

Memphis Bishop Denies Reconciliation Abuse

Memphis (RNS)— The Roman Catholic Bishop of Memphis has challenged the charge of a ranking Vatican official that his nationally publicized effort to reconcile thousands of alienated Catholics to the Church was nothing more than "a call to give general absolution."

Reacting to a stern letter from Cardinal James Knox, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Sacraments, which was circulated among all U.S. bishops, Bishop Carroll T. Dozier of Memphis said, "I do not see nor do I understand how the action in Memphis can be so grossly termed as a call to give general absolution. Certainly this was not the primary intention, nor the primary thrust."

In a letter sent to all American bishops, lest "silence seem to indicate that my devotion to the Gospel and to Jesus Christ is suspect somehow," Bishop Dozier accused the Vatican prelate of "using loose wordage in the form of a public reprimand to me, a reprimand which could ruin my career with my fellow bishops."

He also suggested that Cardinal Knox's reprimand questions "the seriousness with which I give witness to the Risen Lord and His Gospel."

In Cardinal Knox's March 25 letter to Archbishop Joseph I. Bernardin of Cincinnati, president of the U.S. bishops conference, the cardinal accused Bishop Dozier of deliberately disregarding norms issued by the Vatican for the administration of general absolution.

The cardinal also said the Vatican congregation had made a "careful study of the information at its disposal concerning" the two Memphis rites of reconciliation (which drew a total of 13,000 persons) and decided that "for the good of souls (it must) safeguard the right administration of the sacraments according to divine law and norms laid down by . . . competent ecclesiastical authority, particularly in a matter as delicate as that of the sacrament of reconciliation."

Bishop Dozier was told in the letter that the congregation asks him to observe the norms it issues for sacraments faithfully in the future, thus contributing, among other things, to that unity of mind and heart which should prevail in the Church.

Explaining that he was being forced to defend himself against "various citations" of the "Congregation for the Defense of the Faith and the

Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship," Bishop Dozier said his silence "could indicate that I am not in union with the Holy Father... that I am a disruptive member, careless in worship and even more careless in matters of sacrament."

The bishop stressed that there are two approaches to reconciliation — through "scriptural theology of reconciliation" and through "the sacrament of reconciliation. The call in Memphis was reconciliation as a scriptural necessity, without necessarily the use of the sacrament."

The bishop noted in his letter the change for good in the Memphis diocese as a result of the reconciliation efforts, something he had stressed to Pope Paul and Cardinal Knox last January during meetings with them in the Vatican. "The response of our people to the call for reconciliation was the greatest spiritual event in the history of Memphis"

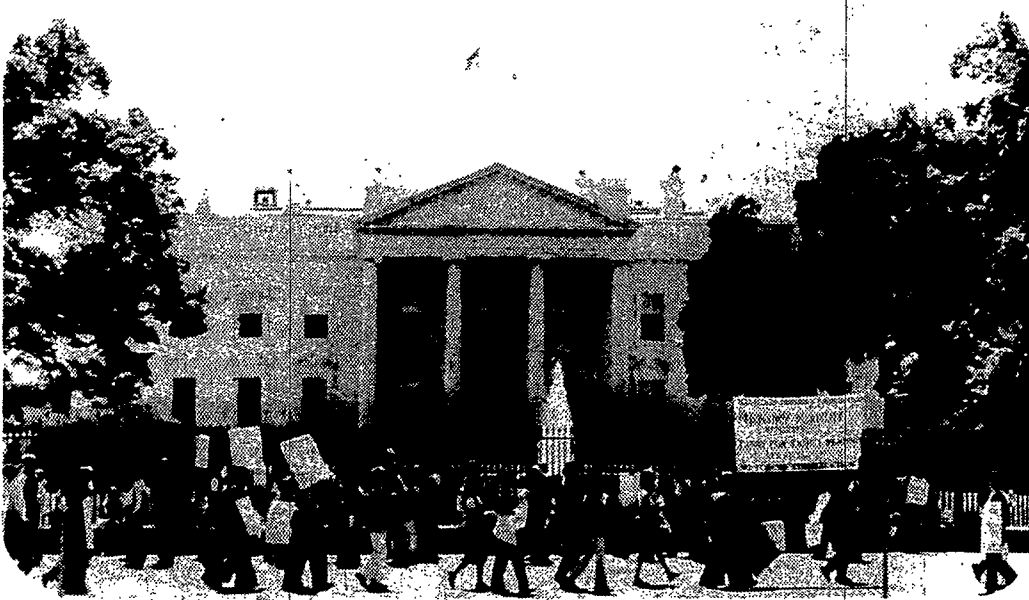
He said the number of confessions has increased, the depth of conscience examination improved, and the number of marriage cases brought to the diocesan tribunal increased.

