

THE WITNESS

MAY, 1978
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Catholics for Women's Ordination:

Confronting the Roman Patriarchy

by Georgia Fuller

Urban Poor to Bishops:

'Be Our Advocate'

Bishops to Urban Poor:

'Are You Our People?'

Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action:

Why the Church 'Waffles'

by Juan Luis Segundo



Stringfellow 'Marvelous'

After reading Bill Stringfellow's marvelous piece, "The Embarrassment of Being Episcopalian" in the February WITNESS, I know what it is to be typewriter-tied; to be unable to articulate the embarrassment, to use his term, which for me has been anger.

The anger is not assuaged when I realize that those who perpetrate the callous attitude towards women and those of us who believe in freedom and liberation as found in the Gospel will neither read his words, nor be moved by words already written by many others.

The Presiding Bishop and those members of the House who are conscience-stricken about women priests will continue to seek after dissidents and neglect the loyal Episcopalian who have hung in, and those who are loyal wear many labels.

One wonders what happened to the idea of the Church existing by mission as fire exists by burning. I fear that we'll continue to be so caught up in one group creating ways to put another group down that we'll neglect our very reason for being, the proclamation of the Gospel.

The Presiding Bishop should issue a public apology to the women of Christendom for his remarks, to the women and men who have been offended by his desire to retain "leadership" and deny the canon of the Church.

The Rev. William B. Gray
New York, N.Y.

Breaks 5 Year Silence

After reading William Stringfellow's "The Embarrassment of Being Episcopalian," I decided to break a five year silence. I was a lay deputy to Louisville in '73, and have not felt the same about the organized Church since. I *know* how long it took the House of Bishops to agree on John Allin to be the

new Presiding Bishop. I was an alternate to Minneapolis, and while I was very pleased with the passage of Woman's Ordination, I was disquieted, because I have known how draconian the Church can be.

The absolute nadir was the 1977 meeting of the House of Bishops, where collegiality reigned supreme and an inability to deal with human sexuality was a disgrace.

Lately, a new concern has surfaced. What is it about Southern leaders who yield absolute power regionally, are able politicians, but when they reach the National level, equivocate and appear powerless and out of their depth? In this case I am not talking only of our P.B., but also our President. This is not a comment based on Southern prejudice; I lived in the South for 10 years, and hold it in my fondest memories.

Has *Future Shock* set in that these men cannot cope effectively out of their milieu, or has the *Peter Principle* set in?

I have no answers, only questions. I was an ardent supporter of Bishop John Hines. No leadership after such greatness has left me and the Church bereft.

I am very confused and hurt by my Church. I am just hanging in the wings for something positive to happen. V.I.M. is not it. The interim period is intolerable. I feel like a carpenter with a hammer and a saw, but no nails or boards with which to build.

Jane Boyer Parker
Lebanon, Pa.

Embarrassed at Article

My first issue of THE WITNESS just came to my door. The discussions in it on abortion and homosexuality were a breath of fresh air. It's helpful to me to know that quoting old statements from the past does not close off theological discussion.

I, however, was embarrassed to read of author Stringfellow's embarrassment. I'm sorry that he is embarrassed but I wonder if charges of aggrandizement and intimidation will help others to feel at ease? As an attorney, might he not have limited his discussion to procedure and left personalities out of it?

Does a bishop make a Church or does its historical liturgy? Which helps more to sustain life lived as a Christian? Today we are celebrating the life of George Herbert. According to the ATR, scholars are finding he was a man who lived the Christian life well. And we can't say he was exactly in with the polls. Might someone write of his life and how he managed to sustain himself in spite of the System of his day? After all, Jacques Ellul has entitled our

time a time of abandonment and attributes some of that to putting too much faith in our institutions.

Also, if I might, I as a school teacher would like to have someone take up the problems presented by education in the public schools today. Those who speak of the right to life and then do not appear at PTA meetings or contribute to the superintendent's task forces on various aspects of education make me wonder what they expect of that life.

Douglas H. Schewe
Madison, Wisc.

For Weeping Together

"To Weep Over Jerusalem," in the February Issue of THE WITNESS, unwittingly illustrates the fragmentation that is destroying the Episcopal Church today.

The plight of our cities and the Church's ministry to them is long overdue as a priority in our common life. That task demands the very best efforts we can muster. Of the human resources notably engaged in urban life and ministry upon whom the Church can call, most are lay persons and clergy. Why then should the Urban Bishops' Coalition presume "to devise new and effective strategies for the Church in its urban mission"? And can Bishop DeWitt suggest for those who care about ministry to the cities nothing more demanding than providing "diocesan moral support if they (the bishops) are not to despair of their task"?

The fiasco of the House of Bishops meeting at Port St. Lucie grew out of the splendid isolation in which that body sought to deliberate for the entire Episcopal Church. Now we witness the Urban Bishops' Coalition, with the best of intentions, presumptuously treading that same path to the accompaniment of heroic rhetoric in THE WITNESS. Surely there *is* cause for weeping over Jerusalem. When we can weep over it as bishops, clergy, and lay persons *together*, perhaps we will be ready to respond to the city's needs.

The Rev. James R. Moodey
Philadelphia, Pa.

Mobilization May 25-27

I have wanted to write many times about how helpful THE WITNESS, the articles and your editorials have been to me on many issues involving the social responsibility of the Church.

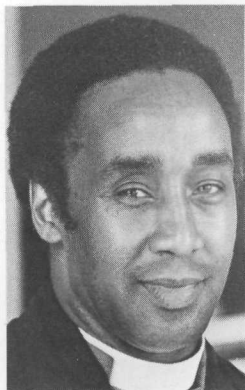
Are you aware of the Mobilization for Survival on May 25-27 in conjunction with the special United Nations Session on

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THE WITNESS

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Bishop Walker

John T. Walker, Bishop of Washington and Chairman of the Urban Bishops Coalition, gave the opening address at the recent conference in Chicago during which the bishops deliberated on public hearings they had sponsored on the urban crisis. They voted to make his statement their own communication to the Church. THE WITNESS is pleased to publish this excerpt as a guest editorial.

Jesus was Serious

I am a city man. Bred in the city in poverty. Educated in the city, working in and for the city, knowledgeable of the city and how many of its systems work. *I live and move and have my being in the city!* Yet, to hear the testimony of so many "broken victims" and those working in their behalf, and to be in their presence, as I was in three of our seven hearings, is to experience each time as for the very first time the shock and disgust over the reality of the human suffering which is experienced day in and day out by people in our cities.

For example I learned something of the extent of deprivation and starvation in my own See city—the Nation's capital. One of the testifiers was the director of a hunger education project. She explained that one way of studying malnutrition is to look at infant mortality rates. In Washington, infant mortality averages about 26 out of every 1,000 births which is the same rate as Taiwan. In the affluent area west of Rock Creek Park in Washington, the rate is 8 per 1,000, which is the same as Sweden's, the best

in the world. However, in three inner city areas and Anacostia, where our heaviest concentration of urban poor resides, the rate rises almost to 40 out of every 1,000. She suggested that "the shocking contrast between neighborhoods of the same city signals a tragic by-product of income maldistribution and a pressing need for policy oriented research."

Fairly recently, a study by Robert C. Weaver, former HUD Secretary, appeared in the *Civil Rights Digest*. In the study entitled "The Suburbanization of America or the Shrinking of the Cities," Weaver points out that suburbanization in America, the flight of those who could afford it from the central city is practically as old as the nation. In fact, to prove that suburbanization is indeed an ancient phenomenon, he quotes from a letter written on a clay tablet and addressed to King Cyrus of Persia in 539 B.C. by an early suburbanite:

"Our property," he wrote, "seems to me to be the most beautiful in the world. It is so close to Babylon

that we enjoy all the advantages of the city, and yet when we come home we are away from all the noise and dust.”

One essential point of the Weaver Study is that the effects of suburbanization as a phenomenon with resultant population and employment shifts and loss of capital from the city, were being felt even before World War II. As a matter of fact, the population peak for most large cities in relation to their suburbs occurred in 1900. In that year Boston's population was already only 43% of its Metropolitan Area as that would be defined in 1950. By 1970 it had shrunk to 23%. Cleveland's 85% became 36%.

Another factor is the pattern of employment growth as the “critical mass” of the suburbs, as a way of measuring the effect of the flight of urban capital. For example, between 1960 and 1970 New York City lost 9.7% of its jobs, while its outlying suburbs gained 24.9%. Chicago lost 13.9% while its suburbs gained 64.4%. Philadelphia lost 11.3% with a suburban gain of 61.5%. Detroit lost 22.5% and its suburbs gained 61.5%. And Washington, DC gained 1.9% during that period *but* its suburbs gained a spectacular 117.9%! Weaver cites a study in the late 1950s which concluded that the outward movement of people from the city would be matched by an outward movement of jobs. Retail trade would follow the populations. Manufacturing and wholesaling would continue to respond to obsolescence by looking for new quarters and by renting new structures in the suburban industrial areas where obsolescence is less advanced and finally, the movement of jobs would reinforce the movement of residences.

