

Franciscans Plan Renewal

Vatican City — (RNS) — The Franciscan Order is seeking to renew itself and to find "a minimum of organizational structure" while remaining true to its traditional principles, Father Constantin Koser, Minister General of the order, said at a press conference here.

Father Koser, who was elected to his office in May, came to the Vatican Press Office from Assisi, where Franciscan delegates from all the provinces in the world are holding their general chapter.

The chapter is half finished, Father Koser said, "and it would be premature to say just what the result will be."

But "the first steps have already been taken," he added. "Everyone present at the chapter has felt the pressing need for renewal and they will take this desire back with them to their various provinces."

"A long period of preparation on the international level" was necessary before holding this chapter, whose purpose is renewal of religious life within the order according to the guidelines of the Vatican Council, Father Koser said.

"This preparatory period has enabled problems to be examined thoroughly," he said. "Two salient points emerged from a mass of documentation and research: the Friars Minor wish to be faithful to the spirit and letter of the Gospel and would like a minimum of organizational structure because the Franciscan Order is now so large."

"This desire for being faithful to the Gospel brings with it the desire of having a minimum of structure and organization. This will be counterbalanced by the liberty of the individual and principally the freedom of conscience."

"There have been bitter experiences in the past with over-emphasis on structure which brings along a lot of discipline and affects the efficiency of the order. The present chapter is trying to strike a happy balance between liberty and juridical structure, following the ideas of the Council and the demands of our present age."



Amman, Jordan — (RNS) — Holding containers of many sizes, Arab children wait their turn for water brought by a van to refugee camp at Wadi Deil, about 30 miles northeast of Amman. About 6,000 Jordanian refugees, many of them children, fled the invading Israeli army and were housed in a temporary camp.

Jews, Arabs

Deep Hatred Remains

New Orleans — (RNS) — "Fighting in the Middle East will break out again in another ten years or so," Carmelite Bishop Ubaldo Teofano Stella, missionary bishop of Kuwait, Arabia, predicted here.

Speaking a day before the cease-fire was effected in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Bishop Stella said the war would end soon. "Too many nations of the world have an interest in the Middle East — the cradle of Christianity and of civilization."

But he was pessimistic about permanent peace. "This fighting is endemic," he declared. "The Arabs and the Israelis will continue to fight until the old anger and hatreds die down, perhaps in future generations."

Here to raise funds for Displaced Carmelite missions in Japan, Bishop Stella is a native of Milan, Italy who served in India before being assigned to Kuwait in 1948.

"If the Arabs hated the devil as much as they hate the Jews, we would have countries full of saints," the Bishop said. Israel was "fighting for its life," he

said. The Arab countries were "not united by a common danger but, rather a common aim — to get rid of the Jews."

"Much of the animosity between the two peoples," the Carmelite prelate said, "comes from the displacement of Palestinians from a land they had held for centuries. Some 600,000 displaced persons are now in other Arab countries living a bare existence."

"They have not been absorbed by their host countries, as a country like the United States absorbs immigrants into the mainstream of its life. The Arabs are a clannish people and do not easily accept others."

"Religion is another factor of dissent between the Jews and Arabs," the bishop noted, although both stem from Abraham.

The Moslem faith places severe restrictions upon the bishop's work, he said. His flock has risen from 500 to about 15,000 Roman Catholics in 20 years. But these are primarily Catholics from other countries since there are "some

65 nations represented among the people in Kuwait."

In Kuwait, a small country but a rich one because of its oil, people are housed, fed, and educated by the government, as well as given medical attention in the best hospitals in the Middle East. Bishop Stella added: "We never have any trouble with government officials. In fact, they go out of their way to help us. But we are forbidden by the government to try to convert people."

Conversion of Moslems would be nearly impossible anyhow, Bishop Stella feels. "There is not even room for common discussion with Moslems. If you try to start a comparison of the Gospels with the Koran, a Moslem will admit no comparison — the Gospels were written by men, the Koran fell from heaven."

But there is no denying the sincerity of Moslem beliefs, he said. The Sheikh of Kuwait has often expressed gratitude to the Carmelite prelate for ministering to the Roman Catholics. Ac-

ording to the bishop, the Sheikh's faith is so deep that he feels God would perhaps punish him if people of all faiths in Kuwait were not cared for.

Churches Plan Refugee Aid

New York — (RNS) — Assured that there were no casualties among U.S. mission personnel, Protestant Churches are preparing to aid the vast number of refugees made homeless by the fighting in the Arab-Israeli war.

Mission boards of denominations indicate that all American personnel have been evacuated from those Arab countries involved in military action. The few who remain have told officials in the U.S. that they are safe and can continue at their posts.

The Churches and interdenominational agencies are planning to provide assistance to many thousands of refugees.

Church World Service, overseas relief arm of the National Council of Churches, has called for contributions totalling \$1 million for constituent members.

Junk Business Finances Church

Cardiff, South Wales — (RNS) — A former Presbyterian chapel has been opened as a new Roman Catholic church at Hay-on-Wye, in Breconshire, Wales, thanks largely to proceeds from a junk business run by the local priest.

