

A Call for Optimism in Trying Times

In accepting the invitation of the editorial staff of our diocesan paper to write a weekly column, I have chosen to entitle my reflections on the passing scene "Pastoral Perspective." I did this "motu proprio" without invoking the principle of collegiality. For who would deny even a bishop the joy of "doing his own thing" once a week?



I have overcome a strong temptation to choose the heading, "Front and Center" lest it indicate a pretense of infallibility. This would, indeed, be rash for one who admits he is learning much each day. There is no special training school for bishops except the "on the job" experience of growing in wisdom and grace before God and man. There is no need to mention the aging process.

I shall be writing on a variety of topics—none of which promises to be an "in depth" study meriting reprint or even a nod from the "Cry Pax" of the NCR. I will offer my personal observations on subjects on which I have reflected—perhaps providing an insight into what your bishop thinks about the changing scene of the Church in the 1970s.

I welcome your suggestions for topics and invite comments on my observations.

I want above all to reflect my own personal optimism in these days of obvious tension. If there is one common phrase that I detest, it's this: "I'm up tight." I refuse to assume this posture because it reflects a lack of faith in the presence of the Holy Spirit Who remains always the principal agent of renewal in the Church and the prime guarantee of eventual victory in the present conflict.

"Up tight" also indicates a lack of inner

security in those who have depended on external props for the pseudo-stability of their Christian commitment.

Rather than be dismayed by the turbulence of our era, I rejoice in the power of the same Holy Spirit who confirmed the first bishops and the Infant Church on the first Pentecost.

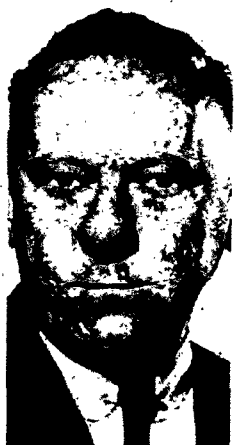
The history of the Church testifies to vehement conflicts in the past and there is little doubt that the Church will continue to suffer the tensions of vitality in every age. For, while holy in her divine dimensions and doctrine, she will remain throughout her pilgrimage to the Heavenly Jerusalem a body of sinful men ever tempted to alienation from God and ever in need of renewal in Christ.

Painful as this hour may be, it will be but a prelude to renewed life only if we accept it with faith, courage and love. I invite you to share my optimism.

On the Line

Imagine! A War Without the U.S.

I don't know how you feel about it, but I'm worried about the big change that is taking place in this country. We haven't gotten into either the war in Pakistan or the one in Ceylon. This is the first time in a generation or two that we haven't joined in other peoples' wars. That's not the America I knew; man and boy. Makes a taxpayer want to hang his head in shame.



What have we got against the Pakistani people and the Ceylonese? Why should we let these people fight their wars without our help? It's just not like us.

Pretty soon we're going to have no use for all our troops and 7½ ton bombs, when Vietnam shuts down about the year 2000. We'll feel like fools if we don't have a war to join and people to protect from godless atheism and bring into the eternal sunshine of the Free World. Right?

I called the Pentagon, trying to get a clue to our uncharacteristic conduct in the case of the snubbed wars in Pakistan and Ceylon. When I finally found a general who would talk, I asked him point blank, "General, how come we don't send troops to, Dinjapur, Lal-

manirhat and support Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike? Don't we owe some allegiance to Dudley Senanayake? What's our position on Nagalingan Sammugthasan? Are we eschewing Rohana Wijera? When are we going to shore up the Sri Lanka party?"

The general coughed nervously for a time, then sputtered, "Will you spell that, sir?" He thought I was Sen. Fulbright.

"Okay," I said. "Shore up. Shore up."

"Well, Toots," he said, "don't mention this to any egotistical exemplar of the Eastern Establishment, or cowardly commentator on CBS, but we just can't send our advisors, B-52s, F-4s, F-105s, Hueys, C-103s, defoliators, aircraft carriers, PX's and Bob Hope in there until we get a few things straightened out."

Like what, he was asked.

"Well, like finding out just where the fighting is going on," the general said. "The only maps we have, so far, are from an Esso gas station in Hagerstown, Maryland, where I live. I've asked the C.I.A., but all they say about that part of the world is that it's all India, and one other thing."

"What's that?"

"Don't drink the water."

"Where's that leave us, high and dry without a war to send troops and stuff to?"

"Don't you worry, Toots," the general boomed. "Just as soon as we find out where this fightin's happened, and how to spell the names, by golly we'll jump in there with both feet. We can't let these people go down the drain, can we?"

"Which people?" I asked.

"You know very well which people," he thundered. "The people we'll go all out for, to save them from being taken over by atheistic hordes. We'll guarantee our freedom-loving new allies—whoever they turn out to be—that they'll have supervised elections every three months so as to insure democracy."

I said, "But, General, the sides we pick might not even like living as we do in our democracy. . . . You know, pollution, poverty, muggings, and TV shows like 'Hee Haw.'"

The general made a gasping noise.

"None of that Commy talk, Mr. Shor," he snapped. "Whatever side we choose in Pakistan and Ceylon, you can bet your bottom dollar, will be democratic! Or . . ."

"Or what?"

"Or else!" he said.

I thanked him, and sent my old war correspondent's uniform to the tailor's, to have it let out.

Editorial

U.S. Bishops Should Speak Up On War

The coincidence of the U.S. Bishops meeting in Detroit immediately after the largest gathering of citizens Washington has ever heard demanding an end of the Vietnam war suggests a question: Will our Bishops make a statement on the most pressing moral issue of the year: the endless killing in Vietnam?

It was November, 1968, when the Bishops last spoke to the nation about Vietnam. Their pastoral, "Human Life in Our Day," discussed the Christian family, contraception, war, armaments, the draft and conscience. In a special section on Vietnam the united hierarchy wrote: "In assessing our country's involvement in Vietnam we must ask: Have we already reached or passed the point where the principal of proportionality become decisive? How much more of our resources of men and money should we commit to this struggle? Has the conflict in Vietnam provoked inhuman dimensions of suffering?" The Bishops left the questions to history.

In the twenty-nine months that have passed since that statement, the Bishops —

like many of us who did not know where to stand then—must surely have found in the war-headlines answers to those questions. Today the Bishops do not need to condemn the war—everyone has already done that. But they could and should break their long silence on the issue of continuing our participation in Indochina indefinitely.

Has "proportionality" not been reached by the sacrifice of 45,000 Americans killed in action and the spending of \$125 billion and the building of one-million-man South Vietnamese Army to protect the land from Communism? Have not the "inhuman dimensions of suffering" been proven by the indiscriminant killing of a million civilians and the saturation bombings which have turned five million villagers into homeless refugees?

The Bishops would find national support if they offered firm moral counsel to Mr. Nixon to respond to the spirit of the people and end our military involvement in Vietnam as rapidly as possible. Every logical American knows that all the troops can't come home

"now," but actually the nation is asking the administration to declare its intentions for withdrawal more clearly and to cut off current bombing raids. The Bishops could emphasize the President's responsibility to get Hanoi's promise for the release of war prisoners and the safe exit of all troops while still urging him to abandon his stated intention to continue American involvement until Vietnamization is secured.

If the Bishops are equally responsive to the mood of their own people they could tell the President how divided this nation has become because of the war, what distressing social issues in their dioceses cannot be faced until military expenditures are reduced and how bitterly military service has corroded the morale of youth.

Silence from Detroit may say to this nation that the last 29 months have not taught the Bishops anything new about the immorality of war-destruction or the sensitivity of their people, who have to endure what the administration decrees. —Father Richard Tormey