No one can doubt that this prediction has come true. I remember Bishop Paul Moore's Easter Sermon of 1976. He characterized the ugly consequences of the flight of population and capital from the cities as death. And he courageously urged industrial chiefs to reconsider their decisions to abandon the city.

The effects of no new investments in the city today and, even worse, the actual draining off of existing capital leaves no resources for providing the basic human services of health, education, welfare, and most vitally, jobs for the poor — mostly minorities who remain in the cities.

Thus, whether we were hearing of problems related to unemployment, education, housing, or racism; and whether in Newark or Colon, in Birmingham or Seattle, in Chicago or Washington, one fact emerges. The urban problem is systemic, long term and, as the report of our national hearing puts it, “infects every major structure of our national life and corrupts societies all across the globe.”

But it is *the cities* that are the repositories of the poor and of the most acutely damaged victims of the systemic economic, political and social malfunctioning of the society.

Indeed, President Carter has recognized this fact in his urban program announced earlier this week. It is encouraging that the President has finally acted. It is immediately evident, though none of us has had the opportunity to study the proposals in depth, that his program is a modest one.

However, there are several good points in the program. He does focus largely on the city, and recognizes that neighborhoods and community organizations are indeed where the action is. Points our deliberative document also makes quite strongly. Moreover, it shows an awareness of the severity of the unemployment problem among ghetto youths.

Certain weaknesses are equally apparent. The administrative procedures seem too complicated to function efficiently. Further, the commitment of resources is less than the severity of the situation would seem to call for. For example, although 8.3 billion dollars is earmarked for the Carter urban program, in fact only 4.4 billion of that is new money.

In formulating this program, did the President listen only to his urban “experts,” or did he hear the voices of the cities that we have heard?

From Seattle, Washington to Colon, Panama, we heard the voices of suffering cry out to us about their own pain and anguish — and hopes, or of their hurt and anguish over the pain of others and about the utter captivity which is the lot of so many people who live in our cities. So many are crippled by the horrible consequences of joblessness and hunger; by alcoholism and drug addiction; by social and economic injustice and by racist policies; by classism and sexism; homelessness and rootlessness; by neglect and oppression; and hopelessness and despair.

We have learned what the President intends to do. Now we are engaged in determining what it is the Urban Bishops Coalition is going to do.

When I say, "what is the Coalition going to do," I am not thinking of structures and processes. There will be time for that. What I am talking about is the call for us to take seriously our commitment to the *people* of the cities. The Coalition's work is tied directly to the mission of the Body of the Christ in the world. That mission is the same as it always has been. That is, to show concern in the name of Christ for the suffering, the friendless and the needy.

Our aim as a Coalition should be primarily to serve as a reminder to the Church of what our mission is. Standing on the cutting edge, unencumbered by bureaucracies, we pledge to hold before the Church the awful challenges and tremendous opportunities to which God calls us in the urban mission.

It is hard to imagine our being able to take steps too radical or too drastic for the circumstances. Rather, we need to fear a too *timid* approach. As we move ahead, our actions are based neither on the notion that we have all the answers, nor on the view that we are totally unaware of what is happening. All of us here have some knowledge of how the crisis is affecting the cities in our own dioceses.

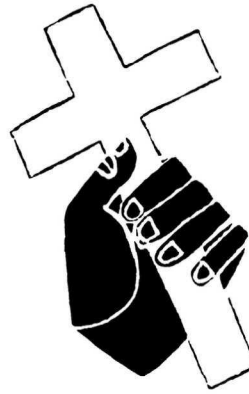
Even with our present state of awareness — with so much more to learn — it is clear that any response we may make which is less than serious will reveal a gross insensitivity to the plight of those people we are called to serve.

And a part of being serious means a willingness to make hard, inconvenient decisions and radical readjustments to our present ways of doing things.

I truly believe that God has called us to prepare ourselves to exercise *leadership* in his mission which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, he has laid upon us. The model for our action is Jesus, who "when he drew near and saw the city, wept over it." (Luke 19:41) Then, he went and died for the city. He was serious.

In my opinion, the main ingredients for a strategy for mission are that kind of compassion and self-giving. I pray that our weeping over the city and *our* willingness to die in service to all of God's people will bring joy and life, as Jesus brought the joy and the life which we celebrate at this Holy Easter Season. ■

(See related stories pages 14-16).



In answer to a number of requests. THE WITNESS presents the following suggestions for those who wish to pursue further resources on Black Theology, after reading our March issue.

THE BLACK CHURCH: A New Theology For Liberation.

Documentary audio program featuring sermonettes, songs and interviews with Black theologians and religious leaders. Suitable for pastors, seminarians, laypersons and students. Send \$10 for one-hour long "Black Church Tape Cassette."

Message to the Black Church and Community. This powerful epistle is suitable for classroom or church study groups. Bulk orders: \$5 for 25 copies or \$10 per 100 copies. Single copy free upon request.

New Liberation Covenant by Hazel Reid. A book of liberation-oriented liturgies using old and new Black worship forms. Price, \$3.50 each, postage and handling included.

Liberation and Unity 1978. A book of meditations featuring 50 leading Black American Christians, prepared for the Lenten season but suitable as a thoughtful reader or gift for any season. Price, 50¢ each.

Black Faith and Black Solidarity. An anthology from the 1972 Dar es Salaam, Tanzania consultation of African and Afro-American religious leaders and activists. Explores the roots of Christian Pan-Africanism. Price, \$3, postage and handling included.

Complete texts of the lectures by James H. Cone and Howard Dodson, which were excerpted in the March issues of THE WITNESS, can be obtained from the Black Theology Project, address below.

Lectures and seminars arranged for college, seminary or church settings. Black Christian perspectives on changing world order. Write for further information.

All of the above items can be ordered directly from:

Black Theology Project
Room 349
475 Riverside Drive
New York, N.Y. 10027
or by calling (212) 678-6276.

Catholics for Women's Ordination:

Confronting the Roman Patriarchy

by Georgia Fuller

A patient was being wheeled down the hall by the hospital chaplain, a Roman Catholic nun. By her own self-definition, she is middle-aged and not the least bit radical.

When they met the patient's wife, he introduced them:

"This is the sister who said mass this morning."

"No! No!" interrupted the nun. **"I did a communion service. (A priest had previously consecrated the elements.)"**

"Well," shrugged the patient, **"It seemed like mass to me."**

Ordain women in the Roman Catholic Church? "No!" resounded the National Conference of Catholic Bishops to a plea which emanated from the national Call to Action Conference in 1976 in Detroit.

The bishops declared the issue "already decided in light of the universal teaching of the Church," and shelved it at their 1977 meeting. It should be noted that the Call to Action Conference was comprised of 1,340 grassroots delegates — 90% of whom were bishop-appointed — to consider pressing issues in the life of the Catholic Church.

While women's ordination continues to gather dust at the bishops' meeting again this year, it has been absorbing grass roots vitality as the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC) prepares for 3,000 people to attend its second major conference Nov. 10-12 in Baltimore.

The issue will not lie still despite official obituaries. It is grounded in the simple fact that women *are* ministering within the Roman Catholic tradition. But hierarchical opposition is formidable. Perhaps in order to expedite last May's negative decision, some U.S. bishops had encouraged the January, 1977 release of the declaration of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This declaration claimed that there would not be a "natural resemblance which must exist between Christ and His minister if the role of Christ were not taken by a man. . ."

Many bishops quickly praised the release, agreeing that women cannot "image Christ." Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin, then NCCB president, pronounced the matter

Georgia Fuller, Ph.D., has served as Co-coordinator of the National Committee on Women and Religion, National Organization for Women (NOW), for the past two years.

closed. Within eight weeks, Catholic support *increased* by 10 points.

A Gallup Poll, co-sponsored by Priests for Equality, the Quixote Center, and 60 other Catholic organizations took samples of U.S. Catholic opinion on Feb. 18-21, March 4-7, and March 18-21, 1977. As debate raged, grassroots support climbed, reaching 41% in the last sample. Strong opposition decreased from 50% to 40% in the same 6-week period.

All my life I thought I was imaging Christ. That's why I had entered religious life. Then the Vatican document said women can't image Christ. What have I been doing all these years? I felt that I had been lied to! I had a faith crisis. Where can a mother superior go with a faith crisis?

I was hurt. I was angry. I turned to a young priest friend of mine and declared, "I can never again go to confession. The church has sinned against me!" The young priest raised his hand saying, "In the name of the church, I ask your forgiveness for our sins against you and against all women."

"Given the growth both in public interest and of people supporting the ordination of women, we felt that it was time to schedule another major event," said Mary Beckman, Women's Ordination Conference Core Commissioner. She and other commissioners were selected after the 1975 WOC Conference, which drew 2,000 registrations and spawned a publication of the proceedings plus an 1,800 member organization.

