

Editorial

The Word

The Word was made flesh and is still dwelling among us. Christ, the Word, has changed the world by His presence; He has elevated the world to a new dignity. The world has the task to remain faithful to this new position; the world has to act with dignity.

There is something especially significant in the fact that Christ is revealed as the Word. We should not be so naive as to think that He is the Word in the exact same sense as we conceive of "word"; we cannot know the full meaning of this exalted Word. However, we should remember that Christ *is* the Word; our words have *something in common* with the Word. Christ is pre-eminently the Word; He is the best Word, the Word *par excellence*, the Word in whose presence all other words would be better left unspoken . . . but still, He *is* the Word. And as the Word, He sets up a new standard of excellence for all our words. We can no longer speak as mere men might speak; our words have been raised to a new dignity because Christ is the Word and the Word dwells among us. We must strive to have our words reach the level which they can now reach.

We know that Christ is the unspoken Word, the Word which comes forth from the Father knowing Himself, and still It remains one with the Father in the divinity. The Word is so excellent because It is one with God; It is God. Our words must be one with God; they must be God-like.

Today we hear a new clamor for the freedom to speak, the freedom to criticize, the freedom to disagree, the freedom to urge toward change. President Johnson knows full well that people will have their say, even if they might damage our country's efforts in Vietnam. The Catholic hierarchy knows that it will hear all sorts of passionate demands that the Church's teaching on birth control be changed. American bishops know that their subjects will object to an attitude of hesi-

tation in the struggle for civil rights for the Negro. Those same bishops know that they will meet protests and demonstrations if their policy in higher education seems to deny academic freedom.

It is not our purpose to condemn such expressions of disagreement. In fact, we heartily endorse any well-founded protest. We would suspect that even the men in authority would not wish to stifle such objections to their policies. Any organization thrives on hearty and well-intentioned discussion. Disagreement may be painful, but unthinking blind agreement with everything can be deadly. However, the subjects must always submit to the proper authority whenever that authority finds it necessary not to reverse a position. We think that this attitude of respect and obedience is quite common in the Catholic Church in America.

It is our purpose here to insist that all such protests be conducted in a spirit which befits the dignity to which our words have been raised. There are some sad instances in which this is not the case. Recently we read a highly-publicized advertisement which suggested that the bishops are contributing to the problem of world hunger by their stand on birth control. Such insinuations are tasteless and disgusting; they are an insult to the Word. We have also received some widely-circulated literature asserting that Bishop Sheen is guilty of heresy because of his recent efforts in the field of Jewish-Christian ecumenism. Such irresponsible accusations demean our power to speak with the Word of God. As Christians, we cannot tolerate this. It is one thing to speak out when it appears that a mistake has been made; it is quite another to presume malicious bad will on the part of the hierarchy. The former is the act of a Christian man; the latter is unworthy of the name of Christ.

Since we are creatures, we must be passive to the Word; we must listen. The more we listen to the Word, the more dignified will be our words. We can hear the Word all around us if we will only listen, but the Word is especially eloquent in the readings, the homily, and the songs of the liturgy. If we listen to the Word in the liturgy, we will hear It more easily in our every-day life. And, most important, we will imitate the Word when we speak. When the liturgy achieves its due prominence in our lives, we will know the dignity of words because we will know the Word dwelling among us. Demonstrations of protest and criticism will not disappear, but they will always be worthy of us Christians.