

An Insider's Report of Peace March in Washington

By PATRICK SAMWAY, S.J.
(Special to The Courier)

Mr. Samway, a student for the priesthood at Woodstock College, Maryland, is a former McQuaid High School faculty member.

I had never been in a protest march before. Like most Americans, I have seen various demonstrations on TV, both peaceful and violent, and know that the intention of the marchers can often be distorted by the way it is reported in the press. But on Saturday, October 21, I went to Washington, D.C., to protest the war in Vietnam and to learn what others thought about the war.

That Saturday began like most others here at our Jesuit seminary, Woodstock College, on the banks of the icy Patuxent near Baltimore. It was a brilliant day when the yellows and oranges and reds had reached their peak. A Kodak day of excellence! After finishing an exam at 11 a.m. on Gnosticism and Docetism, I boarded a bus along with 30 other Jesuits and drove 40 miles from Woodstock to Washington.

It had taken me two weeks to decide to get on that bus. Every day at our liturgy, we pray in a sincere but perfunctory way for peace in Vietnam. It had almost become a common place, like watching the CBS news with Walter Cronkite. I knew there was a war, but I had assumed the aspect of another news story, a celluloid drama, a series of pictures in Life magazine.

Last year I met two diplomatic attaches from the Russian embassy in Washington. Their galvanizing minds saw only the scientific march of history and the inevitable take-over of the world by Communism. They talked like mechanical, but deadly, robots.

Recently, I heard Louis Padovano, S.J., M.D., a Jesuit doctor who spent his summer in Kontum, South Vietnam, near the Cambodian border, give a lec-

ture on the war. He showed slides of the war atrocities: of women and children who had been captured by the Viet Cong, held captive for two years, and made to work in the rice paddies until their skin loosely wrapped itself around their bones; of waifs who had lost their arms and legs because of Viet Cong road mines; of lepers whose homes had been destroyed.

It was a grim, sobering lecture which graphically showed that the Viet Cong are ruthless soldiers who want to terrorize and conquer the South Vietnamese.

Before Dr. Padovano went to Vietnam, he told me "I'm not even sure I know how I feel about Vietnam. I am going there primarily as a humanitarian because I can help people who need help. So I am taking more of a passive than an active position with regard to the politics of the war. It would ruin the medical program if I went over with a political standpoint. I am going there strictly as a doctor. This is how we must go

over there. I will take care of their own values, different from mine, but I don't think antagonistic to mine. They are an apparently gentle people who prefer old comfortable clothes and disheveled hair. It would be naive to judge them by their outward appearance alone. They were there for a peaceful march on the Pentagon and they constantly reminded each other of that.

So all 70,000 of us sat around the reflecting pool and talked about the war, listened to some vocal groups over the loudspeaker, and heard some speeches that failed to attract any real attention. At about 3 p.m. we began organizing for the two mile walk to the Pentagon. I wondered: how would we all get across the Memorial Bridge in an orderly fashion without any pushing or shoving? It took time to get the marchers ready. But these people had come for a peaceful demonstration and they waited, some for hours, until their section was told to move up and join the line of marchers. Such patience is impressive in a large crowd because the natural tendency is to get into a moving line immediately.

We linked arms with 20 marchers abreast. Women were asked to remove their earrings and move to the inside of the marching column. This was the first evidence that there might be any trouble. We marched slowly across the bridge using only one lane. When we were half way across the bridge, we stopped and allowed a number of veterans' groups to pass so they could be near the front of the line. They were duly cheered. On the way to the Pentagon, we encountered no hecklers. To many, it was just another typical Washington parade. It almost seemed that the graciousness of Washington would prevent anyone from committing violence.

We marched. A college student in front of me played "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again" and set the mood for those of us who could hear him. As we turned off the bridge and headed towards the Pentagon, I looked up to Kennedy's grave site and remembered two speeches which had impressed me: Kennedy's first inaugural in 1961 and Pope Paul's "jamais la guerre" speech before the U.N. in 1965. I felt confirmed in my decision to march.

The Pentagon parking lot was filled with thousands when we arrived. We were told that the march was over and that, if we wished, we could approach the Pentagon and be civilly disobedient. The march leaders

made it quite clear that the objective of the march had been accomplished and that no one was being forced to go near the Pentagon.