According to Ms. Beckman, the 1978 Conference will feature four major presentations:

- The state of the question of women's ordination, theologically, and nationally and internationally
- A social analysis of women's ordination as a justice issue
- An analysis of the dynamics of change within the Church
- A look at Christian feminism in the Roman Catholic tradition.

Interspersed will be workshops in three areas: For those hearing or trying to discern the call to ordination; for those interested in active organizing; and for those continuing theological reflection. Topics to be taken up include

sexuality, a psychological profile of 100 Catholic women who feel called to priestly ministry, and "How to Survive in a Church That Doesn't Want You."

This month the WOC Pre-Conference Process is in full swing. Some 50 small, self-organized groups are gathering nationally and internationally to share their experiences and to "dream dreams and see visions."

"One of the main sources of revelation is our lived experience. We believe that our living and thinking is the raw data for theology. Theology cannot just come from scholars who are detached from the people," insists Dolly Pomerleau, coordinator of the 1978 Conference.

The Pre-Conference Process includes two group meetings. The first discusses how Catholics experience the priesthood *now*, and how they are ministering and/or experiencing the ministry of women in the Church. The second session attempts to flesh out the grassroots vision through two questions: *What would a renewed Church look like to you?* and *If you could participate in creating a new priestly ministry, what would it look like?*

Early this summer, each group will submit a report to be forwarded to those who will present the major speeches. Speakers will also receive 112 stories of personal call written by Catholic women contacted through WOC's Project

Priesthood. Theologians will reflect on these data as substantive input to their presentations. Additionally, the Project Priesthood stories will go to an editorial board for

The anonymous personal vignettes appearing throughout this article in bold type are all taken from Women's Ordination Conference (WOC) files.

selection and publication for mass distribution beginning Sept. 1.

"I think our program will be exciting primarily because of the Pre-Conference Process," says Dominican Sister Donna Quinn, Program Co-Chairperson. "We are hoping to capture the dreams of grassroots Catholics, to make their input part of the Conference and to strengthen the grassroots renewal of the Church."

As plans for the WOC Conference go forth, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), an organization serving women's congregations and communities, is preparing a July 1 pilot study on women and ministry. Spearheaded by the Ecclesial Role of Women Commission, the study will be two pronged. The first will be a nation-wide random sample by the Gallup Organization to ascertain the experience women have had in the Church. The second will be a quota sample conducted nationally by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. It will identify and sample groups of women currently ministering, what they are doing, what they would like to be doing.

"This study will contextualize the question of the ordination of women," summarizes Doris Gottemoeller, a Sister of Mercy who is EROWC Chairperson. "The problem of not ordaining is the inability of the Church to recognize and legitimize one aspect of women's ministry. We will research the range and character of women's present services, the inadequacy of the ministry women now receive, the pastoral needs unmet. Having uncovered these data, I, personally, am confident that ordination will be seen as a more plausible, legitimate expectation — a legitimate evolution and necessary development of the present ministry."

Sister Joan Doyle, president of the LCWR, likes to highlight a coincidence of history — that Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* appeared about the same time as Pope John XXIII's encyclical, "Peace on Earth," in which he identified the quest for women's rights as one of the three "distinctive characteristics of our age." Pope John wrote, "Since women are becoming ever more conscious of their human dignity, they will not tolerate being treated as mere material instruments, but demand rights befitting a human

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Vatican prohibits ordination of women as priests because Christ's representatives must have a 'natural resemblance' to him.

—News item

person both in domestic and public life.” Today a new pope faces the issue of change and women’s consciousness in these areas, *plus* church life.

“And we will impact the Church because one of our feminist roots is the Gospel,” explains Sister Kathleen Keating, chairperson of the National Association of Women Religious. “Through the Gospel, we relate to other issues of human liberation. The Church will change because there is an incompleteness, a brokenness in the way the message of Christ is revealed when women are denied an equal place in liturgical and sacramental life.” Sister Kathleen identifies three goals of the Catholic feminist movement: The ordination of women; shared decision making, and the opening of new kinds of ministry and participation in “the priesthood of all believers.” Underlying all these is clericalization and systemic change.

Sister Joan Doyle adds that the issue of *justice* touches the people to whom women minister as well. The shortage of Roman priests, especially in the Third World, is increasing the ministerial responsibilities of women. In Latin America, for example, many women, particularly nuns, are regularly leading paraliturgical services and educating and preparing parishioners in all aspects of Gospel living — prayer, scripture, the sacraments and justice issues. A priest comes but once or twice a year to preside at the sacraments, and the religious expression of the people is being limited and segmented.

The issue of justice touches all women, everywhere, Sister Joan says. “I think that the exclusion of women from ordination is the Church’s radical affirmation that women are inferior among the people of God. The Church is saying that we women have one crippling defect — our sex.”

One woman who believes herself called to ordination is Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, a Cuban who works as a full time parish minister in Rochester, N.Y. She does hospital and home visitations, takes communion to shut-ins, prepares people for marriage and baptism, works in the religious education program and actively participates in the liturgy. As a bilingual minister, her presence is especially important to the growing Hispanic population.

“I do everything a priest does,” comments Ada Maria, “except preside at mass, anoint the sick and give absolution. But I hear a lot of confessions as I minister. It is very painful for me not to be able to share the sacrament of absolution with people because I *believe* in the sacrament of absolution.”

“I come from a tradition in which sacraments are central to the expression of our faith,” she continues. “Priestly ministry is totally intertwined with what I am and who I am. Part of me is being negated when I am denied the

opportunity to test my call.” Women like Ada Maria are supported by many others who do not feel personally called to ordination.

On Holy Thursday we took the children to “an upper room” in the parish hall for a separate service. The children read the lessons, the children led the singing, we played duck-duck-goose and we sang the Our Father. Then we gathered around our altar and I pointed to the bread and asked, “What did Jesus do?” The children chorused, “He took the bread and He broke it.”

Then something stopped me — me, a mother seeking ordination. I asked myself, “Do you really want to break this bread, or do you want the children to break it?” When Jesus broke the bread, He shared who He was. And so the children broke the bread and shared who they were — and my personal vision of priestly ministry changed!

Change began in Rosalie Muschal-Reinhardt in 1972. As she was concluding a presentation, she said to the women, “Shall we close this meeting with a prayer?” Several days later she received a poem from one of those present. Entitled, “Shall We Close This Meeting With A Prayer,” it spoke of the pain that came to her as a woman when these words were usually said. In the middle was the line “But tonight it was different because Rosalie was there — and she is our priest.” A few days passed before Rosalie, a mother of four, stopped shaking enough to ask the woman what she had meant. “You are our priest, whether you admit it or not,” came the response, “because you call us to be alive.” Rosalie is now a WOC Core Commissioner with a Master of Divinity degree from the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago.

Looking toward the future with optimism and the past with love, Rosalie proclaims, “For a church that didn’t change one iota in 400 years, we’ve made a lot of progress recently. The women’s movement is the prime Christian renewal movement because it asks the church to look at *all* of itself — not just part.” While admitting that transition times are trying times, Rosalie chooses to be fully part of this age. “As a feminist,” she concludes, “I see patriarchy as the oppressor of men *and* women. We must challenge this tradition. I will not give permission to anyone to say I am not Catholic. I will NOT be displaced from where I believe I am called to be!”

Although the future is envisioned and its inhabitants are determined, it vibrates in tension with today’s church. Joan Doyle posits five essential questions:

- 1) Do women want to move into the current structure?
- 2) Do women want to change it?
- 3) Do women want to wait until it changes?

- 4) Will celibacy be integral to the priestly ministry of women?
 5) When will the time of pastoral acceptance be right?

Regarding the final question, Joan believes that women moving into new positions anywhere, especially into the Episcopal priesthood, fosters a more receptive climate in her church. The fourth question, that of celibacy, has the potential to divide Roman Catholic women.

“Celibacy is not necessarily a ‘better way’ to live your life,” insists Joan. “But for centuries our life style was held up to be ‘better.’ That very life style restricted us from dialoguing with laywomen. Only since Vatican II have we been removed from our isolated pedestal. The ancient chasm will be difficult to bridge. Women are trying to reach out to each other in reconciliation and healing.”

Selecting answers to the first three questions poses no problem to WOC members, who are committed to changing the present structure. Rosalie Muschal-Reinhardt runs an alternative model of ministry called “In Hope for the Future.” It is a consultative, ministerial service that will do “anything” — religious education, spiritual direction, counseling, group process, retreats — anything except compete with existing services and deny needed ministry to poorer clients.

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz observes, “Women are operating more and more out of a sense of priestly ministry rather than priesthood. The more I can go to the people and be with them and respond to them rather than decide what they need, the better it is. Seeing and experiencing this are my main sources of consolation for the pain of not being allowed to minister sacramentally.

“When you’re in a bad mood, you call up somebody and they help you. There is a real sense of shared prayer among us. I’m especially excited about the interfaith dimension that has opened in my life. I had never set foot inside a non-Roman Catholic church until 1½ years ago when Marilyle Sweet Page was ordained to the Episcopal priesthood.”

