

But Is Not Anti-Arab

Priest Speaks Out for Israel

By CHARLES RANDISI

The conflict that has engulfed the Middle East in the most recent war dates well back to the centuries before Jesus Christ.

Father Joseph Brennan's interest in relations between Israel and the Arab nations only goes back to 1956 A.D., but 17 years is longer than the average armchair peacemaker's interest.

During the height of the Yom Kippur War, Father Brennan, rector at St. Bernard's Seminary, appeared and spoke at a fund-raising rally for Israel at Temple Beth El.

In his Lake Avenue office, Father Brennan explained his feelings about the conflict.

"I'm pro-Israeli, but not in any way am I anti-Arab," he said.

In 1956, Father Brennan was sent by the Rochester diocese to Rome to study the New Testament. During his stay, he took a tour through Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Israel.

At a school for immigrants to Israel, he was intrigued by the methods of teaching Hebrew, so he decided to stay on and learn the language.

While there he was involved in a shooting incident near Bethlehem. Three members of his party were killed by a Jordanian.

"It was my first introduction to the tensions in the Near East, and the violence that lies beneath the surface," he said.

He spent some time there again in 1962, when he stayed four weeks in a small town, Teyveh, north of Jerusalem, and lived with the mayor and his family, who were Christian Arabs.

He returned in 1965 on a tour with some fellow priests, and in 1970, with the American-Israeli Friendship Society.

Father Brennan summarized his feelings about the current tension in three points. First, he said, "I believe that the state of Israel has a right to exist, and the people of Israel have a right to exist. . . There will be no peace until the neighboring governments acknowledge that fact."

Citing 19th Century Russia, the Dreyfus affair, and Nazi Germany



FATHER BRENNAN

as examples, he made his second point. "The fact that Israel exists today is due to the persecution of Jews in Christian countries over the last 2,000 years. Christians bear a heavy responsibility for the conflict."

Third, he said, "I don't think that anything will be accomplished by war in that area. Whatever problems there are can be resolved in other ways."

A Christian approach toward the problem, he said, should be in general one of trying to "help the people who are suffering there."

He mentioned several ways. "Praying for peace," he said, "is the most commonly available means."

Another responsibility is to "be knowledgeable and informed" on the situation, and to make an "enlightened and informed judgment." He added, "Not many can do that."

Most important, Father Brennan said is to "realize how heavy a responsibility we bear for the creation of this problem."

He agreed that the differences between Israel and the Arab states are deep, and that they are characterized by "ferocious hatred" between peoples.

"Culturally and religiously, they (Arabs and Israelis) are radically different," he said.

Whereas Israelis are "technologically oriented, and

have essentially a secular government," the Arab states are of a "totally different culture, even in relationships between men and women, adults and children."

However, Father Brennan believes that the "barriers" are "not insuperable, are possible to overcome if they really want to."

He placed emphasis on the roles of the big powers, the United States and the Soviet Union to help in achieving Mideast peace. "They can make it a powderkeg," he said, "but they also have the power to make a lasting peace."

He expressed sympathy for Arab Christians who support their own nations' governments. He compared the situation to the American Civil War, when "there were Catholics on both sides."

He said he can understand the reason for such aggressive fighting on the part of Israelis. "Many people in Israel are survivors of Auschwitz and Dachau," he said. "Their whole outlook on life is very insecure. For them this is the last, the end of the line. They've been driven out of most other countries, and now they are fighting to save their own."

Father Hoffman Sets Meetings for November

Father Douglas C. Hoffman, director of the Pastoral Ministry, will visit Parish Councils during the month of November

St. James (Waverly), Sunday, Nov. 11-7:30 p.m.; Good Shepherd (Henrietta), Monday, Nov. 12-8 p.m.; Pastoral

Council Formation Committee (Geneva - St. Stephen's Library), Tuesday, Nov. 13-7:30 p.m.; St. Casimir (Elmira), Wednesday, Nov. 14-7:30 p.m.; Our Lady Queen of Peace (Rochester), Thursday, Nov. 15-8 p.m.

St. Michael (Penn. Yan), Monday, Nov. 19-8 p.m.; St. Ann (Owasco), Tuesday, Nov. 20-7:30 p.m.; Holy Redeemer (Rochester), Monday, Nov. 26-8 p.m.; St. Catherine (Addison), Wednesday, Nov. 28-7:30 p.m.

DEADLINE

The deadline for submitting notices to the Courier-Journal of parish events is the Thursday noon preceding publication.

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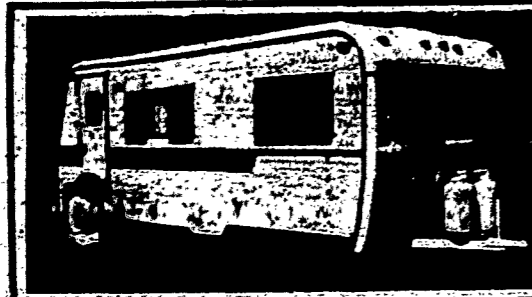
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It's the Spirit

St. Peter, center, preaches his Pentecost sermon to the disciples in the Wakefield Players production of *It's the Spirit*, a musical liturgy-drama taken from the Book of Acts. The next performance is slated for Sunday, Nov. 11, at 7 p.m. in St. Ambrose Church.



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