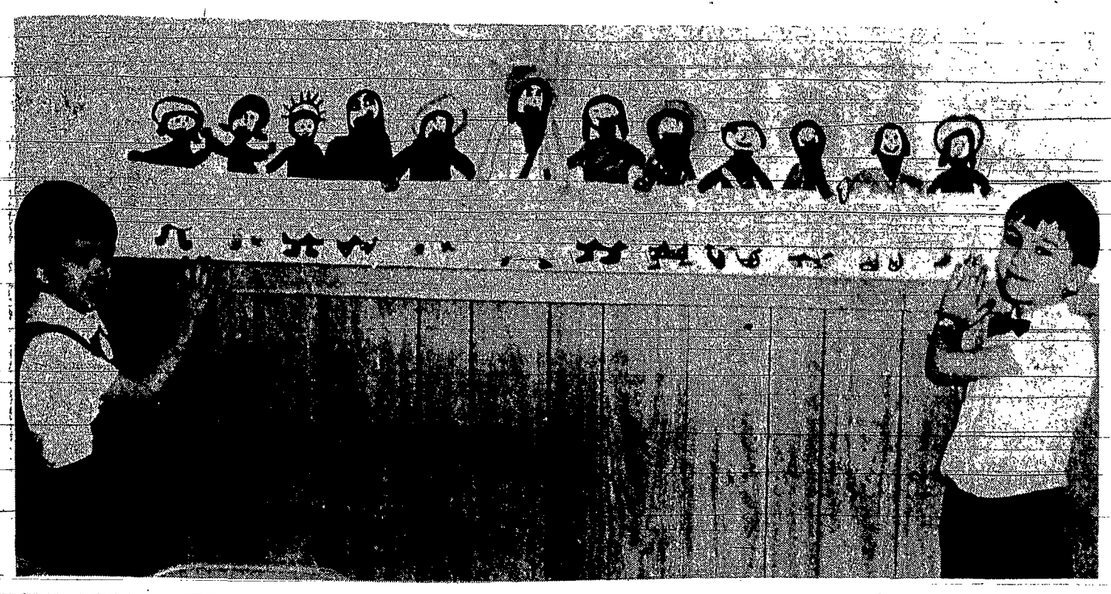

'The First Communion'

Second grade Da Vincis created this version of a famous painting. You know it as "The Last Supper," but the children more appropriately call it "The First Communion." Ursuline School in Cleveland, uses the art project to help prepare her children for their own First Communions. (RNS)

Papal Million to Aid Colombia

Vatican City — (NC)—Pope Paul VI has created a fund named after his encyclical, The Development of Peoples (Populorum Progressio), in order to foster the development of Latin America.

He directed that the initial sum of $1 million — obtained through the sale of real estate owned by the Holy See in Paris — be devoted to impoverished "campesinos" or farm workers of Colombia "in the realization of the agrarian reform of their country, which we had the joy of visiting." During his trip to Colombia last August he addressed a huge crowd of campesinos.

The aid will take the form of interest-free loans for up to 50 years. It may be made to public or private institutions in Latin America. The Inter-American Development Bank, in Washington, D.C., will have the primary responsibility for determining loan projects, but this will be done in consultation with the Holy See.

The Inter-American Development Bank, established in 1961, is an agency of the governments of Latin America and the United States to finance development projects in the fields of housing, education, health, technical training, agricultural and industrial growth, and communications, through a social trust fund of half a billion dollars.

The Pope recalled that he had published Populorum Progressio two years before "in order to awaken consciences more deeply to the tragedy of hundreds of millions of our brothers who suffer from hunger, illnesses, illiteracy and want."

He also said that he had urgently demanded that such impoverished millions be given the means to help themselves, and that he had called upon the nations of the world to cooperate in the sharing of technological know-how in order to reconstruct the world's socio-economic order on an equitable basis.

Negotiations: Only Hope for Biafrans

Washington —(NC)—A settlement at the negotiating table is the only way the Biafran people can be saved, a Catholic bishop of that country said here.

Bishop Joseph B. Whelan, C.S.Sp., of Owerri, who completed a three-week visit to this country on behalf of war victims in beleaguered Biafra, said military victory is impossible for both sides. The hostilities have raged in Nigeria since the secessionist republic declared its independence in May, 1967.

The bishop said in an interview that the fighting in Nigeria is "at a stalemate now" and, if anything, the Biafran forces have taken the initiative and blocked advances by the federal army since late 1968.

Bishop Whelan is chairman of the Biafran Bishops' Welfare Department. He came to the United States at the request of his fellow bishops in Biafra chiefly, he said, to thank the American government and people for their aid to the suffering Biafrans victimized by the hostilities in their republic and the hardships and privations brought about by the "complete blockade" of the country by the federal Nigerian troops.

"The wonderful help of the American people in the terrible problem of preventing mass starvation and tragedy among the innocent victims of the Biafra fighting can only evoke the deep gratitude of all Biafrans," the bishop said. "My fellow bishops wanted me to come and tell Americans this and to ask that they continue their assistance until the awful war has ended and real peace has come for all Nigerians."

"But we also are asking that your good government employ its powerful influence in inducing the British and both sides in the Nigerian war to sit down to the table and do the only thing that can be done if the Nigerian war is to be settled in such a way that all Nigerians can live in permanent peace and reasonably human existence.

"Certainly that is the only way in which the Biafrans can be spared extinction. It is true that a united Nigeria would be an ideal thing, from an economic standpoint, and certainly from the standpoint of the northerners.

