

gifts and His call". To all of us present here this morning, who are conscious of our many failures in the ministry to which God has called us in His new Israel, may there come this word of encouragement. We have been thinking this morning of His call. Let us, in conclusion, remember that when God set His seal upon this call in the laying on of hands at our Ordination He also gave us in this same sacrament the gift of His Holy Spirit to enable us to fulfil our calling, and the assurance that throughout our Ministry we could depend upon His enabling power. And "God never goes back upon His gifts and His call".

The Pastoral Ministry in the Parish

BY THE RIGHT REV. C. A. MARTIN, D.D.

A PASTORAL Ministry is a ministry in which the Pastor is to his people as a Shepherd is to his sheep. He knows them, he leads them, he cares for them—and sometimes he gives his life for them. This is the work clergy are called to do in the parishes into which they are sent. In the words of the Ordinal: "Have always printed in your remembrance, how great a treasure is committed to your charge. For they (the people) are the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for whom he shed his blood".

What an amazing opportunity we clergy have! But what a responsibility! There are in England 12,500 parishes, each with a parish church and probably one or two other buildings to be used for parish purposes. Serving these 12,500 parishes are 15,000 clergy. What would the Communist do with such a set-up? At least one full-time agent in a compact area with at least one, and probably two or three buildings entirely at his disposal for the work of propagating his faith. What the Communist would do is not what the Pastor ought of necessity to do. He has, or should have, different methods, but the opportunity is the same.

Roger Lloyd has said, "The Parish Church is the executive unit of the whole Anglican Church. The level of the whole Church can never rise higher than the level of its parish church. The Church might possibly survive a whole generation of impossible bishops and dead Cathedrals . . . but it could not possibly survive a whole generation of bad Vicars and lethargic parish churches".

The Pastoral Ministry is the strength of English Christianity, and more particularly of the Evangelical School within the Church of England. In saying that I do not undervalue the priestly or the prophetic aspects of the Ministry. We share these in common with other religions, but the religion of Jesus the Saviour is essentially a religion of the Good Shepherd.

My task is to try to put before you some ways in which the Pastoral Ministry can be exercised most effectively, and I want to be very practical in what I say. I might so easily fall into a trap by making

the address a catalogue of bright ideas, and nothing could be less worthy of the subject. We have all had our bright ideas and I hope we shall go on having them. But bright ideas do not carry us very far unless founded on sound principles. I want to deal with these principles and illustrate them by examples.

I

The first principle, and without it nothing else matters very much, is that a man should have a genuine concern for his people for their own sakes. He ought to love them and serve them more than he loves and serves any cause or organisation. It is so difficult to know one's own motives and I am not advocating an unhealthy introspection. But it is well to ask ourselves from time to time whether we are developing this care for people or whether the very pressure of organization is overshadowing it.

An apparently successful vicar learnt the lesson of his life when one of his people said to him, "Vicar, we admire you for your efficiency and zeal, but we wonder sometimes whether you really care for us as people".

A man honestly caring for his people will show it in almost everything he does. He will show it first of all when he walks down the street, for it is in walking down the street that a good deal of pastoral work is done. He will, of course, notice his own Church folk, and have a word to say to them, but his concern will also be for the postman who brings the letters to the vicarage, for the conductor of a bus, for the shop assistant and for the labourer. A man who really cares for people will show it in his courtesy and consideration as well as his earnest desire that they should be won for Christ and His Church. Francis of Assisi took one of the younger brothers on a preaching tour. As they went from place to place the young man said, "When shall we start preaching, Father?" "We have been preaching all the way, my son," was the reply.

Probably the most marked effect will be on the children down the street for they will instinctively look up as he passes and say "Hello". There is nothing more indicative of a man's true calling as a Pastor than the look on the faces of the people, and especially of the children, as he walks down the street.

When he walks down the street he is probably off on a visiting round, and no ingenious plan of parochial machinery can take the place of the regular systematic visiting of the homes of the people. We could do with fewer committees and fewer conferences if only it would enable hard pressed Clergy to do the work they know they ought to do, and want to do, but cannot do, and that is go down the street calling on the people in their homes.

I think of the best lay worker I know. He is a Church Warden, a Lay Reader, a Chorister, Sunday School Superintendent, and he was brought to church first when he was a young married man, and the vicar called at his house in the course of house to house visitation.

His care for the people will help the pastor to be methodical in his visits. He will remember an anniversary of a marriage, or the

birthday of some old lady, or the exam. day of one of the choir boys, but it will save him from becoming a card index fad who tends to think of families in the parish as entries on a card, rather than of people. It will keep him from calculating his work in terms of visits paid rather than of friendships made.

Secondly, this care for people will be recognised when the Minister conducts a service in church. The man who has a genuine care for people instinctively puts himself into a relationship of sympathetic understanding with the worshipper. The prayers will be truly on behalf of the people, and the readings with them. Ideas will occur to every pastor as to how to emphasize that oneness of purpose, but it will be sensed in him in the tone of his voice, in his bearing as he walks and stands. Of such a man you will feel pretty sure you are right in saying, "There's a man who cares for his people—he is now doing far more than reading Morning or Evening Prayer, he is leading them beside still waters, he is restoring their souls".

