

The Abortion Issue Intrudes On The Eucharistic Congress

By W. H. MARSHNER

John Cardinal Krol is preparing something unique for the bicentennial year, 1976. While other Americans are making fools of themselves by running around in powdered wigs reciting the speeches of long-dead patriots, the Cardinal is inviting Catholics and others who glory in the name of Christ to come to Philadelphia and adore the living God. From August 1st to 8th, 1976, Krol will host the 41st International Eucharistic Congress, an event dedicated to moral and spiritual renewal through devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

The religious seriousness which made Cardinal Krol champion the proposal to hold this congress in the teeth of indifference from many of his fellow bishops is, not surprisingly, the same seriousness which has made the Philadelphia Cardinal famous for his hard-line opposition to abortion. In public statements he has consistently compared the baby-killing practice to Hitler's ovens and Stalin's purges. His personal influence was apparent in the bishops' (for once, courageous) response to the Supreme Court's abortion decisions. Krol led his colleagues in declaring that the decisions are not law at all, and that no Catholic can in conscience obey them. And since that time, Krol has been in the forefront of citizen efforts to secure a Human Life Amendment.

In the light of those commitments, Cardinal Krol had better take another look at some of the people he (or his subordinates) have invited to play an official role in his Eucharistic Congress. For instance:

— Dr. Rufus Cornelsen, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Christian Council of Philadelphia (MCCP), told this reporter that he believes abortion ought to remain legal and that he opposes any effort to amend the Constitution.

— Rev. Bernard Thorpe (St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Lafayette, Pa.) admitted doing abortion counseling. He believes in "strict guidelines," by which he means that a woman ought to receive a "psychological evaluation" before having her baby pulped. Would he support a Human Life Amendment? "No way," he said.

— Rev. Howard Hartzell (First Baptist Church, Phila.) believes in abortion for "deformed" or "mongoloid" children. He doesn't like the idea of "permissiveness" and so opposes abortions for unmarried women, but, on the other hand, he thinks they ought to be legal.

— Mrs. Eve Stedman (a staff person for MCCP) says that refusing to bear a child is as much a matter of "conscience" as the legally recognized right to refuse to bear arms. "I am totally opposed to a Catholic-Church style constitutional amendment," she says; "it's a direct infringement of people's religious liberty."

— Rev. John Leser (Calvary Episcopal Church, Phila.) allows as how a woman "owns her body" and therefore "has a right to abortion if she wants it." He says he has felt this way for a long time.

— Rev. William T. Moore (Marple Presbyterian Church, Broomall, Pa.) likes to look at particular cases. He thinks abortion is a decision a woman should be able to make in consultation with her doctor and her preacher. His only worry now is that many women are dispensing with the preacher.

— Mrs. Betty Arnholt (Flourtown, Pa.) sticks by the "right to choose." She rejects

any amendment that would restrict this "right."

— Rev. Charles Miller (head of the Lutheran Synod of Southeastern Pennsylvania) is so tightly plugged into the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights that he refused to answer my questions before checking me out with that organization.

This list is of peculiar interest to Cardinal Krol for the following reason. The sublime goal of strengthening the spiritual bond between Christians through devotion to the Eucharist obviously suggested that the Philadelphia Eucharistic Congress ought to include an ecumenical dimension. Two committees were set up to coordinate non-Catholic participation, one national and one local. The national committee is a big-name deal, involving the Assistant General Secretary of the National Council of Churches and several heads of denominations. More on that in a moment. Of more immediate interest is the local committee. This consists of 15 Catholics, one Greek Orthodox, and 13 Protestants from the greater Philadelphia area. The pro-abortionists listed above are among the 13 Protestants, and the rest of the 13, with one exception, are no better. In other words, every Protestant whom Cardinal Krol's staff has invited to share in the planning of this event on the local level (with the single exception of Mrs. Shirley Hawkins, a pro-lifer with Church Women United) professes the morals of Herod and publicly opposes the Human Life Amendment, which is supposed to be Cardinal Krol's dearest political hope.

It is not the case, of course, that Krol's staff looked for pro-life Protestants in whose company to worship God and couldn't find any; they just didn't look. The man who put together the local committee, Fr. Charles V. Devlin (who doubles as Executive Director of the Cardinal's Commission on Human Rights) told me that the abortion issue had never entered his head. "The question was never raised," he said. Rather the local committee was put together on the basis of "business as usual." Philadelphia has an ecumenical in-group centered in Rufus Cornelsen's MCCP (representing 14 member denominations). This is the clique that is always on hand for a World Day of Prayer for Christian Unity and similar festivities. So, when Devlin needed a few ecumenical types to round out the congress, he just co-opted the old crowd, no questions asked.

The same incredible failure to consider moral criteria governed the selection of the national committee. This was put together by Archbishop William Baum of Washington, D.C., with the help of the same Fr. Devlin. Its members include presiding Bishop John Maury Allin of the Episcopal Church, Dr. Robert Marshall of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and various high honchos from the National Council of Churches (475 Riverside Drive, New York — otherwise known as the Rockefeller Vatican). The National Council types all tend to be pro-abortion, of course. Presiding Bishop Allin has never made a public statement on the subject, but Dr. Robert Marshall is notorious for his pro-abortion stance. Under his leadership, the Fifth Biennial Convention of the LCA, in 1970, adopted a statement called "Sex, Marriage, and the Family," which is one of the most radical ever adopted by an American

denomination. It denies that the fetus can ever have the rights of a person and therefore sanctions abortion for any reason related to the "total health" or economic needs of the mother.

