

The U.S. of A.

Bishop McQuaid's Thoughts on the 'Bicentennial'

By Father Robert F. McNamara

Our nation's bicentennial observance will soon draw to a close. Although it has not turned out nationally quite the way it was planned, it has been largely effective at the local, grass-roots level, in bringing back to earnest citizens a sense of our heritage, and an awareness that we must plan for new horizons.

In the Diocese of Rochester the celebrations have been quiet but full of feeling, and have often had a good ethnic and ecumenical thrust. Thanksgiving and the Immaculate Conception, feast of our national patroness, have offered particularly good opportunities for prayerful reflection on the meaning of America.

One hundred years back, Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid, founder of the Diocese of Rochester, felt impelled as a bishop and a patriot to address his people on the implications of the Declaration of Independence. On June 23, 1876, he wrote a pastoral on the Centenary of our nationhood.

While some of his observations applied to American conditions of a century ago, much of what he wrote is equally applicable to the Bicentennial.

It seems most appropriate to conclude our Bicentennial series of monthly articles by reproducing

excerpts from the Bishop's 1876 pastoral letter.

"One hundred years ago, the colonists of this portion of the American continent, faithful to traditions handed down from father to son, that governments are instituted for the people's welfare rather than for the pleasure of rulers, unable longer to bear the exactions and demands of tyranny, declared in the name of God, whom they invoked, and by virtue of the eternal laws of justice, their independence of their former rulers. Seven years of struggle, accompanied by extreme sufferings and privations, secured their recognition as Sovereign States.

"In the Declaration of Independence and in the long war for its recognition, Catholics took part in proportion to their number and means. When the war seemed endless and fruitless, Catholic France came to the aid of the colonists and quickly brought it to a close.

"We are now called upon to celebrate, with becoming solemnity and joyfulness, the hundredth anniversary of the day on which the American colonists declared their independence of Great Britain. In the common joy we all participate, in the general celebration we join with our fellow citizens as one people — one nation. Since the earliest settlement of these States, as European immigrants arrived, while cherishing with fond affection the land of their birth, dear

to their heart through many tender recollections, they sank old nationalities to take on the new. The country of their adoption became henceforth their only country, as it was their only home. Their children could know no other. Our entire population is one of immigrants of recent or of older date. He is a thoughtless or a foolish man, who designates as foreigners and aliens those who breaking away from old ties and political claims and duties, settled for life in this new country, making here a permanent home for themselves and their children. It is a slur cast on his own ancestors of a generation or two back.

"There is then one nationality here. It is the nationality of the American people made up of citizens born on the soil, and of citizens recently arrived from other countries, but in whose souls burn a love of republican institutions and a desire to contribute to the growth, the development, the success of our common country.

"The dangers from which the earlier settlers were exempt are now crowding upon us. Fortunately, time has strengthened the principles and the spirit of rule by the people, so that the strain now put on republican institutions does not prove too great. It will never prove too great as long as the people remember that all government is from God, and whether it be by the people or by kings, it must be honestly and manfully obeyed. It will never be too great as long as the majority, the ruling power in a republic, bear in mind that the rights of the minority are not to be trifled with, and that it is as easy and unjustifiable for a number of people to become tyrannical and oppressive, as it is for the centralized power of the monarchy to act for its own pleasure and gain, regardless of the dictates of right and reason.

"A population ashamed to work — large numbers of young men brought up in idleness in a country that has no place for drones — professional office-seekers with education enough to be mischievous when not employed —

frightful increase of the buying and selling of votes — speculation and bartering of official patronage and influence among the highest officials of the government — abounding immorality among the people — disregard of the indissolubility of the marriage tie — neglect of the wholesome discipline in the family, and the consequent ill directed training of children, tell us that the essential conditions of selfgovernment are growing weak and passing away.

"Arrived at a period in our history calling for at least a moment's consideration of one hundred years' work, growth, and astounding prosperity, it is our duty as Christians to turn to God in humility and gratitude. His merciful hand can be seen in all that has been accomplished. We work and strive, but under His watchful care. He has given us these homes. He has given us free scope for selfgovernment under peculiar advantages. The least we can do in the midst of joyous demonstrations of patriotism, on this memorable anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, is to assemble in our churches and pour forth heartfelt thanks to God for all His mercies bestowed with so bountiful a hand on our country, and pray most

earnestly for a continuance of His blessing and protection.

"It will be advisable for pastors on that day, or on some convenient Sunday, to instruct their parishioners in the duties and responsibilities of good citizenship, the claims of every regularly constituted state on the reverence and obedience of its members and the principles underlying the right of command and the law to obey, well satisfied that no patriotism will avail to maintain justice and uphold the weak that is not based on God's law.

"The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, and His arm guard and prosper our beloved country."

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Pope Grieved By Killings

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul has expressed his "profound grief" over the recent murders in Rhodesia of a Catholic bishop, a priest, and a nun.

The three missionaries — German-born Bishop Adolf G. Schmitt, 71, a naturalized U.S. citizen and a retired bishop of the Diocese of Bulawayo in western Rhodesia; Father Possenti Weggarten, 65, and Sister Maria van den Berg, both German nationals and both attached to a mission station north of Bulawayo — were held up and

killed by a black nationalist guerrilla on a road between Bulawayo and the Victoria Falls National Park.

A second German nun, Sister Ermenfried Khauer, C.P.S., was wounded.

In a telegram to Bishop Ernest H. Karlen of Bulawayo, president of the Rhodesian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Jean Villot, Vatican Secretary of State, transmitted Pope Paul's condolences to the faithful of Bulawayo.

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