Pre-eminently his pastoral care for people will be seen when he meets them in great joy or great sorrow. The couple who come to the vicarage to arrange their marriage should find a man who enters into their joy, their hopes, their anxieties about the great day. Of course, he will want to see them before the marriage day, and the interview will be the making of a friendship, and in such a relationship he is able to talk to them of the meaning of a Christian home, and of prayers by the bedside. Many young men and women on such an occasion have recognised their loss in that they have not been confirmed. As a result there will be a Confirmation Class for adults nearly all the year round. I can think of no more fruitful ministry than the pastoral care of those who are preparing for marriage.

Perhaps the hardest test for the pastor is when he is called to officiate at the graveside of one he has not known, and with mourners who do not seem to recognise the spiritual nature of the occasion. And yet I have known the most difficult congregation turn and soften when, instead of the formal words coming from the formal officiant, there come the same words pregnant with compassion and understanding. However ignorant these people are of the liturgical services of the Church, however indifferent they may be to religion, they have lost a loved one, they are passing through the deep waters, they are in need of pastoral care and when they get it they are amazingly grateful.

Do not imagine for one moment that this principle of caring for people for their own sake will make the true pastor easy going or sentimental when he ought to speak of judgment. Where rules have been broken and sin has destroyed marriage or alienated families from the purpose of God the pastor must bear witness to the law of God. He will be true to his ideals and to his calling, but he will not send folk away from his home unshepherded even if he cannot provide a marriage in Church, or in fact administer Holy Baptism immediately. When people come to see him, they want something they think he can give. He may be unable to give that for which they ask, but their whole Christian future may depend on that encounter, and the manner in which they are received. The pastor who has a concern for their welfare will see that they do not go away hurt or empty.

II

The second great principle is that the pastor must have a genuine and lively faith in the gospel of Salvation. In his walking down the street and in his contact with people he will find that their great need is not just to be encouraged, or to be comforted, but they need salvation. The pastor must not be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.

The idea of a parish with the pastor living among his people and staying with them is conceived primarily in terms of shepherding a Christian population. But this assumption is no longer true. The pastor is set in the midst of people who, for the most part, do not believe the Christian Gospel. They need to be won for Christ. It has been suggested that to meet the new situation the pastoral ministry must be replaced by the evangelistic ministry. This is altogether a mis-statement : first, because it will be recognised that if people are to be brought to share in the blessings of the Christian Gospel there must be a family of Christians there to greet them ; but secondly, because it is apparent that the converting power of the Gospel is often more effective in these days through a pastoral Ministry than it is through a prophetic Ministry. Sometimes a man has excused himself from the test as to whether his is a converting Ministry by saying, " I feel myself called more particularly to the pastoral work as distinct from the evangelistic work of the Church ". That is a false distinction. A good pastor can be, and should be, an effective evangelist.

Every visit and every service, be it a marriage or a baptism or one of the statutory services, is an evangelistic opportunity, not only in the preaching of the Word. It is that, but is more than that, for on such occasions there is a meeting with people ' in the way '—and it was in meeting people in the way that our Lord, the Chief Pastor, opened up for them the way to God.

But some have to admit that in all their meetings they do not often succeed in leading people to Christ. The fault is not always in the incompleteness of personal dedication, but more often in a lack of faith in the power of the Gospel. If we talked more easily and more naturally about our Lord we should leave the people with Him. The story of Jesus is in itself the Gospel.

III

The third great principle to be realised is that a Pastoral Ministry is in itself sacramental. It is an outward sign of an inward grace. Our Lord has said, " As my Father sent me, so send I you ". As George Herbert has said, " A Pastor is the deputy of Christ for the reducing of man to the obedience of God ".

The life of the Pastor in his home and with his own family is, or should be, a manifestation of the love of God, a purifying and ennobling influence in the parish. This means that for those of us who are married, our wives and our children cannot live independently of the work we are sent to do. A hasty, and possibly a discourteous, telephone message from the vicarage to a local tradesman by whoever it may be spoken will assuredly make it more difficult for the pastor to do his

work. On the other hand a home of real transparent goodness is a power greater than almost any other asset which the Pastor has at his command.

It is the principle of Word and Sacrament. They must be kept together. They cannot be divorced without great loss to both. That is worth thinking over in regard to the arrangement of our liturgical services. The Lord's Supper as a reminder of the night on which He was betrayed, and of his giving Himself for us men and for our salvation is in itself a force of evangelism. It is necessary, however, that this setting forth of Christ crucified and risen must be proclaimed in the word of the Gospel, but within the setting of the Sacrament.

The minister is sent to present the Word ; he does so most effectively in the setting of a life given or laid down for the sheep. Only so will the people know that we come from God. I remember hearing Cosmo Lang, when Archbishop of Canterbury, speak at an Institution of a brother incumbent. In his address he leaned over to where we clergy sat and said, " Nothing matters, my brothers, nothing really matters, except that the people shall know that you come from God ".

One further word. I am more and more humbled by the conviction that we cannot lead people further along the spiritual pilgrimage than we have gone ourselves. We cannot help people to know they are forgiven unless we ourselves rejoice in the forgiveness of sins. We cannot help people to pray if our prayer life is weak and desultory. The pastor in the parish must include the pastor on his knees in the parish. It is time that we Evangelicals revived the emphasis on the Morning Watch.

The pastoral Ministry must be a costly Ministry. It is along this way that we shall learn to be at one with our Master who said, " The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the Sheep ".