

ARCHBISHOP'S WELCOME

Welcome to the local Church of Milwaukee! Europeans, I find, know little about this Church, always confusing it with Minneapolis or seeing it as only an appendix to Chicago. But it has a unique history and character of its own, not entirely absorbed by the images of cheeseheads, beer, and brats. Like all cities in the rust belt, it is rapidly changing its ethnic makeup from Central and Eastern European to Latino, Asian, and now Muslim. When, in 1993, the Catholic community celebrated the 150th anniversary of the founding of the diocese, the Jewish community celebrated the 150th anniversary of their coming here. Because of the close relationship between these two communities that grew up together, we could celebrate many events as one.

At the same time as the strong Scandinavian immigration in the nineteenth century with its deep *Lutheran* roots was taking place, the number of German and then Polish immigrants with deep *Catholic* roots began to dominate in the city. Thus, the Lutheran-Catholic dialogue is a natural to this city.

But to understand the Church of Milwaukee one also has to understand the way in which the Church has always been an integral part of the city's social and artistic life. It is not surprising that, in keeping with the thinking of *Rerum novarum*, there grew up here many German Vereins and Polish Alliances for the social and spiritual well-being of the citizens. It is also not surprising that these movements during the period of industrialization, that is, around 1900, attacked the *laissez-faire* capitalism of the period and were a part of the coalition that elected for most of the last century socialist mayors. Long before the Economic Pastoral Letter of the American bishops was published, Milwaukee was a diocese with a deep concern for social justice.

This cultural heritage also has produced a fine artistic milieu and makes Milwaukee a unique place in which to live. A fine symphony, a reputable opera company, an excellent repertory theater, a forward-looking art museum with its Calatrava design and wings not yet fitted for flying, a unique musical group dedicated to contemporary classical music, a resident ballet company (which Chicago cannot boast of), and—until recently—a Catholic symphony orchestra. All this makes the history of Milwaukee special.

But, as mentioned, the ethnic landscape is now changing. The Church here must expand its relationships to new groups as it solidifies its rapport with the older ones. Your theme, *Missio ad Gentes*, is thus most pertinent in our own history as a local Church.

The theme has a special interest for me personally. As a young abbot primate of the Benedictine Confederation, I participated in the synods of bishops of 1969, 1971, and also the Synod on Evangelization in 1974. That synod, as you

know, ended with no document, the final text prepared by the *relator* and the two theologian-secretaries was found by the participants to be unacceptable. As we left the aula that day, October 22, 1974, Cardinal Seunens whispered in my ear: "If we only had three more weeks, we could do it!" We were in a situation like that of the council fathers where the first schemata were rejected, but we did not have the time or energy to take a new course. The document published a year later by Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, was a wonderful synthesis of the best thoughts on that subject expounded in the synod, but so many of the divisive issues mentioned at the synod were not dealt with.

As you will recall, the *relator* who tried to pull the material together was Cardinal Wojtyla. The two secretaries represented two opposite theological poles: Father Domenico Grasso portraying the older classical model of the Roman school, and Father Duraisamy Simon Amalorpavadass expounding a new voice from a contemporary world of experience. Wojtyla was not able to bring these visions together into any kind of synthesis. It interests me that none of the biographers of Pope John Paul II saw in this moment a significant event presaging a dichotomy that would yet have to be worked out in the mind of the future pope. The biographies by Tad Szulc and Berstein/Politi have nothing to say about the synod and Wojtyla's role. Jonathan Kwitny, in *Man of the Century*, strangely and without foundation notes that Wojtyla "in deference to Paul VI, indicated a preference for uniformity and central authority over local tradition" (pp. 247-48). George Weigel, in *Witness to Hope*, is more expansive and talks of the synod ending in "ecclesiastical gridlock" and of Wojtyla's failure to write a *relatio* that would, as Weigel says, "satisfy the contending parties" (p. 221). But he draws no conclusions from this failure.

What was still lacking was a vision of the Church where the mission *ad extra* of the Church was not seen as adventitious but as a part of its very being. In *Evangelii nuntiandi* Pope Paul VI mentioned the intimate relationship between worship (an *ad intra* element) and evangelization (#47), but did not develop this point. He also talked of the relationship between development and social justice, on the one hand, and evangelization, on the other—a theme that both he and Pope John Paul II would later develop. But the relationship between ecumenism and evangelization was slower in coming and the relationship between interfaith dialogue and evangelization even slower in finding a synthesis. How the *ad extra* dimensions of the Church, and especially the *missio ad gentes*, are to be integrated into the vision of *Lumen gentium* so that our ecclesiology is integral and not piecemeal remains the challenge of our day.

Blessings as you reflect on these issues under the rain, fog, mist, sun, and stars of this diversified city of Milwaukee by the lake.

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