

## CONTINUED...

## Pope's message

Continued from page 1

tinct by virtue of its specific historical evolution and the resulting characteristics which make it a structurally unique, original and organic whole. Culture is the form of man's self-expression in his journey through history, on the level of both individuals and social groups. ...

5. A culture is always marked by stable and enduring elements, as well as by changing and contingent features. At first glance, in examining a culture we are struck above all by those aspects which distinguish it from our own culture; these give each culture a face of its own, as an amalgam of quite distinctive elements. In most cases, a culture develops in a specific place, where geographical, historical and ethnic elements combine in an original and unique way. ...

## Human development and being part of a culture

6. The need to accept one's own culture as a structuring element of one's personality, especially in the initial stages of life, is a fact of universal experience whose importance can hardly be overestimated. Without a firm rooting in a specific "soil," individuals risk being subjected to a still vulnerable age to an excess of conflicting stimuli which could impair their serene and balanced development.

The Son of God himself, by becoming man, acquired, along with a human family, a country. He remains forever Jesus of Nazareth, the Nazarene (cf. Mk 10:47; Lk 18:37; Jn 1:45; 19:19). This is a natural process, in which sociological and psychological forces interact, with results that are normally positive and constructive. Love for one's country is thus a value to be fostered, without narrow-mindedness but with love for the whole human family (3) and with an effort to avoid those pathological manifestations which occur when the sense of belonging turns into self exaltation, the rejection of diversity, and forms of nationalism, racism and xenophobia.

7. Consequently, while it is certainly important to be able to appreciate the values of one's own culture, there is also a need to recognize that every culture, as a typically human and historically conditioned reality, necessarily has its limitations. In order to prevent the sense of belonging to one particular culture from turning into isolation, an effective antidote is a serene and unprejudiced knowledge of other cultures.

## Cultural differences and mutual respect

8. In the past, cultural differences have often been a source of misunderstanding between peoples and the cause of conflicts and wars. Even now, sad to say, in different parts of the world we are witnessing with growing alarm the aggressive claims of some cultures against others. In the long run, this situation can end in disastrous tensions and conflicts. ...

In light of this, people of good will need to examine the basic ethical orientations which mark a particular community's cultural experience. Cultures, like the people who give rise to them, are marked by the "mystery of evil" at work in human history (cf. 1 Th 2:7), and they, too, are in need of purification and salvation. The authenticity of each human culture, the soundness of its underlying ethos, and hence the validity of its moral bearings can be measured to an extent by its commitment to the human cause and by its capacity to promote human dignity at every level and in every circumstance.

9. The radicalization of identity which makes cultures resistant to any beneficial influence from outside is worrying enough; but no less perilous is the slavish conformity of cultures, or at least of key aspects of them, to cultural models deriving from the Western world. Detached from their Christian origins, these models are often in-



Reuters/CNS

Pope John Paul greets a child who brought up an offertory gift during the Christmas midnight Mass in St. Peter's Square Dec. 24. In his homily, the pope urged believers not to lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas.

spired by an approach to life marked by secularism and practical atheism and by patterns of radical individualism. This is a phenomenon of vast proportions, sustained by powerful media campaigns and designed to propagate lifestyles, social and economic programs and, in the last analysis, a comprehensive world view which erodes from within other estimable cultures and civilizations.

Western cultural models are enticing and alluring because of their remarkable scientific and technical cast, but regrettably there is growing evidence of their deepening human, spiritual and moral impoverishment. The culture which produces such models is marked by the fatal attempt to secure the good of humanity by eliminating God, the Supreme Good. Yet, as the Second Vatican Council warned, "without the Creator the creature comes to nothing!" (7) A culture which no longer has a point of reference in God loses its soul and loses its way, becoming a culture of death. This was amply demonstrated by the tragic events of the 20th century and is now apparent in the nihilism present in some prominent circles in the Western world.

## The challenge of migration

12. A style and culture of dialogue are especially important when it comes to the complex question of migration, which is an important social phenomenon of our time.

The movement of large numbers of people from one part of the planet to another is often a terrible odyssey for those involved, and it brings with it the intermingling of traditions and customs, with notable repercussions both on the countries from which people come and on those in which they settle. ...

13. In such a complex issue there are no "magic" formulas; but still we must identify some basic ethical principles to serve as points of reference. First of all, it is important to remember the principle that immigrants must always be treated with the respect due to the dignity of every human person. In the matter of controlling the influx of immigrants, the consideration which should rightly be given to the common good should not ignore this principle. The challenge is to combine the welcome due to every human being, especially when in need, with a reckoning of what is necessary for both the local inhabitants and the new arrivals to live a dignified and peaceful life. The cultural practices which immigrants bring with them should be respected and accepted, as long as they do not contravene either the universal ethical values inherent in the natural law or fundamental human rights.

## The recognition of shared values

16. Dialogue between cultures, a privi-

leged means for building the civilization of love, is based upon the recognition that there are values which are common to all cultures because they are rooted in the nature of the person. ... (1) It is necessary to foster people's awareness of these shared values, in order to nurture that intrinsically universal cultural "soil" which makes for fruitful and constructive dialogue. The different religions too can and ought to contribute decisively to this process. My many encounters with representatives of other religions — I recall especially the meeting in Assisi in 1986 and in St. Peter's Square in 1999 — have made me more confident that mutual openness between the followers of the various religions can greatly serve the cause of peace and the common good of the human family.