Bishop John E. Petit, whose Welsh Diocese of Menevia is considered the poorest in Britain, presided at the dedication.

The priest, Father Hugh Healy, bought the chapel five years ago as a second-hand bargain at \$4,200, but he then needed three times that amount to convert the structure. He obtained Bishop Petit's permission to run a junk store, and business soon flourished. His congregation has only 60 members, but he thought they should have a church rather than the rented room above a public lavatory which had been used since 1926.

Peace in Bethlehem, Jews Admitted to Mosque

By GABRIEL STERN
Special Correspondent

Bethlehem — (RNS) — Last Sunday morning, the church bells rang so gently and peacefully from the towers and steeples of Christ's birthplace that I had trouble imagining the fighting which took place here a week earlier, when the town was a part of western Jordan.

Only a few, slight shell scars on the walls of the fortress-like Basilica of the Nativity recalled the dramatic events of the previous week.

Israeli soldiers strolled in Manger Square, mingling with the Arab young people of Bethlehem decked out in their Sunday best. Souvenir vendors were doing a brisk business and hoping for much more when the expected waves of tourists begin pouring in.

Sunday services as usual were also offered in all the Christian churches of the formerly Jordanian Old City of Jerusalem.

I also visited Hebron, formerly regarded as a stronghold of Moslem fanaticism but now apparently quite calm under Israeli rule.

In Hebron is the world-famous Mosque of Abraham, built upon the Cave of Mchpelah, with the tombs of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

These tombs have been fully respected by the Moslems but, until now, Jews have been permitted to enter the mosque only as far as the seventh step. Now, Jews are free to enter and to visit the tombs of their ancestors.

Shareef, the local Moslem guardian of the tomb, smiled as he let me in.

"Why not?" he said. "Abraham is our common ancestor by Isaac and Ishmael."

Parents Given 3 Options On First Communion

Stow, Ohio — (RNS) — Parents were given three options this year in deciding how their children were to receive First Communion in Holy Family Church here.

The results were these: Two groups of about 30 children each received as in the previous years, wearing traditional First Communion clothes.

Another group of about 20 received a week earlier in the "Sunday best" clothing.

The others — 122 in all — received with their parents, three at the Easter Vigil Mass, 25 on Easter Sunday and the remainder at Sunday Masses, in May.

Teachers commented that the parent-child Communion at the Easter Mass seemed to bring the spirit of Easter to everyone.

Father John H. Archbald, pastor, and Sister Marie Pierre of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, principal, arranged the three options for the parents after they were proposed at a parish council meeting.

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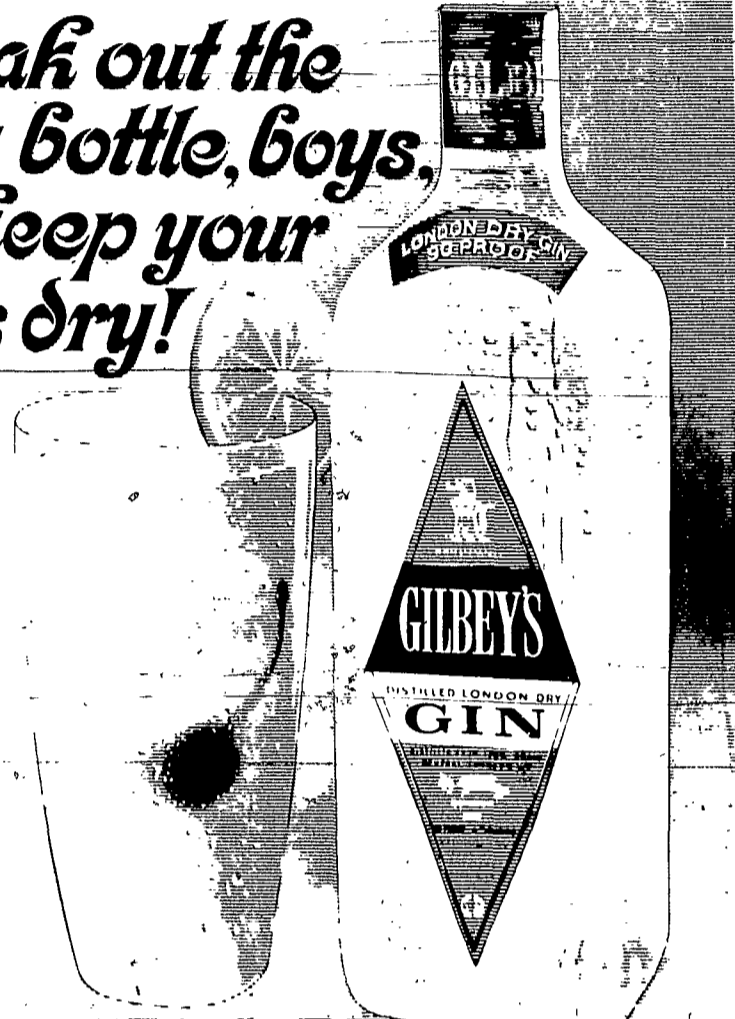
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