faith, of course, is embodied in the communion of life. Thus, decisions affecting our life style as members of the church, decisions affecting the administration of our common resources and goods, transmission of the "received" teaching of the Apostles, are all part of the bishop's role by extension of his role as presider at Eucharist. These other duties relate to and flow from the bishop's role as "president (presider) of the assembly."

Interestingly, in the early church the

bishop was forever the pastor of the local church for which he had been ordained. He never left that church; his communion with his particular diocese was an integral part of his identity as bishop. This older practice emphasized the nature of the church in a more profound way, I think, than our current policy of bishops often moving from diocese to diocese (and usually from smaller to larger, perhaps more prestigious dioceses) does. It showed concretely that for each one of us, it is our communion with the local diocese that makes us Catholic.

The nature of the church as located in the local diocese has been clouded for those of us living today, largely because in the recent past the church has seemed to live from two opposing theologies of the office of bishop. The First Vatican Council promoted the view that, in the words of J.M.R. Tillard, OP, "the church in its earthly form start(ed) from its 'head' the bishop of Rome," while "Vatican II sees it starting from the bishops who, taken together as a whole, comprise the foundation of the universal church" (*Lumen Gentium* 19). In the vision of Vatican II, individual bishops are not to be regarded as vicars of the pope. Rather, they exercise authority in their own right on behalf of the people of diocese. Vatican II emphasizes local bishops as "heads" of the church, which itself resides primarily in the local diocese. It is this college of individual local bishops which builds, leads and guides the whole church, since this is the body that carries on the mission entrusted to the Apostles

as a group.

Because current church life seems "caught" at every level as we struggle to realize the vision of Vatican II regarding the office of bishop, we often overlook the importance of our local bishop to our realization and expression of faith. As Americans, we seem to be doubly affected by our extreme individualism and the difficulty we all have trying to enter into any sort of "community." To be part of any group, we have to learn to make room for others, to compromise, to maintain personal integrity while living by judgments made by others for "the good of the whole." This is tricky business but this is the business at the very heart of the eucharistic community.

Reflecting on the Eucharist as we remember Bishop Hogan can be the occasion for us to remember what it is that makes us members of the church. We know very well that it is often a struggle to balance membership in a local church with membership in the universal church. We know very well that it is often a struggle to move from Vatican I theologies to Vatican II theologies. We know very well that not every decision made in our parishes or at every other level of church governance is the one we would have made by ourselves. The office of bishop helps us to recognize, concretely, what "communion in faith" looks like.

Let us thank God for the life and ministry of Joseph L. Hogan.

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Loneliness can lead to reliance on God's love

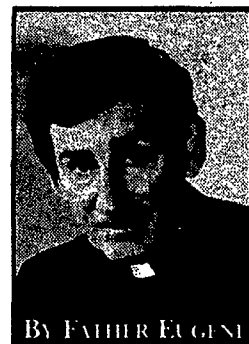
It functions like a panic attack. It makes you want to fall asleep, hoping that when you awaken the reality of your life will be different.

The "it" of which I speak is loneliness. With the recent death of my mother, I have experienced all its symptoms.

Although I enjoy marvelous friends, celebrate Mass every morning with wonderful parishioners and talk with numerous people throughout the day, loneliness often strikes without warning, leaving me paralyzed.

Once when it hit late at night, I told myself, "You have to get to its roots and stop letting it cripple you!" I attempted this and concluded that I must make it a priority to "realign" my memory.

In analyzing loneliness, I discovered it is strongest when I recall the days of my youth. This creates a longing to recapture all the times when I could just pick up the phone and share with my parents the happy events or problems I was experiencing.



the
human
side

By FATHER EUGENE HEMRICK

I know that they wouldn't say much, but I also know their mere presence would be the comfort I'd need.

Loneliness also hits hardest when I hear certain sounds or come upon certain scents that remind me of enjoyable times in the past.

The smell of garlic and simmering tomato sauce frequently permeated our home. Often we would invite friends over and wink at each other when they asked for extra helpings of spaghetti and soaked

up the sauce with their bread.

The sounds of happiness that vibrated through our home were loudest when Italian and Irish relatives came for dinner. The Italians all talked at the same time in Italian, making you wonder if anyone was listening to anyone. At first I thought the Italian language prompted this, but I finally concluded that they just liked to emote, that the more they did so the faster they talked and the happier they got.

My Irish relatives had a great sense of humor and always made me feel like a grown-up when I was young.

When I think back on those days, tears come to my eyes. Mom often said that when you cry for the past, you are crying for yourself.

There is much truth in this. In one way, my loneliness is selfish because my needs aren't being met; it's as though I still want to be a child surrounded with friends, laughter, a happy home and caring parents. But it is also true that I deeply loved

them. This leads me to conclude that if you love deeply, you are going to be hurt because you can't hold onto love forever in this world.

I have come to believe that this hurt serves a good purpose. It compels us to rely more heavily on the only love that lasts, God's love for us and the need to love God more.

I also conclude from my reflections on loneliness that fond memories must always be cherished and preserved, but they can't be allowed to hold us hostage to the past. Rather they must encourage us to pass on to others the blessings we've received.

Once we realign our thinking in this manner, loneliness loses its power over us.

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Father Hemrick is a research associate with the Life Cycle Research Institute at The Catholic University of America and coordinator of institutional research at Washington Theological Union.

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