

NFPC Backs Amnesty, Optional Celibacy

Father James Schwartz, associate pastor of St. Theodore's Church in Gates, represented the Priests' Association of Rochester at the National Federation of Priests' Councils. Here is his report.

Denver — A "prophetic" concept of the Church—as an agency of social change, an activist movement whose only allegiance is to the needs of man in a troubled world—was presented to the fifth annual national convention of the House of Delegates of the National Federation of Priests' Councils. As a followup of the synodal document "Justice in the world" of the 1971 International Synod of Bishops, the NFPC chose as its convention theme, "Justice and Peace: Imperative for Priests/USA." The NFPC annual convention was held here March 12-16.

With a firm conviction that there are some things wrong with our social systems and institutions, NFPC convention sought ways of extending the reconciling work of Christ in the Christian ministry today by seeing, as a principal task of our institutions, a demolition of the walls of human alienation. There are the walls of inequality and injustice that hatefully divide the rich and the poor, the economically advanced nations and the developing countries,

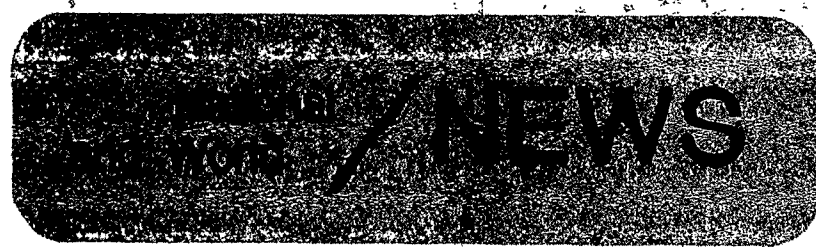
blacks and whites, Marxists and Christians, radicals and liberals, the police and the minorities. The walls of enmity, which stubbornly block the redemptive effort of Christ, are built on such flimsy foundations as race, nationality, class, education, sex, religion, and ideology.

Lest the convention become too idealistic, Father Frank Bonnike, the re-elected president, warned that most of us are late in coming here. We come, therefore, in no triumphal, self-righteous, or arrogant way. We come here with a sense of personal and corporate repentance. We come here ashamed. The credibility gaps between our preaching and our practice, between God's priorities and our own, have been too obvious even to ourselves, causing us a crisis of belief in ourselves.

Resolutions passed by NFPC hit several areas:

Vietnam War — NFPC House of Delegates placed itself strongly in opposition to all American military activity in Indo-China.

Berrigans — NFPC publicly acknowledges the debt owed Fathers Philip and Daniel Berrigan, and others who have shown opposition to the Vietnam War. It further recognizes the non-violent witness of persons in the peace movement as a true form of prophetic ministry and political involvement.



Amnesty — The delegates of the NFPC 1972 National Convention urge the President and Congress to grant an immediate and general amnesty to those who have left the country or have been imprisoned because of their opposition to compulsory military service in the Indo-China War.

Ministry to Homosexuals — NFPC Committee on the role of the priest was directed to establish a task force to develop a model for a Christian ministry to the homosexual community.

Celibacy — NFPC co-sponsor with the Canon Law Society of

America a continuing effort to design the practical steps for a transition from an exclusively celibate clergy to a clergy which includes priests who are celibate, priests who have married, and married men who have been ordained priests.

Freedom of Residence for Priests — NFPC supports the principle of freedom of residence for priests, and that just compensation be provided therefor.

Selection of Bishops — NFPC endorses the proposal of the Canon Law Society of America on the selection of Bishops.

NFPC represents 127 priests'



FATHER BONNIKE
NFPC leader

councils and associations with a membership of 30,000 priests. It was established to promote communication among priests and to give priests the opportunity to speak with a national voice on important issues.

A 'Valley of Death'

Following is the statement of Msgr. James T. McHugh, Director of the Family Life Bureau, USCC, regarding the second section of the report of the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future.

For the first time in the controversial discussion of abortion in this country, the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future has recommended abortion as a eugenic measure. The proposal for nationwide abortion on request is based on the commission's view that improving the quality of life is the principal objective of a population policy, and that easily available abortion should be a part of such a policy.

Easy abortion is further seen as a way of eliminating the "unwanted child," though no effort is made to accurately define that term. The commission chooses to ignore the overwhelming evidence that the fetus is a living human being from conception on, and urges the creation of a clear and positive framework for abortion on request "particularly when the child's prospects for a life of dignity and self fulfillment are limited."

If the child can be killed in his mother's womb any time she decides he is not wanted, what prevents us from killing the aged, the sick, the mentally or physically disadvantaged, or members of objectionable minority groups when their lives become a burden to others and they are — at least to some degree — unwanted. Stating that "some of the policies we recommend are irreversible in a democratic society, in the sense that freedoms once introduced cannot be rescinded lightly," the commission ignores the tragic implications of extending its rationale for permissive abortion into other areas. The pre-occupation with finding an easy and effective way to eliminate the "unwanted child" has led the commission into an ideological "valley of death."

The commission selectively omits the fact that in nations with highly permissive abortion laws, illegal abortion also flourishes. Moreover, easy abortion has proven counter-productive to establishing or maintaining a humane family planning program.

This report does not consider abortion in terms of moral judgment.

CDA to Pray For Prisoners

New York — (RNS) — The Catholic Daughters of America will participate in special Holy Week observances this year in remembrance of American servicemen who are prisoners of war or missing in action in Southeast Asia.

ments or the so-called "hard case" of balancing the child's right to life against a danger to the mother's life. Abortion is seen as a backstop for unused or faulty contraception, on the ground that a woman must be perfectly free to determine whether or not to bear a child.

