

# The Real Weapons of Peace

For the past nine years Pope Paul VI has written an invitation to the whole world to celebrate a Day of Peace. Day is to be interpreted in the Biblical sense — a period of time offered to us as a grace to use our best efforts to achieve what has been man's universal hope, but a blessing which seems forever to elude his grasp.



The theme of Pope Paul's message this year is "The Real Weapons of Peace." The Holy Father calls all of us to devote our energies to an all-out war against war. His words resound His anguished pleading in October of 1965 before the General Assembly of the United Nations. Who of us can forget the first visit of a Vicar of Christ, the Prince of Peace, to American soil and his fatherly cry to the human family, "No more war, war never again."

The following is offered as a summary of this year's letter:

The great Cause of Peace deserves a hearing and our common reflection.

Progress has been made in the awareness of Peace as an idea. This awareness is promoted by organizational structures and through a variety

of conferences, days of study, and by trade agreements.

However, we are witnessing more and more certain manifestations which are contrary to the purpose of Peace. There is, for example, a rebirth of a nationalism which provokes dangerous rivalries and contentions. We are witnessing, too, a growth in the arms race justified in the name of defense and as part of a plan "just in case." I shiver with fear at the growing phenomenon.

We are witnessing, too, the organization of peoples into factions and parties that have for their purpose the promotion of systematic struggle and irreconcilable hatred.

The weapons we need for Peace are moral weapons. If the consciousness of our universal brotherhood truly penetrates into the hearts of men, we have the weapon to promote Peace. We have seen in our own time such an example of what can be done even by one man. Gandhi, armed only with the principle of nonviolence, was able to vindicate for a nation of hundreds of millions of human beings the freedom and dignity of a new people.

Civilization walks in the path of Peace armed only with an olive branch. In the procession of peacemakers we find: The Doctors with the volumes of the Law which spell out the ideal human society; the Politicians who are expert not in Calculations geared to winning

wars and repressing the defeated and demoralized, but in discovering and assessing the resources of the psychology of goodness and friendship; Justice moves in this ordered procession completely intent on defending the weak and punishing the violent.

I rejoice as I witness this procession forming in our tragic times. Its step may be slow but it is sure and beneficial for the whole world.

The final words of Pope Paul's letter are specifically addressed to those of us who claim to live according to the Gospel of Christ: "How many times in the Gospel is forgiveness recommended to us, not as an act of cowardly weakness, nor as a surrender in the face of injustice, but as a sign of fraternal love, which is laid down as a condition for us to obtain God's forgiveness. . . . Let us remember the pledge we give to be forgiving and to pardon when we invoke God's forgiveness in the 'Our Father.' We ourselves lay down the conditions and the extent of the mercy we ask for when we say, 'And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.'" (Matt. 6: 12)

It is my personal hope and prayer that we respond generously to the Holy Father's invitation to work for peace. We begin humbly with ourselves by establishing the tranquility of order in our own personal lives and by extending respect and love to those whom we meet in this year of grace. Let us proclaim by word and deed that Christ is our Peace.

## Bishops Urge Christians Find Jewish Roots

Following are excerpts from the statement issued last October by the U.S. Catholic bishops for the celebration of the 10th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, No. 4, on Catholic-Jewish relations.

Ten years have passed since the Second Vatican Council promulgated its statement on the Jewish people, *Nostra Aetate*. This decade has been a period unique in Catholic-Jewish relations.

We welcome the new Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing *Nostra Aetate*, No. 4 issued in January of this year (1975) by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews recently established by the Holy See.

These ten years make it clear that *Nostra Aetate* initiated a revolution in Catholic-Jewish affairs. Calling for "fraternal dialogue and biblical studies" with Jews, it ended a centuries-long silence between Church and Synagogue. An age of dialogue was begun. Conversations between Catholics and Jews proliferated rapidly in many forms. Productive meetings took place on every level, from the highest intellectual exchanges to the most popular types of social gatherings, often referred to as "living room dialogues." In 1967 the first full-time Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish relations was in operation.

Since that time the secretariat has maintained fruitful contact with the major groups within the Jewish community and has been in regular communication with the Bishops of the country. Many dioceses have followed the example of our conference and have established commissions or secretariats for Jewish-Catholic relations. Numerous projects have been undertaken, including, for example, a careful and systematic analysis of Catholic teaching texts in order to eliminate offensive references to Jews and replace them with materials showing Judaism in a positive light. Numerous theological discussions have

been undertaken and Catholic collaboration with the Jewish community has resulted in a variety of social action programs. We are pleased to observe that many of these initiatives have been emulated on the unofficial level by many individuals and groups across the country who have shown admirable sensitivity, dedication and expertise in promoting Catholic-Jewish amity.

We do not wish to convey the impression that all our problems are behind us. There still exist areas of disagreement and controversy which separate the Jewish and Catholic communities. We should like to believe that the difficulties can be resolved to some degree in amicable dialogue. Already dialogues have been held on important subjects of disagreement, and it is our hope that progress will be made in mutual understanding by furthering this dialogic method.

