

The Year in Religion - - 1970



May 4, Kent State University, Ohio, students staged anti-war rally. Seconds after this picture was taken, National Guard bullets killed four students.

In the Nation

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1968 burning of Selective Service records at Catonsville, Md., they refused to surrender. Father Philip was caught quickly, but Father Daniel eluded the FBI four months, aided by a network of friends. During his time underground he became a nationally celebrated figure, giving an occasional interview, publishing articles, and once appearing to preach at a United Methodist church in Philadelphia.

The Vietnam war continued to divide churchmen, with some supporting the President's policies, others calling for quicker withdrawal and sharply protesting the Cambodian invasion, and a few demanding a more hawkish policy.

Anti-war feeling was compounded when National Guard troops killed four students at Kent State and local police two black students at Jackson State during demonstrations against the Cambodian action. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court enlarged the possibilities for draft exemption, ruling that belief in God could not be required for conscientious objector status.

The religious interest in overcoming poverty was expressed in the widespread support given to Cesar Chavez, head of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, in his successful struggle to win a union contract for California grape pickers, largely through the pressure of a grape boycott.

Among numerous other moves to involve the Churches in the struggle against poverty was the launching of a \$50 million campaign for development funds by the U.S. Catholic bishops, and a similar effort by the United Presbyterian Church.

If religious groups were divided on the Vietnam war, they were perhaps even more so on the Middle East conflict. Among problems at the forefront of Jewish-Christian dialogue were issues arising from the tendency of many Christians to sympathize with the Arab point of view. Several important conferences during the year worked to achieve deeper understanding of such issues in a continuing effort to develop better Jewish-Christian relationships. Despite differences, the August ceasefire in the Middle East brought general satisfaction to most churchmen, and varying degrees of hopefulness for permanent peace.

An election year, 1970 saw an unusual number of clergymen running for elective office. Most were defeated, but Father Robert Drinan, SJ, of Massachusetts was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

The traditional issue of tax support for parochial schools and Church colleges was the subject of wide discussion and consideration by executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. President Nixon, as well as several state governors, expressed concern for the future of private

In the Church

The Catholic Church reported a membership drop, which, though small, was the first in this century. The United Methodist Church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the Lutheran Church in America were among the other large denominations showing membership losses.

Some membership increases were reported, particularly among Pentecostals, mission Churches and some more conservative groups.

In an extraordinary decree entitled "The Increasing Burden of Age," Pope Paul ordered all cardinals 80 years or older barred from future papal election.

Those working for equal

status for women in the church made gains during the year that saw churchwomen joining in the activities of the Aug. 26 "Strike Day" sponsored by the women's liberation movement.

Pope Paul named St. Catherine of Siena and St. Teresa of Avila Doctors of the Church, the first women to be given the honor.

The Episcopal Church's triennial convention, meeting in Houston, seated women as delegates for the first time, and ruled that deaconesses had all the rights of deacons. But a move to ordain women to the priesthood failed.

The American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America both voted at their biennial conventions to

ordain women, and in each a woman was ordained later in the year. The WCC reported that 70 Churches now ordain women.

In a move that some feared would reopen old wounds, Pope Paul canonized 40 English and Welsh martyrs of the Reformation period. The Anglican Church sent a representative to the service, however, maintaining the cordiality that had been growing between the two communions.

In another ecumenical gesture, the Vatican relaxed its regulations on mixed marriages, a move welcomed by Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, general secretary of the WCC, though he observed that it still left fundamental problems unsolved.

In the U.S. informal discussions on a possible new ecumenical organization were being conducted by representatives of the NCC, the Catholic Church, and some Protestant groups, such as the American Lutheran Church, not now in the NCC.



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