"But, of course, the Biafrans feel, to the point of choosing extinction rather than surrender, that only by retaining their autonomy can they be assured of survival. They are willing to make some economic concessions in furtherance of a settlement that would involve control from Lagos. And I equally doubt that the northerners will concede sovereignty to the Biafrans, at least not now.

"But I must repeat: a military resolution of the conflict is not the answer."

Bishop Whelan said that there has been some improvement in the flow of relief into Biafra through Caritas International and the World Council of Churches because of the better U.S. aircraft used in the airlifts from Sao Tome. Previously, he said, before the availability of the new U.S. planes, it was possible to fly in 10 tons per plane but he said the present aircraft can carry 15 tons on an average of 15 flights a night.

Azuka Dike, right, a trustee of the Biafra Relief Services Foundation, presents a check for $50,000 to Msgr. Andrew P. Landi of Catholic Relief Services at the headquarters of the U.S. Catholic overseas aid agency in New York City. The donation will be used to finance the nighttime mercy flights of the Joint Church Aid — USA into the stricken area of the African country. The joint effort is sponsored by CRS; Church World Service, the overseas relief agency of the National Council of Churches; and the American Jewish Coommittee.

Seminarians Make Peace Pilgrimage

Rome—(NC)—About 60 students and professors of the North American College, led by their new rector, Bishop James A. Hickey, walked a 15-mile pilgrimage for peace through the streets of Rome on Monday of Holy Week.

A statement in the name of the marching students and faculty members said: "the purpose of this peace walk is to express our concern for peace and the supreme value of human life, particularly where war is raging or threatening to rage: namely Vietnam, Nigeria-Biafra and the Middle East."

'Bishops Can Be Thirsty as Anybody'

Toowoomba, Austalia—(RNS) — Anglican Bishop Ian Shevill of North Qleensland, defending his occasional practice of visiting bars and said that he only regretted that the last time he visited on he had drunk lemonade.

"God made hops," Bishop Shevill said, "and when St. Matthew held a part yit was undoubtedly a beer party."

He had been criticized for taking time of from a mission here to visit the bar of the local Shamrock Hotel.

"Bishops can be as thirsty as anybody," the prelate said. He noted, however, that he had had lemonade rather than beer on his latest bar visit because of Lent.

Msgr. Illich Quitting 'Church Service'

Cuernavaca, Mex. — (NC) — Msgr. Ivan Illich, controversial founder of the Center of Intercultural Documentation (CIDOC) here, has announced his "irrevocable decision to resign entirely from church service."

Msgr. Illich's action was disclosed in a letter dated March 15 and addressed to Archbishop (Cardinal-designate) Terence J. Cooke of New York.

In the letter Msgr. Illich said he had decided "to suspend the exercise of the priestly function and to renounce totally all titles, offices, benefits and privileges which are due to me as a cleric."

Controversy over Msgr. Illich's CIDOC began in January when the apostolic delegate in Mexico, Archbishop Guido del Mestri, delivered a decree announced by the Vatican's Doctrinal Congregation forbidding priests and Religious to attend courses in training at CIDOC for work in Latin America.

"These proceedings," the Monsignor wrote to Archbishop Cooke, "have cast over me the shadow of 'a notorious churchman' and this interferes with my ministry, my work as an educator, and my personal decision to live as a Christian.

"In September of 1968 you gave me leave to live as a layman. I want to inform you of my irrevocable decision to resign entirely from church service, to suspend the exercise of the priestly function. I will not petition the Congregation of the Faith to relieve me from the obligation to say priestly prayers or to maintain clerical celibacy."

Msgr. Illich was on leave from the New York archdiocese. In January he returned to lecture at Fordham University there and said in New York that since March of 1968 he had ceased to celebrate Mass in public and had abstained from writing, publishing and lecturing on theological matters pending a clarification of the stand with his superiors.

'Parallel, Competitive' School Systems Topic

Dayton, Ohio — (NC) — The regional chairman for the National Alliance of Businessmen said here if parents were able to choose between sending their children to public or private schools at public expense, the quality of American education likely would be improved.

Robert S. Ingersoll, a Chicago corporation executive and vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said the concept of "parallel, competitive systems of private and public schools ought to be explored."

The availability of a choice between private and public schools might improve both systems in quality "as schools vie with one another to attract and hold pupils," Ingersoll said. "Such a competitive system would compare to our colleges and universities, where competition between public and private systems has helped raise the standards of all education."

Today's society, Ingersoll said, is far short of achieving a "true quality of life for our people." To achieve that would require that everyone be supplied "with freedom and basic security, a meaningful job, a healthful environment, the opportunity for a good education and acceptance as an individual."

The view of the church as responsible for "men's souls, but not for men's society," is no longer adequate, he stated.

"Man's society and his soul are too closely interwoven in modern life," he said. "One of the important jobs for the church today is to become involved itself; encourage the involvement of others and provide the strong moral foundation upon which involvement is built."

A Prayer for TV

'God's Chicken Soup

Washington — (NC) — The one most requested text at the National Association of Broadcasters convention here was the prayer before a luncheon session offered by Father Donald F. X. Connolly of the National Catholic Office for Radio and Television, New York. It also brought a standing ovation from those attending the luncheon.

Father Connolly's prayer went like this:

"Lord, keep our motives clear, our determination intact and our goal to make ABC mean 'Always Better Content'; to make CBS mean 'Cause Bigger Smiles'; to make NBC mean 'Never Belittle Challenge'; and to convince the FCC to seek inspiration rather from Aaron, the overseer, than from Moses, the lawmaker.

"Perhaps we can help you best, Lord, if you will act toward the human race as a Jewish mother and let radio and television be your chicken soup.

"Amen."

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