



**BAPTIST PRESS**  
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October 22, 1971

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** C. B. Hastings, assistant secretary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of interfaith witness, is in Rome attending the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops as a special correspondent for Baptist Press and an official observer. Following is his first news analysis on the significance, for Southern Baptists, of the issues confronting the Synod.

Future of Priesthood Debate  
Dominates Catholic Synod III

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By C. B. Hastings  
Written for the Baptist Press

ROME (BP)--The eyes and ears of the Catholic Church are turned toward Rome, awaiting with varying degrees of hope and confidence the decisions of the Third Synod of Bishops on the explosive issue of the future of the priesthood, and the grave issues of justice and world peace.

Two main questions are uppermost in the mind of a Baptist attending the Synod: How do the 212 bishops see the state of their Church six years after Vatican Council II? And what will they say that Pope Paul VI will accept and decree to their 500 million in the world?

Some watchers of the Catholic scene since Vatican II have thrown up their hands in dismay: some feel that the Church has lost its ancient moorings since Vatican II; others believe that Pope John's ideal of "updating" and renewal will never be implemented.

At least for a large number, the Church seems to be in agony. Whether these are death rattles or birth-pangs, or perhaps both, remains to be seen. Awaiting the Synod's recommendations to Pope Paul is much like anticipating the passing of the eye of the storm. If Vatican II seemed to signal a fresh wind of renewal, Synod III looks at present like the return blow of reaction.

Certainly not even the most optimistic are expecting any major change in the Church's law of clerical celibacy, the most hotly contested issue.

Although most of the bishops admit that such an internal problem should be dispensed with as quickly as possible in order to deal with the graver matters of justice and world peace, there is as yet no end in sight to the debate on the priesthood. Cardinal Marty of Paris confessed for all: "We are starting to get tired. Isn't there some better way of doing this?"

On the other hand another bishop pointed out that if, in such a world full of injustice, priests could remain aloof from agony, truly the Church is in danger. He thought the turmoil a sign that the Holy Spirit may be breaking through the crusty ecclesiastical structures.

What are the concerns about the priesthood? The most obvious one is numerical shortage. Estimates of the number who have left the priesthood range all the way from 10,000 in the U. S. alone to 30,000 world-wide. The Curia admits to about 3,000. At worst, this may be 7.5 per cent of the 400,000 priests in the world.

Such a shortage is serious in light of the great drop in seminary enlistments. Many seminaries are closed; many are half-empty. There is a morale crisis among younger priests which goes beyond the simple desire to marry. It involves personal dignity and the freedom of the servant to realize his full talent in an ancient system that is too often rigid and self-serving.

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Vatican II spoke of the priesthood of all believers' being derived directly from Christ. This priesthood includes all "the People of God" and not just the hierarchy. How then do "Orders" differ from this common priesthood? Is the "priesthood" purely a priestly ministry of service to others--full-time, unhindered by family ties? The question remains unanswered.

One perceptive Catholic observer thinks that the "real sleeper" in the debate is the acknowledgement that the priest's first duty is to proclaim the Word prophetically. This concept could have far-reaching practical results should bishops return and find young priests taking such a pronouncement seriously.

One of the most significant trends at the Synod comes from the South American bishops: most of them call for a greater emphasis upon "evangelization" of unbelievers and teaching and training of believers. Under the present emphasis, when priests have up to 20,000 parishioners each, they cannot get time away from the altar and the confessional. The South American bishops call for readjustment of priorities to place the greater emphasis on training priests to be instruments of change toward justice and a truly Christian society.

In the debate over celibacy, there seems to be some sentiment toward the ordaining of mature married men in places where there are no other priests available. The Canadians, Dutch and Belgians are in the lead here.

Standing with the majority who speak against any change in celibacy laws is the official U.S. delegation--Cardinals Dearden, Detroit; Carberry, St. Louis; Krol, Philadelphia; and Archbishop Byrne, coadjutor of St. Paul-Minneapolis.

The majority of the bishops definitely do not want to relax the 800-year-old law of celibacy. They advance the classic arguments of Christ's example and teaching (Mt. 19:12) and Paul's example and teaching (I Cor. 7:32); the freedom to serve unencumbered; the priest as a "sign" of Christ to the world, and celibacy as a foregleam of the perfected state in heaven.

Some voices are raised questioning the validity of these arguments and their power to attract young candidates. The claim that marriage is a sacrament on a par with the sacrament of Orders is like a ghost hovering in the wings. One looks in vain for any reference to Paul's rather plain statement that the bishop must be a "one-wife husband" (I Tim. 3:2). Some point out that the practice of celibacy, though it began as early as the second century, was never a dogma but only a rule and therefore can be changed.

A Baptist preacher would have felt like cheering Bishop Gran of Oslo, Norway. Catholics, he said, could learn much from the Lutheran pastors of Norway. There the pastor's wife is like an assistant pastor and his family an example to his parishioners of the Family, which is the Church.

Pope John may have succeeded in permanently opening the window to let in fresh air, in spite of Curia and synods. But will they ever get to Justice and World Peace?

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Missionary Kids Try Learning  
Manners; Baboon Shows the Way

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10/22/71

RICHMOND (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary families in Peru and Ethiopia recently sought to teach their children good manners, but despite a misunderstanding in Peru, a baboon in Ethiopia showed the kids the way it should be done.

Mr. and Mrs. James Redding, missionaries to Peru, instituted a weekly meal stressing manners and etiquette to their five children. Their nine-year-old daughter announced at breakfast one morning, "We are going to have good manners today."

Their three-year-old daughter, who according to the Reddings "had waked with a good appetite," promptly sang out: "Pass the manners, please."

Meanwhile, in Ethiopia, Mr. and Mrs. William E. Lewis Jr., and their four children had good luck in teaching manners to the family pet, who set a good example for all.

Their young baboon sits at the table with the family on a high chair which all the children have used. The baboon eats from a dish used by Mrs. Lewis as a baby.

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