

Faith Harassed In North Vietnam

By FATHER PATRICK O'CONNOR
Society of St. Columban

Saigon — (NC) — The hard-pressed Catholics in communist-ruled North Vietnam receive the sacraments with more difficulty and less frequency year by year, according to letters reaching Cambodia and Europe.

Relatives here of persons who are still in the north feel that while the Catholic population there grows by natural increase and some conversions, Catholic life is being steadily weakened.

The communist regime in Hanoi does not wish to hamper the "Liberation Front" propaganda in the south by an anti-Church, but it keeps trying to strangle Catholicism slowly.

The priests in the north, about 320, are too few and too restricted in their movements to meet the needs of the Catholics, estimated at 833,400. A high proportion of the priests are now elderly and infirm. No ordinations have been possible for most of the dioceses for several years.

One result of all this is that more Catholics die year by year without the last sacraments. In one large northern area it is estimated that administrations of Viaticum and Anointing of the Sick have been fewer by about 20 to 30 per cent in the last year, compared with the previous year.

The total number of Catholics has increased, but the number of confessions and of Holy Communion decreased, though only slightly, in a year.

No Catholic schools survive in the north, except one seminary functioning under difficulties in Vinh. Catechism classes may be held in churches, but pressure is put on parents and children to discourage attendance to them.

In one year the number of

boys attending catechism classes in one area decreased by about 10 per cent, the number of girls by somewhat less.

At least two priests and one Redemptorist Brother, all Vietnamese, are in prison in the north. Lay Catholics have also been jailed for religious activities, but no one, except the communist authorities, can say how many they are.

On March 10, according to an English-language broadcast of Hanoi radio, the ninth anniversary of the founding of the "Liaison Committee of Catholics Loving the Fatherland and Peace" was celebrated. This communist-sponsored group has apparently made no headway in its nine years of arduous existence. Some 15 priests, in bad canonical standing, are attached to it. They have taken over the church formerly staffed by the French Dominicans in Hanoi. The Catholics keep away from it.

COURIER-JOURNAL
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Jesuit Prelate Stirs Critics in England

Birth Control Debate Widens

London — (NC) — Archbishop Thomas Roberts, former Jesuit missionary, caused some stir at a sensation here by openly criticizing Catholic teaching on birth control. Rebuttal was swift but calm.

In an interview in Searchlight, a newsletter published by the former editor of the Catholic Herald, Count Michael de la Bédouziere, the archbishop declared that if he were an Anglican he would accept that Church's position that contraceptives are permissible.

How you can destroy that position by reason alone is not clear to me," he said.

A known pacifist and former Archbishop of Bombay, India, the prelate is an active supporter of nuclear disarmament, racial equality, world-wide justice and spiritual freedom. Now he is a consultant of the English Province and re-

sides at the society's Farm Street headquarters here. He said that while accepting the Church's authority, he himself could not defend the outright condemnation of artificial contraceptives on grounds of faith. He said he thinks the whole issue might be subject to "interpretative changes."

"Where authority is concerned, have we absolute certainty that this matter of contraception is not liable to the same changes as happened in the case of usury?" he asked, adding: "The concept of slavery has changed immensely. . . . The same may be true of the laws of nature."

Father Thomas Corbishley, S.J., superior at Farm Street, seemed to give qualified approval to the Archbishop's position, commenting "Archbishop Roberts' remarks are interesting as perhaps the first British statement on this question. It is too early to say whether one agrees with him, but it is certainly true that the Church's position on birth control will have to be reconsidered."

But the big three national Catholic newspapers, the Universe, the Catholic Herald and the Tablet, while treating the controversy calmly, published lengthy contradictions by prominent theologians who said the evolution — not radical change.

"uninterrupted tradition" of the Church's attitude toward contraception is not subject to contradiction. They admitted, however, that doctrines which cannot essentially change can still develop, noting that new scientific discoveries pose new moral questions in the realm of family limitation. In this respect, they said, certain issues relating to "the pill" (oral contraceptive) could be considered open questions, and are expected to come before the Second Vatican Council.

Experts also pointed out that the use of the pill to regularize the menstrual cycle and thus facilitate the rhythm method of family limitation is already widely accepted as morally sound.

Theologians also fold the "doctrinal changes" referred to by Archbishop Roberts are actually instances of doctrinal evolution — not radical change.

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Jesuit Archbishop Thomas D. Roberts spoke about the Vatican Council at Elmira College's Newman Club Sunday evening. The French born prelate was former Archbishop of Bombay. He also answered questions about current criticisms of parochial schools, Pope Pius' silence on Nazi atrocities, birth control and other subjects. Shown with the prelate after his talk are Lutheran minister Rev. John A. Kaercher, Miss Eileen Zagata, Newman Club president, the Archbishop, Rev. Otto Vogt, Newman chaplain, Anthony Cicariello and Miss Lolly Delaney.

Youth Crime Gain Linked To Smut

Newark — (NC) — Youth crime was linked by four judges speaking here to the easy traffic in smut made possible by availability of indecent publications which "defile" descriptions and inadequacy of anti-obscenity laws.

The judges of Essex County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court in their 1963 annual report (filed April 25) asserted the rise in juvenile crime and the upswing in antisocial behavior by young people is reflected in the number of youths involved in sex offenses.

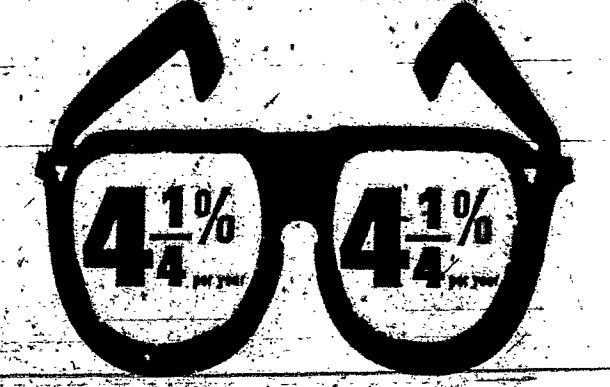
"Delinquents coming before the court," they said, "have available to them in the public market a vast array of crime stories, masochistic, fetishistic and obscene magazines containing borderline or lewd stories. The availability of such publications . . . defies description."

Children, they asserted, can be affected by this type of literature. Further, they said, current laws are not adequate to cope with the problem.

"The purveyors," they said, "are more daring, pushing sales by every means, because he has very little to fear from the law. They cited the definition of obscenity given by the U.S. Supreme Court in the Roth case in 1957 and said that under it "apparently only hard core pornography can be legally prohibited."

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