Another WOC Core Commissioner, Dominican Sister Dolores Brooks, was the principal of a co-ed Catholic high school before feeling called to the priesthood. In 1973 she began a Master of Divinity degree at Weston School of Theology, which shares facilities with Episcopal Divinity School. She met and received encouragement from the Rev. Sue Hiatt, one of the first Episcopal women to be ordained. With inspiration from Sue and other women ministers, and support from WOC members and local Catholic women,

she has been a staff assistant in a large, diverse, urban parish for the last two years.

I see the priesthood today as a closed system which provides services and maintains dependent relationships and the expression of faith as it is. I believe I am called, as a single woman, to a renewed priestly ministry, which is the enabling of the adult faith community. If I can give you the opportunity to use your gifts, I am enabling you to become your fullest possible self — which is what salvation ultimately is.

I’ve described this vision to male priests. Some have responded, “If you are ordained to priestly ministry, I will have to get out of the priesthood — because I like the structure the way it is!”

“A parish is an old, tradition-bound structure,” offers Dolores. “I’m trying to see if it’s possible to create a role for women within that structure. I’m beginning to think that it is.” Dolores supports her typical church ministry (visitations, teaching, etc.) by maintaining a liturgical presence at every service because “liturgy is one of the primary ways Catholic people experience ministry. It is one of their few expectations of the church.”

But the awkwardness of trying to create a role and the feeling of sometimes being left out, manifested as personal pain and hurt integrity, cause deep struggles for Dolores. This is balanced by the genuine appreciation she shares with the parishioners.

“I’m grateful that they seem to want me to serve,” she says. “At the same time, I don’t want to get caught in the cultic priesthood. We talk about renewed priestly ministry, but what is it? Trying to form a new model — one that works with the people rather than for them — is hard especially in the presence of the old model, with all its temptations of expectation and certainty.”

Ada Maria echoes her tension, “With the grace of God and a good support system, I might not buy into the present structure. It is a VERY comfortable structure!” ■

Further information on the Women’s Ordination Conference, the Pre-Conference Process, or Project Priesthood can be obtained from 1978 WOC Conference, P.O. Box 651, Hyattsville, MD 20782.

CREDITS

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Why the Church 'Waffles'

by Juan Luis Segundo

The Rev. Juan Luis Segundo, S.J., is a Latin American theologian associated with the Peter Faber Pastoral Center in his native Montevideo. This article is excerpted from Chapters IV and VI of his new book, *The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action*, and presented with permission of Orbis Books. The paperback version is available at \$5.95 from Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545.

The tacit and frequent alliances of the Latin American Church with centers of political and economic power do not seem to derive from any will to gain political or financial power. They seem to be based on the principle of choosing the lesser evil. Since Christian majorities are in great danger of falling away from the church in modern society, it seems more prudent to protect their Christianity with the help of outside authorities.

When a military coup is effected, and such coups are usually conservative in nature, the change of political command is always supported by the prestige of the Church. One of its higher-echelon representatives in the country appears alongside the new rulers, and the scene is recorded for radio, TV, and the press. Now this maneuver is not something that greatly appeals to the church official in question or promotes his own career. In most instances it is an unpleasant task for him. He knows very well that a large part of the population will find the new regime odious and against their best interests, and that they will view his participation in unfriendly terms. But if he did not add his prestige to the takeover, that would signify a break with the government and reprisals would be sure to follow. It is not that the reprisals would fall on him personally, but that they would affect the aid that the government gives to the Church in one form or another to bolster its hold on the masses or its institutions.

If we were to ask that prelate why he was not willing to rely on the Gospel message itself, why the Church could not carry on its functions under the impetus of that message, he probably would not even understand the point of our question. Chronologically and culturally we are far removed from that ancient Church that relied solely on the intrinsic force and attractiveness of the Gospel message itself.

It is much the same with economic power. More than one bishop in Latin America, for example, has personally chosen to take seriously the notion of "the Church of the poor." More than one bishop has stopped living in the old episcopal "palace" and gone to live with the poor in their neighborhoods. But such gestures

only reinforce the point I tried to make earlier. One is making a serious mistake and overlooking the real problem when one assumes that the Church's alliances with economic and political powers stem from any personal desire for power or money. Nor is one justified in talking about the *personal* cowardice or conservatism of the bishops, for many of them are valiant individuals who are willing to endure poverty and imprisonment. It is what they see as the needs of the Church that wins out over their own personal generosity and courage.

Take the case of the bishop who goes to live among the poor. It is almost universally true that this gesture will not mean that the episcopal palace or the curial buildings will be shut down or sold. The Church, too, needs an administrative setup to handle its internal affairs. While the bishop may choose to be poor himself, the Church still needs and uses considerable sums of money to maintain the organisms used to protect Christians. Schools and universities and media continue to operate, and they are visible to all. Thus the personal witness of the bishop is little more than an epiphenomenon, perhaps convincing some people that there are a few decent people even in the Church. But the growing social awareness of people in Latin America is not convinced or converted by that gesture.

Another line of witness might be much more effective. Let the bishop stay in his palace. But let him also decree that the Church will hand over all its institutions to the State and henceforth rely solely on the enduring power and attractiveness of Christ's good news. We do not find that line of witness in Latin America.

At this point we cannot help but raise a question: Why does such a line of witness seem so impossible to the Church and its

leaders? Why does that option seem so crazy that it is not even brought up for discussion? It think we must say that the shift from alliances to reliance on the Gospel is not made because an underlying certainty prevents it. Underlying our present pastoral approach is the conviction that *the Gospel message no longer possesses the power it once had*. And we need only point to pastoral experience itself to prove the truth of that assertion.

Whatever the reason may be, the Church today knows it is impossible for it to match the performance of the early Church in the area of evangelization. The Latin American Church feels keenly aware of that fact. Whether one regards it as scandalous or as obvious, that conviction pervades our pastoral approach here to such an extent that the Church ends up witnessing *against* the Gospel message. And those who offer this counter-witness fully realize what they are doing.

This pastoral conviction, too, derives from three underlying assumptions that are taken for granted and that play an important role:

The first derives from the paradoxical realization that the present difficulties facing the Gospel are the result of its success. In the early days of the Church people had a certain conception of Christians. It may have been overly simplistic and naive, but it was widespread. The Church and its followers seemed to have a monopoly on love, and this did much to spread the Gospel message to others. The Gospel seemed to have a monopoly on certain authentic values.

But what impact can the Gospel message have today, when everybody displays love to some extent and Christians do not seem to love more or better than anyone else? If the older image of the Church and its message was true, then that message has been so successful that in the 20th century we find numerous groups and movements espousing love, solidarity, and mutual sacrifice. Marxism itself, now the official doctrine of countries that contain more than half the world's population, proclaims the implementation of real and effective love as Christianity once did. It seeks to give equal

opportunity and fulfillment to all, but disclaims all ties with religion. And it directly opposes the profit motive as a basis for social relations, associating that motive with the western capitalist world where most Christians live. In short, then, some evangelical values have become so generally known and accepted that the Gospel message itself no longer has the peculiar attractiveness it once had. But dismay over the fact can only be justified if one assumes that the Gospel is preached only to win adherents to the Church. One can hardly be dismayed if one assumes that the proclamation of the Gospel was meant to bring about such widespread recognition and acceptance of its basic values.

The second underlying assumption is simple enough, but it would be well to spell it out. No one doubts that many people can indeed find the reason for their existence in the Gospel message, even today. What is doubtful is that the number of people who reach that conviction will exceed the number of people who join other organizations, movements, and parties engaged in fellowship and united effort. If the church relies solely on the power of the Gospel message, it will only come up with a minority; and it will lose the masses. It will have a minority of strong and courageous Christians engaged in transforming society but the masses will be lost to it, and perhaps to God and salvation as well.

The third underlying assumption is most important for pastoral praxis: When people point to concrete pastoral experience to prove that the Gospel no longer possesses the attractive power it once had, the underlying assumption is that our pastoral work is presenting the very same Gospel message that was proclaimed by the early church. That assumption is open to serious question. First of all, the task of

proclaiming the Gospel was neglected for centuries; even while external circumstances remained largely the same, our pastoral technique got rusty. Today the world has changed greatly. Can we really be sure that we are dealing with the "good news" of Jesus every time that we talk about Jesus, his message, and the Church? Only if we could prove that we are could we rely on our pastoral experience to provide evidence for our assumptions.

In any case it should be evident that there are serious obstacles and objections confronting any attempt to make the transitions (from contracting alliances to relying on the power of the Gospel). What is more, we do not yet possess any sure criteria for determining the proper choice. It is not enough to point out that the present approach is a vicious circle, for the alternative approach might be one too.

The point of interest to us here is that however serious and important the reasons militating against a shift in approach may be, they are not brought out into the open and discussed frankly. Instead they are left buried under an air of fatalism.