I sat in the parking lot and observed the groups that had marched in behind me. They had come to express their dissatisfaction with the war and, as far as I could tell, they displayed no angry feelings as they approached the Pentagon itself. They had not come to taunt the soldiers or throw bottles at the soldiers.

It seemed to me that only those who wanted to be arrested were actually arrested. I saw the soldiers with their gas masks and bayonets; they looked like invaders from Mars. When they rushed towards the crowd, the crowd sat down and prevented them from advancing. I then realized that the soldiers were only doing their duty and, in a way, I was grateful they were there to keep any violence to a minimum.

At this point, each person there had to make a decision. Would he stay and be civilly disobedient and try to disrupt the Pentagon by having these soldiers spend their time and energy protecting the building or would he go home satisfied that he had accomplished his goal? Thousands left. A radical few hundred attempted to break the police lines. As a result, tear gas was used and this caused many in the crowd, especially the girls who were horrified of the gas, to turn against the soldiers.

I left, but some 400 marchers remained during the night and many burned their draft cards. Some even burned dollar bills because they would rather burn money than have it support the war effort. I do not approve of any of the violence that went on and neither did any of the thousands who left the Pentagon around 6 p.m. We had come to say that we were against the war and that we wanted full time negotiation efforts. When we had said that, we left.

I do not like to quote encyclopedias or papal documents because, too often, the Ciceronian style camouflages a meaningful

idea. But Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World I (78) deserves repetition.

"Peace is not merely the absence of war. Nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies. Nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly an enterprise of justice" (Is. 32:7). Peace results from that harmony built into human society by its divine Founder, and actualized by men as they thirst after ever greater justice.

Insofar as men are sinful, the threat of war hangs over them and hang over them it will until the return of Christ. But to the extent that men vanquish sin by a union of love, they will vanquish violence as well, and make these words come true: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again" (Is. 2:4).

I had never been in a protest march before. I am not sure whether I will ever be in one again. There are too many unknown factors in this war for one person to make a comprehensive judgment. But I do know that on that balmy October Saturday in Washington, I saw thousands of patriotic Americans and, what one friend called, "beautiful people."

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Nuns Order Revises Rules

More Open to the World

Los Angeles — (RNS)—The Immaculate Heart Sisters have announced a new look that, in the immediate future, would put them in the forefront of progressive Roman Catholic women religious organizations in America.

It will involve not only modernization of their dress, and in the names—the Sisters will use, but a reorientation of the society, which traditionally has been concerned primarily with healing and education.

"We shall become more open to the world, reaching out into fresh fields, more a part of the world, and more responsive to it and involved in it," Mother Mary Humillata Caspary said here.

Since 1963 she has been a mother general of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the formal name of the religious order. The mother house is adjacent to Immaculate Heart College here, which the nuns operate.

The renewal, said Mother Mary Humillata in an interview, will be more profound than any thus far announced for any American society of Catholic women religious, although the Loretto Sisters of Louisville, Ky., have pioneered some innovations in dress and mission.

All the new measures revealed by the Immaculate Heart Sisters are experimental in nature, and "temporary," following guidelines laid down by Vatican II. The period for experimentation is five years following the next general chapter, or convention, of the society, which, in the case of the Immaculate Heart Sisters, would extend until 1975.

But there is little reason to suppose that those innovations which prove beneficial will not then be made permanent.

"Changes will reflect a new understanding of the contemporary world's need within both traditional and emerging professions," said Mother Mary Humillata. "They also reflect the growing importance our society attaches to the services of professionally trained women."

Most obvious will be a simplification of the Sisters' dress. No one style will be adopted, but Sisters engaged in varying occupations may wear varying habits, suitable for their work. Names will be simplified.

"For example, I will be called 'Sister,' not 'Reverend Mother,'" Mother Mary Humillata said.

"Many Sisters will go back to their baptismal names. Under our rules there could be no duplication of names, so in order to select one some of them went pretty far out."

New Charities Head from D.C.
San Francisco—(RNS)—Msgr. Leo J. Coady, director of Catholic Charities for the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., has been named president of the National Conference of Catholic Charities.

Msgr. Coady was elected at the 53rd annual meeting here. He succeeded Mother Mary Charles Keane of Omaha, Neb., the first nun ever to hold the top post and who was re-elected last year to a second term.

