



Worker-Priests

Two young Capuchins are testing the priest-worker movement in Milwaukee — living in an inner city apartment and working part-time. Fathers Paul Yaroch, left — top and bottom, and Robert (Bob) Bertram, right — top and bottom, are self-supporting and away from their religious community to share, contact and involve themselves with the people they serve. Father Bertram, 28, is a sales clerk in a department store; Father Yaroch, 33, is a cab driver. (Religious News Service)

Lords Approve Easier Divorce

London — (NC) — The House of Lords, Britain's upper chamber of Parliament, has removed the last major obstacle to the new more permissive divorce laws. After seven hours of intense debate, they voted approval by a 122-34 vote. It is expected to become law by the end of this year.

Five Anglican bishops voted for the bill and three against. Anglican Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury abstained, upsetting the divorce lobby's claim that they had the full backing of the State Church.

The new law, dubbed by critics as a "philanderer's paradise" and "a Casanova's charter," would make the irretrievable breakdown of a marriage the sole ground of divorce. This would replace the existing practice of a divorce petitioner having to prove a marital offense such as adultery, cruelty, perversion, desertion or non-consummation.

The most controversial clause allows divorce by mutual consent after two years of separation, and grants divorce after five years of separation even if one partner, however innocent, objects.

Special Ceremony For Divorcees?

Wakefield, England — (RNS) — A form of church service which could be offered to divorcees has been urged by Anglican Bishop Eric Treacy of Wakefield.

At present a divorced person cannot be remarried in the Church of England while the former partner is still alive, even if the applicant for such a ceremony is the "innocent" party.

Bishop Treacy stated that because of this Church law a "very large number of sincere people who have suffered considerable unhappiness through the breakdown of their marriages are each year denied the benefit of Christian marriage."

"This is a situation," he said, "that is going to occur a good deal more frequently under the provisions of the suggested new divorce law, when a woman may be divorced without her consent after five years desertion by her husband."

"It seems to me, therefore, that the Church must be prepared to offer a form of service which will meet the needs of many devout people who have been victims of other people's selfishness, irresponsibility and lust. This is a clear pastoral responsibility, and I, for one, do not feel that we can continue in our present inflexible attitude."

New Archbishop Warns Of Undermining of Truth

Los Angeles — (NC) — The newly appointed coadjutor archbishop of Los Angeles cautioned here that the Church is facing an effort to unsettle ancient truths by giving the people of God a freedom of choice about them.

Archbishop Timothy Manning declared: "Faith is a catalogue of things believed, housed in human words like jewels."

"The Church stands irrevocable and unmoving, and will not yield the smallest meaning of these words. For them men have died," he asserted.

"Here there are no two churches. There is no underground church and an overground church. There is no charismatic church and a hierarchical church," he continued.

Religious Leaders Admit St. Louis Racism Exists

St. Louis, Mo. — (RNS) — In an unprecedented move, a dozen major religious bodies here issued a joint pastoral letter acknowledging the existence of racism in the community, condemning it as "morally reprehensible" and proposing "reconciliation of man to God and of brother to brother."

Signed by representatives of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Orthodox bodies, the letter said that racism is "the basis of the most pressing social problem of our day."

"Racism and the discriminatory practice it has produced and continues to spawn are leading to the polarization of the St. Louis community," the letter continued.

The letter was read in all churches and synagogues of the religious bodies involved. Among the signers were John Joseph Cardinal Carberry, Archbishop of St. Louis, Episcopal Bishop George L. Cadigan of Missouri; Methodist Bishop Eugene Frank, and Rabbi Robert P. Jacobs, B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation. Thirteen other leading churchmen also signed.

"As leaders of the Jewish-Christian faiths, we publicly acknowledge the existence of racism in our community," it began. "We most emphatically condemn it as morally reprehensible and the basis of the most pressing social problem of our day."

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The group had met twice before after two black militant groups had disrupted church services at a number of churches on six consecutive Sundays. The two groups are seeking to present a set of demands to the churches in the areas that range from payment of reparations as called for by James Forman's Black Manifesto to demands that churches reveal such things as property owned and non-profit bonding, and remove investments from firms which discriminate.

Signers of the pastoral proposed their mission as one of reconciliation — "reconciliation of man to God and of brother to brother. For racism is a moral issue and as religious leaders we again condemn it as a violation of God's law."

"We declare our guilt along with the rest of society for having failed to address ourselves with sufficient commitment to the solution of the problem of racial discrimination here in our own St. Louis community."

Nixon Draws Criticism On Desegregation Stand

Washington — (NC) — The Nixon administration finally issued its long awaited policy statement on school desegregation guidelines and promptly found itself accused of having tried to placate civil rights leaders and southern conservatives alike.

At issue was the real intent behind the 2,000-word statement approved by President Nixon. The statement said the administration intends to hold Southern school districts to the September 1969 deadline for desegregation — but it added what may prove to be a crucial qualification on that policy.

When "bonafide educational and administrative problems" exist, the statement said, then exceptions may be made.

The statement also defined what those problems might be, including "serious shortages of necessary physical facilities, financial resources or faculty."

Leon F. Penetta, who as director of HEW's Office for Civil Rights has chief responsibility for enforcing administrative sanctions against recalcitrant school systems, said he believed only "a very, very few" of the 263 school districts scheduled to desegregate would be found eligible for delay.

The statement, in any case, made it plain that the administration regards school segregation as a national, not an exclusively Southern, evil.

"Almost 50% of all our public elementary and secondary students attend schools which are concentrated in the metropolitan areas of the three Middle Atlantic states, the five Northern Midwestern states and the three Pacific Coast states," it said. "Racial discrimination is prevalent in our industrial metropolitan areas. In terms of national impact, the educational situation in the North, the Midwest and the West require immediate and massive attention."

The statement noted this segregation was largely attributed to housing patterns and "denial of adequate funds" to ghetto schools. It said the result "is just as unsatisfactory as the results of the de jure segregation."

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