Forced to select a term, I find that the term "evangelization" best suits our purpose here. Another Greek term, *kerygma* ("proclamation") might also be used, but several reasons make it less suitable for our purposes. The four Gospels constitute a literary genre that is usually called "kerygmatic." Moreover, the object of kerygmatic proclamation is the "good news," which is a precise translation of the term "Gospel" (*euangelion* in Greek). Thus I prefer the term evangelization here because it gets right to the point and helps to define the content of our proclamation.

A fine descriptive definition of what I understand by evangelization can be found in Seumois's description of the three elements that go to make up authentic kerygma. This adviser to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith says that authentic evangelization or kerygma consists in: (1) communicating only the essentials of the Christian message; (2) communicating it as good news; and (3) adding nothing further except at a pace that will allow the essential element to remain precisely that.

Here I shall examine each of these features.

1. Communicating only the essentials of the Christian message. This becomes imperative if we choose to shift from exerting pressure on people to relying on the liberty of adults and respecting that liberty. The fact is that if we do give up all use of pressure, we also give up something that has made our pastoral work much easier. For we have been used to retaining our listeners as long as we wanted, whether they were really interested or not.

This means that we could no longer begin to transmit the Christian message with just any one of the elements, however authentic, that Christian experience and thought have been accumulating over the course of 20 centuries. In effect the new challenge brings us back to the situation of the early church. We must be able to transmit the *essential* message of Christianity within a very restricted span of time—one that our interlocutor can tolerate without looking for an excuse to bid us adieu.

This does not mean that the task in question is directly and primarily incumbent on the priest. Insofar as the priest primarily has *internal* functions within the church, the job is to form a community capable of carrying out the task. Thus both the priest and the community must rediscover the essential ingredients of the Gospel message. To some extent these ingredients have been buried under a welter of other elements. While these may also be true and authentic, they were piled on indiscriminately over the centuries by a Church that had *plenty of time* to initiate each generation of Christians no matter which element it started with.

Today that situation is past. If the church cannot formulate the essential message of Christianity in the course of a typical conversation running no more than a half-hour, then there simply will be no evangelization. It cannot count on weeks, months, or years. Needless to say, many pastoral officials rely on the belief that at least the family and the Catholic school do have the time to transmit the gospel message without confining themselves to its essentials only. They forget two things. One is that even if the Christian message is transmitted to children, that no longer means that adults will really “know the Gospel.” The other is that the time

available to the family and the school is also a time when the mass communications media can interfere and disrupt any such transmission of the message.

Now let us suppose that we were to ask pastoral officials, *What is the essential message of the Christian faith?* What would be their response to this natural question which is of such critical importance today? My feeling is that the question would take most of them by surprise. Perhaps it would even be most disturbing to those with the greatest and longest pastoral experience. We might get answers such as these: “That God raised his son, Jesus Christ, from the dead”; that Jesus is the Son of God”; or “the truths formulated in the Creed.”

What are we to think of these responses? That brings us to the second element described by Seumois.

2. Communicating it as good news. This element makes it clear that the above formulas, however brief and correct they may be, however much they may represent the essence of the Christian message, do not constitute the content of an authentic evangelization. Unlike the situation at the first level described above, at this second level it does us no good to examine the earliest professions of Christian faith. Why is this? Because either they were fashioned for profession *within* the bosom of the church (against heresies, for cultic worship, and so forth), or else they were responses to questions and expectations of *their own day*.

But the *Gospel* of Jesus Christ is either good news *right here and now* or else it simply is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ—however orthodox may be the formula of the Creed employed. There is no evangelization when Christianity is understood to be a restrictive condition imposed by God for the attainment of salvation, a restrictive condition to which we must bow even though life is complicated by faith and the practices it entails.

If we are talking to a person whose problems and expectations are unknown to us, it is not enough to say: Do you know that God resurrected his son, Jesus Christ? With that remark we have not yet even begun the task of evangelization. The remark may be true, but our interlocutor might well say that he or she knows lots of other news that is much better.

One thing should be clear by now from all that we have said. Our fearfulness that

the Gospel message does not have the drawing power it had once upon a time is based on a real experience that is doubly false. It is false because we do not actually give people the essential message of Christianity and because we do not give that message as good news. It is not surprising, then, that it seems to be pastoral suicide to take the risk of fostering and relying on the freedom of our interlocutor in the proclamation of the Gospel message.

From a more positive perspective we can say that two practical consequences flow from our second point. The first is that a message can be good news only if it relates to some expectation. Any evangelization process, therefore, must begin with *listening*, which runs counter to all our habitual reflexes and habits. Our customary assumption has been that evangelizing means talking and, insofar as it is possible, keeping our listeners quiet so that they may pay attention to our complete and logical exposition.

By “listening” here, I am not referring solely to an act on the level of the individual alone. Insofar as the Christian community is concerned, “listening” must be translated into a friendly and thoroughgoing sharing of life with the non-Christian. It must entail a shared historical sensitivity, shared commitments, and the recognition of the human values that the non-Christian holds and cultivates. This recognition, in turn, must be fleshed out in deeds.

Obviously such a context is directly opposed to any context in which Christians are set apart for the sake of their own protection. Yet only such a context can provide the foundation for an authentic process of evangelization.

And that brings us to the second practical consequence of this point. If our efforts to renew our contact with the essential message of Christianity is to be fruitful, it cannot end up in *prefabricated formulas*. A Christian community truly engaged in evangelization is one that *translates* any such rediscovered formulas into something that is capable of meeting the concrete expectations of contemporary listeners. No Christian community can operate mechanically here, much less be content to bring in the priest when someone begins to express an interest in the content of the Christian message. The Christian community must be creative.

In the religious world of Old Testament and pagan times, the good news could be formulated and expressed thus: "God raised his son, Jesus Christ, from the dead." Today the Christian community may have to say something like this: "No love is lost on this earth." Note that the latter formula is an authentic translation of the former. The Son of God (who is love) loved us to the end and died; but his love did not perish, and we express that belief by bearing witness to his resurrection. Our expression of this belief in new terms does not mean that we now claim to have a finished and perfect formula. Our new "evangelical" formula simply is a response to what we feel to be a characteristic anxiety of human beings. People proffer their love, but in the end it seems to be in vain. Many other expectations would call for very different formulations.

Finally, two points should be noted in connection with the persistent stress on Christian *witness*. First of all, we must admit that no evangelization can be effected if our words run counter to our deeds. On the other hand, however, no witness is in itself evangelization if it does not express the basic underlying foundation of our conduct as witnesses. No moral code or behavior can take the place of the "good news."

3. Adding nothing further except at a pace that will allow the essential element to remain precisely that. This may well be the most surprising and unexpected point in Seumois's description of the task of evangelization, but its logic is inescapable.

For some time the early Church clearly felt no temptation to add much to the essential core of the Christian message. It simply had not yet made explicit more items that could be added. Our situation 20 centuries later is quite different. During that period the Church took on the physiognomy of a "universal religion," and structures, dogmas, polemics, mystical experiences, and liturgies developed freely.

Up to this point, however, Seumois's third feature corresponds with his first. Both refer to the essential core of the Christian message. But there is a difference between the two features insofar as the third presumes an interest in the essential core and then calls for something more. Exactly what is this *additional* element to be?

Our answer to this question is closely bound up with one of the fears discussed earlier: That the gospel message no longer holds the attraction it once did. The implication is that the gospel is no longer the single blazing star in an otherwise dark sky. To some extent many evangelical values have been fleshed out to the point where they can and do lure people into associations and movements centered around values that are closely akin to those of the "good news." We need only cite the French Revolution, for example. Though it began in opposition to Christianity, it was waged in the name of three central Gospel values: Liberty, equality, and fraternity.

In the outlook of many, however, this is a mixed blessing. While it can be said that some modern-day values do seem to embody or resemble the Gospel message, they also seem to strip the Gospel of its force and novelty. What is more, they also pose the danger of *deviation*. For example, any of the brief formulas that the Christian community might fashion to respond to other people's questions about the faith are formulas that are readily shared by other viewpoints that the Catholic church regards as erroneous. We might tell our listeners that "God is equally the father of all human beings." But if we let it go simply at that, we might well fear that they will hear the same thing in a Protestant setting and join that branch of Christianity. Likewise, if we simply tell our listeners that "no love is lost on earth," we might well fear that they will hear the same thing from the Communists and join their party.

How are we to forestall that danger and prevent such errors? Two approaches come to mind, but both work against the overall task of evangelization. The first approach would start out with our listeners' initial interest based on their own free choice; but it would then introduce some sort of pressure that would *provide us with time* to forestall any possible deviations. The second approach would be a bit more radical. Right at the start, when we are laying the groundwork for our evangelization, we would introduce elements designed to prevent any deviation.