Recalling past centuries however invites a sobering evaluation of our progress and warns against becoming overconfident about an early end to remaining problems. Those were centuries replete with alienation, misunderstanding and hostility between Jews and Christians. While we rejoice that there are signs that anti-Semitism is declining in our country, conscience impels us to confront with candor the unhappy record of Jewish sufferings both past and present. We make our own the statement of *Nostra Aetate*, for the sake of her common patrimony with the Jews, the Church decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism staged against Jews at whatever time in history and by whomsoever, and we reaffirm with the new Vatican Guidelines that "the spiritual bonds and historical links binding the Church to Judaism concern (as opposed to the very spirit of Christianity) all forms of anti-Semitism." We urge all in the Church who work in the area of education, whether in the seminary, the school or the pulpit, not only to avoid any

presentation that might tend to disparage Jews or Judaism but also to emphasize those aspects of our faith which bear witness to our common patrimony and our spiritual ties with Jews.

Much of the alienation between Christian and Jew found its origins in an anti-Judaic theology which over the centuries has led not only to social friction with Jews but often to their oppression. One of the most hopeful developments in our time, powerfully assisted by *Nostra Aetate*, has been the decline of the old anti-Judaism and the reformulation of Christian theological expositions of Judaism along more constructive lines.

The first major step in this direction was the repudiation of the charge that Jews were and are collectively guilty of the death of Christ. *Nostra Aetate* and the new Guidelines have definitely laid to rest this myth which has caused so much suffering to the Jewish people. There remains, however, the continuing task of ensuring that nothing which in any way approaches the notion of Jewish collective guilt should be permitted in any Catholic medium of expression or communication. Correctly viewed, the disappearance of the charge of collective guilt of Jews pertains as much to the purity of the Catholic faith as it does to the defense of Judaism.

The council's rejection of this

## Women's Role Asked Of Eucharistic Congress

New York [RNS] — A U.S. Roman Catholic women's group has asked for female participation in the principal worship service, and a collection for women to study to be priests, at the 41st International Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia next August.

The U.S. section of St. Joan's International Alliance made its request of Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, chairman of the governing board for the Congress.

The alliance, which supports full equality of men and women in the Roman Catholic Church, including female priests, asked that women read the Scripture, preach, and distribute the eucharistic bread and wine, all of which are possible in current Roman Catholic practice.

charge against Jews has been interpreted by some commentators as an "exonerating" of the Jewish people. Such a view of the matter persists. The truth is that the council acknowledged that the Jewish people never were, nor are they now, guilty of the death of Christ.

*Nostra Aetate* was a new beginning in Catholic-Jewish relations, and as with all beginnings we are faced with the task of revising some traditional understandings and judgments. The brief suggestions of the council document have been taken up by some theologians, but their implications for theological renewal have not yet been fully explored. We therefore make a few recommendations in line with two themes of the document: the Jewish origins of the Church and the thought of St. Paul.

Christians have not fully appreciated their Jewish roots. Early in Christian history, it went through a de-Judaizing process that dulled our awareness of our Jewish beginnings. The Jewishness of Jesus, of his mother, his disciples, of the primitive Church, was lost from view. That Jesus was called Rabbi, that He was born, lived and died under the Law; that He and Peter and Paul worshipped in the Temple — these facts were blurred by the controversy that alienated Christians from the Synagogue. How Jewish the Church was toward midpoint of the first

century is dramatically reflected in the description of the "Council of Jerusalem" (Acts 15). The question at issue was: would Gentile converts to the Church have to be circumcised and observe the Mosaic Law? The obligation to obey the law was held so firmly by the Jewish Christians of that time that miraculous visions accorded to Peter and Cornelius (Acts: Ch. 10) were needed to vindicate the contrary contention that Gentile Christians were not so obliged. By the third century, however, a de-Judaizing process had set in, which tended to undervalue the Jewish origins of the Church, a tendency that has surfaced from time to time in devious ways throughout Christian history. Some catechists, homilists, and teachers still convey little appreciation of the Jewishness of that heritage and rich spirituality which we derive from Abraham, Moses, the prophets, the psalmists, and other spiritual giants of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Continued next week

## Local Group To Stage Godspell

"Godspell," on Broadway for five years, will be staged at the Strasenburgh Planetarium Jan. 29, Feb. 2, and Feb. 4-9. The musical is an adaptation of the Gospel of St. Matthew.

Directing the production will be William Andia, former director of drama at St. Agnes High School. Artist Carl Zolo, the designer, is credited with several works of art in Rochester churches. Sister Virginia Hogan, SSJ, chairman of the St. Agnes music department, will be the musical director. The cast includes Nazareth College students Bob Sanchez and Tricia Austin, and former Nazareth student Phyllis Contestable.

Ticket information may be obtained at the planetarium box office, 244-6060, ext. 56.