Once again, it is useless to ask why out of all the denominational presidents in the United States, many of whom are solidly pro-life, someone like Robert Marshall was chosen. The moral question never arose; it was just "ecumenism" as usual.

It is the sheer inadvertence which is alarming. Fr. Devlin works mainly in the area of human rights. What kind of a Catholic can think for two minutes about human rights in America, A.D. 1975, and not put the slaughter of innocent children at the head of his concerns? What kind of a Catholic can put that concern into a box, in order to be Mr. Nice Guy when it's time to be "ecumenical"? What kind of a Catholic can sling his arms around a pro-abortionist while kneeling before the terrible eyes of the Eucharistic Christ?

Moreover, there is a seriously deficient understanding of ecumenism at work here. According to the mind of Vatican II, ecumenism is not an exercise in civic good will. It is supposed to be a serious attempt to restore Christian unity. Hence ecumenism, in the genuine sense of the word, can never exist apart from an ever growing unity in creed and proclamation. But at least in the case of Dr. Robert Marshall's LCA, we are dealing with a church body that is moving away from unity. Here is a denomination which has cravenly abandoned a crucial element of the Christian moral heritage simply because it conflicts with prevalent secular thinking. The United Presbyterians, the United Methodists, the United Church of Christ, and the American Baptists are no better. In an analogy that is not at all far-fetched, these denominations could be called *Volkschristlich* — that is, they are very like the churches in Nazi Germany which abandoned tenets of the Gospel one after another in response to the demands of Nazi ideology. In any case it is time to ponder seriously the question whether "ecumenical" relations with Protestant bodies that support abortion can really deserve the name. It is time to ask whether such relations must not be terminated precisely in the name of ecumenism.

It might be objected that in a pluralistic society, ecumenism must be taken in a broader and more tolerant sense. Just the opposite is true. "Pluralism" in contemporary America means exactly one thing: it means the exclusion of Catholic values from public policy. When Catholics accept the rhetoric of pluralism, they signal their own acquiescence in that exclusion. Therefore, to pursue ecumenical relations which can only be justified on the basis of an acceptance of moral pluralism (as is clearly the case here) is to allow an ecumenical politics to subvert the Church's fundamental commitment to the natural law and to the instauration of the Kingship of Christ. A highly visible "ecumenical" step, such as allowing pro-abortionists to have an official role in the 41st International Eucharistic Congress, besides being a scandal to the faithful, cannot fail to have the *secular* effect of casting grave doubt on the political seriousness of the anti-abortion stand of Cardinal Krol and, indeed, of the whole American hierarchy.

But enough of theory. It is time for action. All niceties about the nature of ecumenism aside, the fact is that every right-to-life organization in America has been kicked in the teeth by Cardinal Krol's "inadvertent" staff. Protestant clergy and laity all over Philadelphia who have worked long and hard in collaboration with the Catholic Church in such organizations as Pennsylvanians for Human Life have been stupidly and callously ignored. It is time for all pro-life people, especially Protestants, to protest. Dr. Robert Marshall must be removed from the Eucharistic Congress' national committee. This is a non-negotiable demand. Every pro-abortionist listed in this editorial must be removed from the local committee. This also a non-negotiable demand. A new local committee must be selected on the basis of moral criteria and not "ecumenical" backslapping. This is a third non-negotiable demand.

If these demands are not met, the alternative is to organize an international pro-life boycott of the Eucharistic Congress. Write, phone, or wire your views to Fr. Charles V. Devlin, 222 North 17th Street, Philadelphia, Pa., 19103 (215-587-3762), or directly to Cardinal Krol at the same address.

Anthologizing Mary

By NATALIE E. WHITE

and Lourdes, taught by Our Lady, were not weak but strong, and what she taught them she intended we should learn through them.

First was *obedience*, to her will, which is the will of God, and it was obedience without question. She told Bernadette to scratch in the mud and to eat grass and Bernadette obeyed, which obedience made her a fool in the eyes of the watching world, but brought forth the crystal waters of the healing spring.

Second was *fear of the Lord*, the beginning of wisdom. At Fatima, Our Mother Mary opened her hands and from them a penetrating radiance seemed to pass into the Earth, disclosing beneath it the fires of Hell and the souls in torment and the horrible and loathsome animal

forms of the devils. With this terrible vision she impressed on all her children that God's *justice* is the counterpart of His *mercy*.

Third was the need to *do penance* for the sins of the world. She did not promise her children happiness in this world, only to be with them as she was with her Firstborn. Bernadette understood this: "How stupid to turn in on oneself when Our Lord asks for our hand to nail it." And the suffering children of Fatima understood, as all Mary's children understand, that if she asks much it is because she first gave much; if she asks for a hand to be nailed, she asks with a pierced heart. And whatever joy and glory she promises those who love her, she promises as the Mother of the Crucified, the strong Mother who stood at the foot of the Cross.