Despite occasional platitudes about human dignity, moral values and religious convictions,

the commission is highly utilitarian in the policies it recommends. At the very time when the United States struggles to protect the rights of all minority groups, this commission recommends withdrawing legal safeguards for the right to life of the unborn child. The report is naive in its assumptions and punitive in its recommendations. It should be treated with "benign neglect."



Fire hoses continue to play on the ruins of the 105-year-old Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Burlington, Vt., after a late evening fire vitally destroyed the landmark structure. The fire started about 11:20 p.m. March 13, and in less than an hour, police said, the building was entirely burned out. Police arrested a 22-year-old Burlington man who, they said, had confessed to arson in the gutting of New England's oldest Catholic cathedral. The fire was the eighth major conflagration in the downtown Burlington area in the last 13 months. (RNS)

Black Catholic Leader Cites Challenge to Church Schools

Los Angeles — (RNS) — Black Americans who were converted to the Roman Catholic Church "were educated to be Catholic, but not to be black," according to the executive director of the National Office of Black Catholics.

In addressing the organizing meeting of the Los Angeles Black Lay Catholic Caucus in St. Malachy's Church here, Brother Joseph Davis, SM, said that Catholic schools are in a position to overcome this deficiency.

"Because they are not bound by the public school system, the Catholic schools can structure their own philosophy," he suggested.

According to Brother Davis, about 1 million of the 48 million Catholics in the U.S. are black. Most are recent-generation converts from Baptist and other Protestant traditions, he said, except for some blacks whose ancestors were baptized into the Church by French Catholic slave-owners in Southwest Louisiana.

Brother Davis maintained that black converts joined the Catholic Church because it is "the one, true Church," and because "we thought we were doing better . . ."

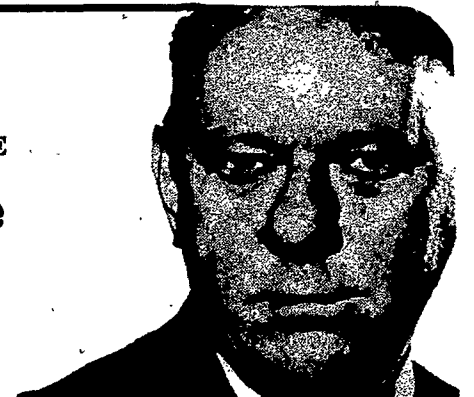
The promise of better education for black children in Catholic schools was another factor, he added. In practice, however, "The schools divorced us from being part of the black community."

"Name a black Catholic leader of national stature," Brother Davis challenged the audience, and concluded, "we cannot."

In a statement issued at the conclusion of the gathering, the caucus declared, "We know for a fact that we have always been separated. However, our ultimate goal is to be a part of the universal Church without having to give up our identity as black people and at the same time contributing our culture, heritage and deep sense of appreciation of God's relationship to men and man's relationship to man."

BOB CONSIDINE

On the Line



THE SCRUTABLE EAST — Cardinal Paul Yüpin, China's only prince of the Roman Catholic Church, told us in Taipei that he was delighted his old friend Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had agreed to accept another six-year term as President of the republic.

The Cardinal, who is pushing 80, said of the 83-year-old Gimo, "There is no senility in John K. Shee." (His Eminence has his own pronunciation, but it was reasonable to assume we were talking about the same perennial.) "There are many people who live to be 90 in Taiwan. Only this week I went to the 90th birthday party of Sheng Yun, my friend who has long been the head of the Taipei Physical Education Club. He is still strong enough to climb mountains with the young members."

"John K. Shee is not physically what he was years ago, though he is still full of vigor. We don't need his physical power; we need his spirit, his mind, his leadership."

Cardinal Yüpin is a man for all seasons. In addition to shepherding Taiwan's Catholic minority and worrying over what has become of the Church and its people on the Communist mainland, he is president of the non-denominational 4,000-student Fu-Jen University, a member of the National Assembly representing a lost district in his native Manchuria, and one of the 85 "presidents" of the 85-member Presidium. He is not a member of the ruling Kuomintang party or any other. The Cardinal might be called an independent-for-Chiang.

When I saw him the other day in the marvelously gilded and lacquered Grand Hotel in Taipei (soon to be cast into the eternal

shadows of a huge new modern annex), the Cardinal expressed hope that the Presidium would see fit to appoint him to "chair" the Assembly's formal election of his old friend. He occupied that chair six years ago during the election of Chiang's vice president, C.K. Yen.

"I hope I may be the man to give the good news to the whole world that John K. Shee is officially re-elected," Cardinal Yüpin said, stroking his great gold crozier and smiling wistfully under his Cardinal's red beanie.

By the time this piece reaches print, the issue may have been decided in the Taiwan Assembly whether to recommend Vice President C.K. Yen for another six-year term. (Editor's Note: He was).

"C.K. is a wonderful man," an assemblyman told me. "Admirable, honest, a true patriot. But in view of the world situation (he meant the Nixon visit to the mortal enemy across the Formosa Strait), we need a very strong vice president—in case anything should happen to the Gimo in the next six years. Our constitution provides, like yours, that the vice president would succeed if the president died or was incapacitated."

I asked him if his idea of a strong vice presidential candidate might be Chiang's older son, Chiang Ching-kuo, who was educated in Moscow (Chiang Kai-shek was then friendly with the Russians) and who was shot at by a Taiwanese independence group in New York during a visit there last year.

"Oh, no!" he said. "Never! Be cause if Chiang Kai-shek died and was succeeded by his son, the world would say we operate like royalty. You must not forget: We are a democracy."