Other officers named were Charles J. Tobin Jr. of Albany, N.Y., first vice president, and Harry J. Kirk of Washington, D.C., treasurer.

Mr. Tobin is secretary of the New York State Catholic Welfare Committee which acts as a spokesman for the Catholic bishops in the state. Mr. Kirk has served as treasurer of the Catholic Charities conference since 1950.

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Dress styles may have to be approved by the Sacred Congregation for Religious at the Vatican, whose prefect is Ildebrando Cardinal Antonini, but the other innovations, coming under the general title of experimentation, are not subject to supervision.

"For the first time, our rules have been changed from within, and not imposed upon us from without," said Mother Mary Humillata. "They represent the temper of the community itself, not of others."

Most far-reaching are the projected changes in the society toward the world, and in the view of the world it will get of it.

"We won't abandon our traditional works," the nun said, "but we also say that diversity in works is not to be discouraged, but encouraged. Thus we may assume social service, or work with economic opportunity projects, or such specialized tasks as with the mentally retarded, or with young people."

"If one of our Sisters has a special talent, or interest, we will encourage her to pursue it."

"She might be a commercial artist, or a newspaper woman, or a musician, or almost anything else. Whatever her talent, we will use it. This, we hope, will encourage a different type of person to consider our community."

It will be, she added, "a real blessing in diversity of works."

"We hope it will forge new

links between ourselves and the external community — not for evangelism, but so that we get to know more people, and become a 'Christian presence' in other areas of life and work."

The Immaculate Heart Sisters have always been "one of the more open communities," Mother Mary Humillata conceded, but the renewal will tend to break down any isolation that may remain, so that no longer will "we be a little island."

A girl who seeks to join the Immaculate Heart Sisters must do more than merely feel the "vocation." She must also pass a whole battery of aptitude tests, to determine whether she can get on well with a group, and other things.

In addition to the reorientation of some aspects of the community life, much more autonomy will be given to individual houses of nuns, it was announced.

"Within the local house authority will be determined by the Sisters themselves — they will select their own mode of government," said Mother Mary Humillata.

"Do they want a superior? Do they want group decision-making? If so, fine. Any problem that can be solved by themselves will be settled there. Local groups are urged to work through local problems."

"The motto is: 'Don't call for help until you need it!' and each group will be looked upon as one of adults, capable of solving their own problems."

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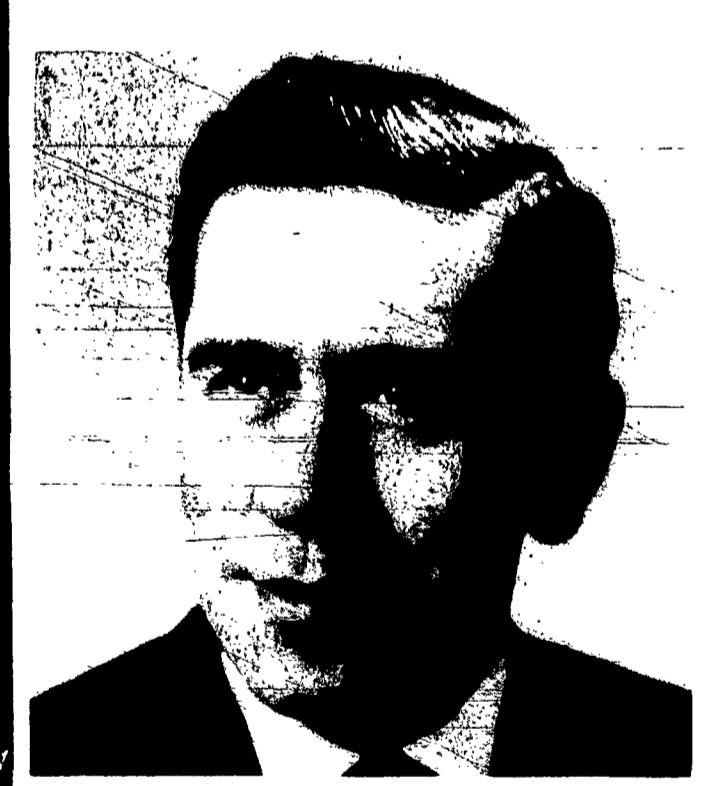
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Past, President, St. Anthony's Mens Club
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