Both, I noted above, work against the overall task of evangelization. This may already be clear to the reader, but I want to make sure. In a famous address to Italian jurists, Pope Pius XII concluded that

tolerance of error was not only a *lesser evil* but could even be *the greater good*. Even though one had the means to prevent error, therefore, it might be better sometimes not to employ those means. Commenting on Pius XII's address, Cardinal Lercaro tried to further explain this teaching. He noted that it was not based on the commonly accepted notion of respect for the freedom of the erring person. Pardonably enough, it was really based on *respect for the truth*—not for the truth *in itself* but for *the way in which truth reaches human beings*. Thus if we start out with the assumption that people do not err, we are not really respecting the truth.

If human beings are to really *take hold of* a truth, it is not enough to keep repeating it in parrot fashion. They must make it their own, which means they must have freedom and time to ponder it and work it out. What is more, they must have the opportunity to "experiment" with it, to apply it to their real life even if in an erroneous way. For the things we really get control over are things with which we make mistakes first and then learn to handle correctly.

But what about the second approach? Perhaps it can escape this criticism. Unfortunately it cannot. Suppose, for example, we want to keep someone from falling into Protestant "errors." As soon as we have spelled out the essential core of the Gospel, therefore, we add some other criterion stemming from the Christian experience in the 16th century. We inject some comment about the controversy over justification or devotion to Mary, for example. What have we done? By injecting these additional remarks, which may be based on real "truths," we have moved at a pace that destroys the essential core as such. Since the supplementary features are more concrete and tangible on the contemporary scene, since the gap between Catholics and Protestants is readily apparent, their differentiating features immediately take the place of the essential core of the Christian message. Our listener sees devotees of Mary rather than Christians, Catholics rather than Christians. The danger of dislocating the evangelization process by appealing to elements that are true and valid but secondary has not gone unnoticed. It is not Protestants alone who have warned against the dangers of devotion to Mary.

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Urban Poor to Bishops:

'Be Our Advocate'

Following are some key excerpts from the document put together by Dean Joseph Pelham, summarizing testimony of the seven public hearings sponsored by the Urban Bishops' Coalition. The document will be published in the near future.

Heard and reflected upon were the voices of the poor and those who work on their behalf, the unemployed and underemployed, blacks, Hispanics, women, gays, native Americans, Appalachian whites, undocumented Latino workers, Asians, youth, the elderly, and those who are the objects of the criminal justice system. These are the people of the cities. As individuals and as groups they are victimized by the cities and form a vast "underclass" without access to power, caught in a web of discrimination, deprivation and oppression, and often without hope or any reason for hope.

* * *

Honest words were spoken, candid words were spoken, in some instances angry words were spoken. Often, too, restrained words were spoken. But in every instance, pleading words were spoken: Be our advocate!

* * *

The problems of the urban "underclass" described so vividly and terrifyingly by a multitude of testifiers are related to the persistence of phenomena written deeply into the structure of society: racism, sexism, classism, and a domestic kind of colonialism. It is these systemic phenomena which are incarnate in the agony of the cities and cause and maintain the existence of an "underclass" which is the special victim of poverty and deprivation.

* * *

The overall dynamic is thus an interaction between the systemic phenomena of racism, sexism, classism and urban colonialism on the one hand and, on the other, an economic policy motivated by exploitation for the sake of profit, and political and social policy largely determined by this interaction.

Many of the psychological dimensions of the urban problem have accompanied the shift of population to the suburbs: feelings of alienation, despair, rootlessness and the pathologies such feelings generate among youth, adults and families. All of urban society is beginning to show signs of these strains and stresses. However, the physical, socioeconomic and political manifestations of the crisis are of a magnitude and character in the cities not equaled in the suburbs.

* * *

The question cannot forever be avoided as to whether the dynamics and the dynamic which are/is at once the causal factor and the source of the aggravation of the crisis of the cities and the distress of their inhabitants is simply the mindless, accidental working of impersonal forces or whether it is too logical, consistent and predictable to be the result of sheer accident. To put the question in another way, are the suspicions of the alienated in the cities true — that there are demons at work which can and must be named and exposed?

* * *

A whole new and exciting form of the diaconal ministry might be found in the training and deployment of clergy as professional community organizers. If the Episcopal Church is experiencing an over-supply of clergy in terms of traditional parish ministry, could this be a new way to respond to the fact that men and women continue to offer themselves for ministry and that there are needs to be met? Indeed, could the "parish" of the future in the cities be less defined in terms of a church building set in a certain location and more defined in terms of organization and processes related to certain issues? Do we, in fact, have need of many more such "parish" clergy?

There was, additionally, abundant evidence that the Church faces a crucial "credibility gap" in relation to the "wretched of the cities":

— Testimony presented in several hearings by Integrity and by other representatives of the gay community indicated that the actions of the House of Bishops at Port Ste. Lucie call into question the ability of the Church to speak and act with authentic concern for gays, whose feelings of a lack of "citizenship" in the Church are strong.

— Testimony presented in the Newark Hearing and elsewhere, questions in the same manner, the authenticity of the Church's commitment to the equality of women and to support of new styles and forms of ministry in light of its decision to legitimize dissent, at even the highest level of its leadership, from the General Convention's approval of the ordination of women.

— Testimony presented by Hispanics indicates lack of confidence about the Church's commitment to them both by its failure to develop strategies of ministry in the Hispanic community and by its insensitivity to ways in which legal processes and agencies are used to harass the Church's ministry to minority communities' quest for self-determination. The Church has, in their eyes, sold them out and become an arm of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and a partner to Grand Jury abuse.

— Testimony was presented at the Chicago Hearing by Mattie Hopkins which indicates that the Church has practiced its own form of "redlining" the cities and disinvestment in them. Ms. Hopkins indicated that, "Racism in the Church displays the same bruising elements that it does outside the Church — exploitation, denigration and neglect. Dioceses that include urban areas (and through them the National Church) collect assessments from parishes in the inner city, send a

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Bishops to Urban Poor:

'Are You Our People?'

by Robert L. DeWitt

The "Pelham Document" — a 35-page, hard-hitting statement of the Church's obligation to the people of the cities — was the central focus of some 40 Episcopal Urban Bishops at a deliberative session in Chicago recently as they tried to determine strategies following public hearings in seven cities.

Dean Joseph A. Pelham of the Rochester Center for Theological Studies had been commissioned by the Urban Bishops Coalition to summarize and analyze the testimony of nearly 150 people from the cities where the hearings were held — Chicago, Newark, Birmingham, Seattle, two in Washington, D.C., and Colon, Panama.

The "cries of anguish" reported in the document set the tone for the deliberations. The majority of the testifiers were people caught in the crunch of deterioration of the fabric of the cities. The document was clear that there is a cruel logic at work — intentional or unintentional — which victimizes the "urban underclass" inhabiting the core cities of the land: *"Cities are the centers of residence of those who have been declared obsolete, unneeded and of no value by institutional, systemic principalities and powers. Cities have been consigned to the scrap heap, to be maintained only as colonies for the unneeded without adequate housing, health care, jobs or security, or as presently convenient locations for certain business or commercial activities."*

The document called upon the bishops to make a basic decision as to whether the issue is primarily "cities in distress," or "people in distress." That the two are inseparable is obvious, but a determinative difference for the Church will result from which it sees as its priority. Just as the bishops have deliberated on the Pelham document, so will others, as it is circulated. It will be surprising if this does not make a difference in many dioceses, in many parishes.

"Are those people (in distress) our people?" queried the document — a difficult question for a church as deeply entrenched in the middle class ethos, and with as large a middle class constituency as the Episcopal Church. The bishops in Chicago indicated that they were not yet clear about the answer.

Despite its agonizing array of human ills, the Pelham document did not suggest any attempt to take the urban crisis by storm. It carried a strong note of sobriety. The testimony of Dr. Gibson Winter of Princeton was quoted. It

referred to the urban situation not as a crisis, but as a "degenerative disease," centuries in the making, which will not yield to emergency measures. (See April issue, THE WITNESS.)

A continuing ministry of presence — of "being with the people" — was deeply congruent with a theme which ran throughout the hearings: that the people of the cities are not calling so much for financial assistance from the Church as for involvement *by* the Church. Many of the action recommendations in the Pelham document were therefore directed toward the *community* as the focus of ministry, community organizing, for example. It pointed out that this is consistent with the geographical parish pattern through which the Church has been expressing its life for centuries.

The document noted that efforts of the Episcopal Church cannot be successful if isolated from its "potential partners" — organized labor, the business community, the ecumenical community and secular groups. But even with such allies, it warned, the Episcopal Church comes to this challenge with a weak reserve of credibility because of its poor record of sensitivity to large groups of people in the cities — gays, women, Hispanics, Blacks and other minorities, and because of its failure to demonstrate, in the past, that it has the staying power for involvement in such struggles.

This warning was substantiated at the deliberative session. Two issues were discussed at greater length than any others. One was a statement of policy for mission which called upon the bishops to make *"a decision to cease the attempt to be all things to all people. A decision to abandon the role of chaplains to the Establishment. A choice to be for the poor."* Each of the sub-groups discussing the document in Chicago wanted to edit that statement. They obviously were ill at ease in responding to a call to be for the poor if that meant "taking sides." In a choice between the haves and the have nots, they wanted to have it both ways.