## The value of solidarity

17. Faced with growing inequalities in the world, the prime value which must be ever more widely inculcated is certainly that of solidarity. A society depends on the basic relations that people cultivate with one another in ever widening circles — from the family to other intermediary social groups, to civil society as a whole and to the national community. States in turn have no choice but to enter into relations with one another. ...

At the same time it is necessary to point out that this growing interdependence has brought to light many inequalities, such as the gap between rich and poor nations; the social imbalance within each nation between those living in opulence and those offended in their dignity since they lack even the necessities of life; the human and environmental degradation provoked and accelerated by the irresponsible use of natural resources. These social inequalities and imbalances have grown worse in certain places, and some of the poorest nations have reached a point of irreversible decline.

Consequently, the promotion of justice is at the heart of a true culture of solidarity. It is not just a question of giving one's surplus to those in need, but of "helping entire peoples presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development. ..." (9)

## NOTES

(3) Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 75.

(7) *Gaudium et Spes*, 36.

(9) John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 58.

\*\*\*

EDITORS' NOTE: The pope's entire message may be viewed on the Vatican Web site, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). It is listed under "Latest" under "The Holy Father."

## Masses

Continued from page 1

have already been scheduled for this year, he added.

"Attendance was not a primary factor, but we did look at it," Father Kennedy said. He pointed out that only a slightly higher percentage of parishioners — 22 percent — attend the 12:15 p.m. Sunday Mass. However, that Mass attracts a lot of young adults in the neighborhood, he said, and young adult ministry is important to the parish.

Some who attend the 4:30 p.m. Mass at Blessed Sacrament expressed negative feelings about losing it.

David Van Wey of Rochester said he liked that Mass because its atmosphere seem more relaxed than Sunday morning Masses.

"To tell you the truth, I'll still be going to Mass on Saturday, just someplace else," he said.

John Van Morrelgem has ushered at the 4:30 Mass since the 1970s and said he felt like he was getting "laid off." Meanwhile, Robert and Beverly Kingston weren't happy that the 4:30 Mass was being eliminated because they own a funeral home across the street from Blessed Sacrament and said they have arranged their work schedule for years assuming they could fulfill their weekly Mass obligation on Saturday afternoon.

Calling hours are rarely scheduled on Saturday afternoons, they said. The couple said they will have to attend the 8 a.m. Mass at Blessed Sacrament because they often work Sundays.

A parish that already dropped a Mass in 2000 is Eastside Catholic in Elmira, a cluster comprising the congregations of St. Cecilia's and St. John the Baptist, both of which closed their churches a few years back, and St. Peter and Paul Church, where members of all three congregations now attend services. The parish dropped its noon Sunday Mass in July and now has three weekend Masses, according to Father Patrick Connor, pastor. The new Mass schedule was part of the overall planning process by churches and faith communities in Chemung County, where Eastside is located, and Schuyler County.

Parishes have used bulletins and pulpit preaching to explain the Mass schedule changes. The Auburn parishes went so far as to take out a full-page advertisement Dec. 29 and a half-page ad Jan. 5 in the local daily newspaper, *The Auburn Citizen*. The ad details the new Mass schedule.

Laurel Biata noted that there was a silver lining in the decrease in Masses in the Auburn parishes. Biata is a St. Mary's representative to the Auburn parishes' planning group communications committee.

Just as she has met many Catholics

through the pastoral planning process, Catholics who don't know each other now may meet each other when they begin attending different Masses, she said, creating the potential for other types of community-building activity.

In addition to other benefits to fewer Masses, pastors said that congregations are generally fuller at each celebration than in years past, and priests have been freed up a bit to engage in other ministerial duties.

In a newsletter column to parishioners, Father Schrader also pointed out that fewer Masses will enable St. Mary's to develop a children's choir, which "has long been desired by a number of our families with younger children."

"With the additional time available on Sunday morning between Masses," the pastor wrote, "rehearsal time for this new music ministry will now be possible."

One factor that concerns all congregations that decrease the number of Masses is the ultimate effect on parish membership and weekend collections, pastors said. Yet, Father Kennedy pointed out that given the current realities, parishes must take the risks involved in changing Mass schedules.

"I think from the beginning we assumed an unknown number of people would go elsewhere, and what impact that will have financially we don't know," he said. "I certainly don't want to lose any parishioners over this."

C  
©20  
115  
P.O.  
Roc  
716,  
800,  
http  
e-m  
Pres  
Bi  
Gen  
Ki  
kf  
Edit  
Assi  
Ki  
ks  
Staff  
Rc  
Mi  
ml  
Staff  
Ar  
ad  
Edit  
Lo  
lit  
Busi  
Offi  
Mi  
me  
Adm  
Ar  
ag  
Circ  
Do  
ds  
Graj  
Graj  
Ki  
kp  
Graj  
Li  
Iri  
Adv  
Acco  
Ra  
rhy  
Do  
dw  
Class  
Joy  
Lett  
Th  
provi  
throu  
opini  
We w  
about  
life.  
Alt  
letter  
possil  
sentat  
a vari  
churc  
publi  
terest  
play.  
termi  
with t  
Let  
words  
use of  
unacc  
to edi  
conce  
submi  
spellin  
Me  
P.O. E  
14624  
name,  
address