The other issue was the first action recommendation, which stated that "Immediately, members of the Urban Bishops' Coalition, as a coalition, agree to *stop* all campaigns for capital funds until such time as they have looked analytically at the nature of the crisis in their cities, listened carefully to the advice and counsel of those who are the victims of that crisis and those who seek to deal with it, and have become *involved* with those persons and in that

effort." This suggestion was discussed more than any other, and fundamentally changed as follows: "In the raising of capital funds it is essential that dioceses look analytically at the nature of the crisis in the cities . . ."

The response of the bishops to these two issues said a great deal about the difficulty of the Episcopal Church in its dealing with the poor of the cities. This sober fact was reflected in comments after the meeting:

• The Rev. Suzanne Hiatt, consultant: "Some of the Bishops complimented the Pelham document by saying it pulled no punches; but they then proceeded to have the punches pulled. However, the very fact that these bishops are meeting on this urban concern can only be a positive thing."

• Bishop Wesley Frensdorff of Nevada: "The bishops went further than we had any reason to expect. But given the constituency and the leadership of the Church, it remains to be seen how much the bishops can deliver on the decisions made."

• Dean Pelham, author of the report: "The question is whether individual bishops are able to make fundamental decisions about the style and emphasis of their own ministries. Those decisions on the part of the individual bishops are essential to there being any reality to the Coalition. The real issue is whether the response is seen as one more thing the Church is doing, or whether it is seen as the priority."

It would seem, however, that as a result of the hearings, and the deliberations on them, things are not as they were. The Coalition adopted the following recommendations:

On the diocesan level: Dioceses in the Coalition which have not had hearings will be urged to do so, or to adopt some other appropriate mode of "listening" to those suffering in their cities, and to those attempting to deal with that suffering. (Some dioceses, such as Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and

Southeast Florida are already contemplating doing this.)

All dioceses in the Coalition are urged to establish commissions of 50-100 people which will include the urban victims as well as diocesan representatives, to review carefully the findings in their locales. (Some dioceses such as Chicago and Alabama have already initiated specific programs as a result of the hearings in their cities.)

On the national level: A national Policy and Action Committee, which will include bishops and representatives of the best thinking expressed in the several hearings will review the testimony of the national hearing as well as the Deliberative Document itself to make suggestions for the national level.

Before the year is out the Coalition will meet with clergy and laity to assess the action taken at the diocesan and national levels. Several months later another meeting will be held for the same monitoring process.

The Coalition will continue as an organization, with interim actions and planning being referred to a Steering Committee. The next meeting of the Coalition will be held immediately prior to the meeting of the House of Bishops in Kansas City in early October, at which time ongoing organizational matters will be discussed.

Fifty members of the Coalition, a sizable minority of the House of Bishops, have now identified their commitment to the urban mission of the Church. Their continuing to meet for discussion of these issues, to undertake joint programs, will inevitably make a difference in the tone and tenor of their own diocesan ministries, and in the posture of the national church. How much so, only time will tell. Perhaps it was symbolic that the deliberative session was held at a Center for Continuing Education. ■

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...pittance back, then decry the burden of the poverty-stricken black parishes to the diocese. What in fact happens is that our money goes to support and develop suburban churches where the former city congregations have fled . . ."

* * *

It is clear, therefore, from the voices heard at the Hearings that the members of the Urban Bishops' Coalition would, because of their action or inaction in the past, enter into renewed interest in the cities handicapped by a lack of credibility.

An absolutely pivotal issue in relation to the Church's stake in the city is the question of the extent to which the Episcopal Church does or does not come to identify the people of the cities as *its people*. The church was led to the suburbs in the '50's and '60's because that was where "its people" were moving. This exodus left the cities inhabited by people whom the Episcopal Church has never identified as "our people."

* * *

Response to the urban crisis will demand a radical commitment to ecumeni-

city which has not heretofore characterized the Episcopal Church. Much of the wisdom spoken in the Hearings was voiced by representatives of other churches and synagogues who are engaged in a significant way in urban mission.

Finally, a theology of urban mission will emerge through engagement, action, involvement. The nature of God's call to the Church in the decade ahead will come clear to us only as we are present at those places and among those people whose hunger, thirst, oppression and imprisonment are the words which God is using to form that call. ■

'Women's Reformation' in Motion

by Barbara Brown Zikmund

As the circumstances and attitudes of the American woman have changed in the last decade, it is important to realize that these changes have not failed to affect the churches. And because of the close historical relationship between American women and church life, the future vitality of American religion cannot be considered apart from the contemporary women's movement.

Probably the most direct way to highlight this relationship is to mention the remarkable fact that *40% of all theological students in seminaries are presently women*. When one looks at figures for Protestant seminaries alone, the percentages are even higher. These figures represent a new era. Women in seminaries (and many women throughout the churches) are injecting vitality into our ecclesiastical veins. I say this not only as a woman, but as a student of American church history.

History has not been helpful to women. As Peggy Way has put it, "the historical record defines, builds upon, perpetuates and creates myths about women which become the untested 'self-evidents' of history." History and tradition make it difficult for women to change past patterns which have become codified as God-given truths. Furthermore, the historical records clearly neglect the actual presence of real women "so that there is a paucity of literature defining and tracing our actual roles within any particular historical epoch."

Although the Christian Church did give certain women direct opportunities to lead in special ways, for much of Christian history a more indirect style has been the predominant way women have served the Church. I do not wish to degrade or downplay the significant impact of women, even when it has been indirect.

Although certain women in the early Church and the monastic orders did exercise more direct leadership, by the late middle ages the acceptable forms of Christian service were linked to a celibate

life style. It is to the credit of Protestantism that the ideal of Christian service for women was moved from the medieval cloister to the "freedom" of the Christian home. While today we may object to the traditional limitations imposed upon women within the family, it is important to understand that the glorification of women as "helpmeet," indirect servant of the Lord, was a step forward in the history of women.

In the great missionary outreach of the 19th century and in the development of ministry in America, many women carried on a significant ministry working behind, and alongside their husbands.

The second way that women have predominantly related to the Church has been in separate, special and sometimes limited arenas or areas of activity. So much so, that within American church life some things have been particularly defined as "women's work."

Ironically, "women's work" has often come closest to the works which Jesus told the disciples of John were signs of his ministry. When they asked Jesus if he was the Christ, he said "Go back and tell John what you are hearing and seeing: the blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from dreaded skin diseases are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead are brought back to life, and the Good News is preached to the poor." (Matt. 11:4-5)

Throughout the history of the Church, women have opened themselves to places of human pain and organized significant special ministries to children, the elderly, the weak, the ill, the infirm, the insane, the imprisoned and other women. But the tacit understanding (particularly in Protestant history) has usually been that work beyond those activities viewed as a natural extension of the role of Christian wife and mother were inappropriate. Indeed, if women ventured beyond this territory, it was not good for them and it was not good for the faith. Because, some Christians believed, women were keepers of culture and preservers of faith and morals, if women's world was not kept separate and protected, the very future of civilization and/or the faith was in peril.

Nevertheless, within American religious history women in the churches have

accomplished marvelous things from an independent power base. Women's societies, associations, guilds and fellowships have flourished in our churches. American women have raised millions of dollars and given millions of hours to put their faith into practice.

These are the two ways that women have tended to serve the Church in the past — through indirect supportive roles in the shadow of some man or through separate special efforts, organizations and concerns defined as appropriate for women.

My thesis, however, is that the women's movement of the past decade has upset these classic patterns and expectations. I want to suggest seven ways that women have become and will continue to be a source of vitality in American church life.

First, I believe that in recent times women have increased the awareness of Christian people that individuals must take personal responsibility for their faith and actions. The women's movement has used the consciousness-raising group as a major vehicle of self-revelation and personal growth. In small groups women have explored what it means to be in any relationship, what it means to consider the future, what it means to have a commitment and live by it. Because of the women's movement people have become more serious about marriage and parenting. People have learned to listen to each other and to view their faith as something rooted in experience, not simply found in creed and custom.

Obviously, parts of the women's movement have been irresponsible. The sexism of the past seems demonic at times and the rebellion of some women has been extreme. But the greatest impact of the women's movement has been to strengthen people, particularly women, to take hold of their lives and live responsibly. Why should we lament that women are not keeping the old limited forms of church participation alive? We need new forms of church life to support changed people.

Secondly, our new sensitivity to the problems and concerns of women has made us all more open to the physical, or bodily, dimensions of life. Because women, not men, get pregnant and the arrival of a child dramatically affects

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women's lives, women are concerned about issues that take the body seriously — issues such as rape, contraception, abortion, homosexuality and physical violence. Too many times in Christian history we find a disembodied understanding of the faith. Yet we worship a God who cared so much for this world that we believe the Divine entered into human flesh and became incarnate. Christianity is not a bloodless philosophy or theory, but a living Word which speaks to us where we are in our physical condition. As painful and disruptive as these issues are, it is important for the Church to struggle with matters of the flesh.

Women, who have historically suffered because they were considered *only* bodies, are able to keep the Church from lapsing into spiritual imbalance.

Third, because of the particular history of women in the labor force and as volunteers in the American church, I think that women are challenging the church to rethink its understandings of church membership and Christian vocation. As more and more women have less and less volunteer time to give to the Church, we are approaching a crisis in our institutional life. The American voluntary church has thrived on the "church work" of many women.

But the situation has changed. Most American women spend the majority of their adult years holding a time consuming job outside the home. They simply do not have the energy, or the conviction, that volunteer work at church is where they should spend their leisure hours. Yet many of them want to remain part of the Church.

We need to take seriously the new roles women find themselves in and consider what is essential to sustain church health and membership. Even more significantly the rapid movement of women into the labor force raises some important questions about Christian vocation itself. How does any Christian relate his or her faith to a job? My hunch is that the greatest challenge facing the Church is not to uphold the right of every person to a meaningful job, but to offer meaning in life which is not dependent upon whether one has a job at all. Because women have historically found meaning outside of occupational categories, the experience of women becomes especially important to the Church.

Fourth, as women seek a theology to inform and reflect their new sense of worth in society (and the Church), there is a growing interest in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It seems to me that there is some correlation between the recent rise of the

charismatic movement and the development of contemporary feminism. Historically there has always been an increase of female participation and involvement in the Church when the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been emphasized. It makes sense. If the major reason that women have been limited in church participation and leadership is because of the authority of tradition and the Biblical record, any time there is an emphasis upon the power of the spirit to transcend tradition and scripture the situation of women in the Church has improved.

Fifth, the theological reflection of women is raising some very basic questions about the language we use to speak of God and describe the human condition. Here we come to a place where the particular perspectives and experiences of women are challenging the Church and upsetting some old habits. Women are learning what it means to do theology within the framework of feminine experience. Women are asking questions and seeing things which they never before noticed, and are finding the masculine bias of the English language increasingly offensive, if not idolatrous.

The impact of language upon our world view must be taken seriously. We now know enough about human development that even if one is not bothered personally by the use of the word "man" to refer to all people, or pronouns which emphasize that God is masculine — we must wonder if our children are hearing the *Word* of the Gospel. Any time we speak we are using a symbol system. Women have raised some

fundamental questions about our symbols and henceforth the Church cannot afford to ignore the issue.

Biblical translations, liturgical forms, creedal statements and social policies are the raw materials of church life. It is healthy for the Church to be prodded on these things.

Sixth, the authoritarian institutional style of traditional church life is being directly questioned by women who have had experience with shared leadership and non-patriarchal structures. This rejection of institutional traditions is not pointedly anti-ecclesiastical. It reflects the new sophistication of women about the politics of power.

Within the women's movement there have been two rather different judgments about power. Women have come to realize that historically power was like a commodity. Some people (usually men) had power and others (usually women) did not. When and if women were seen as powerful, it usually meant that their power was less pure (*e.g., witchcraft*). Also it was felt that powerful women reduced the power of men. As feminism developed there were two different ways women sought to cope with power: one group struggled to get power and one group sought to get rid of power.

In the 19th century campaign for women's rights the concept of mass organizing to gain equity in employment, education and citizenship is a good example of powerless women claiming power for themselves. In the recent re-birth of feminism there is certainly a continuing desire to take and share power held by men. But there is also a fundamental attack upon power structures and patterns themselves.

The concept of "consciousness-raising," which is at the heart of contemporary feminism, undercuts some basic assumptions about institutions and leadership. The consciousness-raising group is a leaderless gathering where all are "equally" in charge. There are rules laid out which protect people from petty criticism, external authority, or domination. Everyone is encouraged to speak briefly and listen openly.

It is significant that women are finding alternative methods for personal and institutional change through consciousness-raising. Women are sharing enough to question basic assumptions about power and historical structures. Women are even concluding that the Gospel of Jesus Christ (which uplifts weakness over strength and says that the first shall be last) calls for new structures to empower the powerless in the Church.



Women are suggesting important alternatives to hierarchical and patriarchal history — not because women want to gain control, but because they want to disperse control. The vitality of our religious life will continue to be enriched by this movement.

Finally, the decision of increasing numbers of women to attend seminary and seek ordination is changing the quality and character of parish leadership and congregational life. This is the most obvious impact of the women's movement upon the church. Female leadership will bring a fresh perspective on personal faith and responsibility. Simply by their presence, women in ministerial leadership will witness to the inter-relationship between our faith and our bodies, our faith and our vocation, our faith and the Holy Spirit, our faith and our language and our faith and the authoritarian structures of the Church. Not that male clergy cannot do this as well but for this moment in history women have an edge. It is an awesome responsibility which women cannot afford to take lightly.

What makes the situation more difficult, however, is that the influx of women into the full-time ministry comes at a time of shrinking opportunities and fewer full-time jobs in the churches.

Ultimately, I think that this, too, will contribute to the vitality of the Church. I am not worried about the qualifications of women for ministry. Some of the best prepared pastors are women. If churches can get past their initial reservations about "women ministers," and call people who will do the *best* job for them (male or female), the Church is sure to benefit.

Continued from page 2

Disarmament? It seems to me that the "Save Our Communities" part of the program with its emphasis on the linkage between nuclear weapons, nuclear power, the arms race and unmet human needs dovetails with the intent of the Urban Bishops Coalition.

We know military spending is often justified in terms of creating jobs, and defense workers are often cold to pleas on shifting priorities which could cost them their jobs. Yet, military spending creates fewer jobs than spending money on almost anything else. In other words, jobs which are such a vital part of easing the situation for workers are more plentiful when linked to peaceful purposes. As Jimmy Carter said recently "I think the shift away from weapons towards peaceful goods and

Thus the oversupply question raises another problem. If there is an increase in seminary enrollments and a decrease in church openings, should the seminaries curtail admissions? There are a number of practical reasons the seminaries cannot reduce enrollments, yet we recognize that care must be taken not to mislead students about the opportunities that exist after graduation. There is also the question of limiting ministry to the vocational slots that already exist in the Church. Some United Presbyterian literature has rephrased the issue to ask whether the Church has a shortage of jobs or a crisis of vision.

The most important impact of women in ministry will finally come in the local congregation. Women pastors raise some interesting questions about parish life. Is there something sexual about the historic pattern of male pastor and the fact that most active church people are female? When the pastor is a woman those sexual dynamics are upset and recast. Is there something nurturing and maternal about the efforts of today's clergy to care for hurt people? When the pastor is a woman her socialization and history enhance her ministry. Is it important that the Protestant preacher challenge the status quo? When the preacher is a woman, her very presence, as well as her words carry that message.

Here, therefore, are seven developments in contemporary church life which seem to me to relate to the changing circumstances of women. I do not pretend to know where it will all lead, but I believe firmly that the changing relationship of women to the Christian Church is a blessing — God's blessing. ■

services in the long run is favorable for world peace; and you also get more jobs per dollar spent."

The Rev. Arthur Kortheuer
New York, N.Y.

Thanks for Abbie Jane

Thanks and praise for bringing us Abbie Jane Wells! (December WITNESS) So many of us are listening — hoping to hear a theologian who starts where we are and "wonders" what we wonder! You are fortunate to be on her mailing list.

Blanche Hamilton
Pittsburgh Network
Church & Society

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The former President of the Latin American Episcopal Conference, Bishop Manuel Larrain, asked the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to alert preachers of the Gospel to the danger of introducing devotion to Mary too soon. Her prerogatives could be introduced at a pace that would dislocate the core of the Christian message.

The elements of the Christian message, then, must be put in a proper hierarchy by adopting a proper "pace" or "rhythm." Only in this way can the essential core of that message retain its central place as such. But the need for proper pacing is not confined to the proclamation of the message by the Christian community. It must also show up in our *praxis* of the message, and this may be even more difficult.

Even if a Christian community is proclaiming the essential message *in words*, it is not and cannot be evangelizing if it judges historical realities in terms of criteria that do not reflect the same proper hierarchy. If we prefer a project with a Christian label over one with greater liberative content that bears a different label, then we are submerging the essential in the secondary. If we prefer the undifferentiated unity of Christians bereft of liberation impact over commitments to liberation that are shared by some Christians and non-Christians, then once again we are letting secondary elements drown out the essential core of the Christian message. It is most important, therefore, that the matter of pace or rhythm be extended to *praxis* also.

The following point, however, may well be the most important one associated with this third feature of evangelization. If we are to be able to evangelize, we must divest ourselves of the three fears discussed previously. We must stop fearing the freedom of our listeners because only through the exercise of their freedom can the Gospel message become a truly personal conviction giving direction to their whole life. We must stop being afraid for the salvation of the majority; we must stop trying to bring them up to the logical minimum of faith as quickly as possible, so that we can dwell deeply and at length on the core faith that we now take for granted. Finally, we must stop fearing that the Gospel no longer has the power to attract human beings. ■

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