In answer to Cardinal Knox's criticisms that he did not consult with other bishops on the reconciliation effort, as the norms recommend, and that he wrongly conveyed to the news media the Pope's approval of the rites, the Memphis prelate said he did consult with fellow bishops and he denied that he failed to report the Pope's "words of disagreement" on the matter.



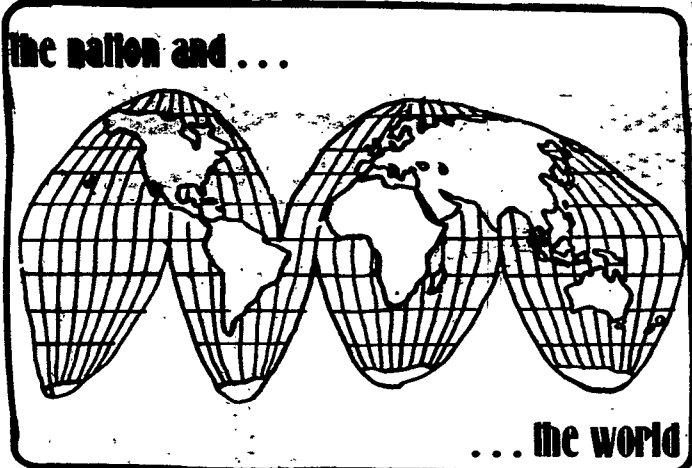
Counter Demonstrations

Both sides of the abortion issue demonstrated in front of the White House on May 8 with (top) March For Life protestors, led by Nellie Gray, president countering the procession of the Motherhood By Choice Movement, below, supported by the presence of Dr. Kenneth Edelin, a Boston doctor who was acquitted last year of manslaughter charges connected with an abortion. (RNS)



LATIN MASS

A Latin High Mass will be celebrated in Our Mother of Sorrows Church on Sunday, May 15 at 9:30 a.m. The Adult Vested Choir will sing under the direction of Caroline Effinger. Accompanist for the event is Leo Jelley.



The oldest Roman Catholic priest in the world died in Louvain, Belgium at the age of 106. Father Julian Sterx, who was born in Louvain in 1870 and ordained a priest in 1893, carried out his ministry almost uninterruptedly in his home town.

Responding to recurring drought conditions in Haiti, Catholic Relief Services in New York has launched an emergency feeding effort aimed at reaching more than 12,000 people in that Caribbean island nation over the next three months.

Americans of "all religious persuasions" were urged by New York's Cardinal Terence Cooke to pray and work for the blessings of peace, liberty and justice in Northern Ireland "to replace the violence and repression which bring such a disgraceful waste of human lives for all involved." Cardinal Cooke made his plea in a statement issued on his return from the funeral of Cardinal William Conway of Armagh, primate of Ireland. He said he had the opportunity to see once again "the battle-scarred neighborhoods . . . and to talk with the families who have suffered so much in the tragedy of that stricken land."

Religiously-related schools and hospitals, as well as those publicly-operated, would be eligible for federal grants in installing conservation measures, as recently proposed by President Carter. These and other non-profit institutions would share with public schools and non-profit hospitals in assistance totalling \$300 million per year for three years, if the President's proposal, which is part of his "energy package" is approved by Congress.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops hailed the recent television dramatization, Jesus of Nazareth, as a "profoundly spiritual experience for millions of viewers." The bishops said, "We commend Franco Zeffirelli, the National Broadcasting Co any, the sponsors and all associated with the program for this contribution to the religious and cultural life of the nation."

The House Judiciary Committee, by a vote of 20 to 12, has decided to retain a clause banning the use of government anti-poverty law funds in any litigation which would compel physicians or hospitals to perform abortions against their will. "A very historic vote," is how Thea Rossi Barron, legislative counsel to the National Right to Life Committee described the action. An official of the National Abortion Rights Action League observed that "they (those opposing abortion) had all their forces there. It was really a pretty full house."

Movie Producer Protests Film

New York (RNS) — In a protest against the film, "Nasty Habits," which he described as defamatory to Catholics, a famed spokesman for the Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith, called on the leadership of the motion picture industry to reexamine its standards and objectives regarding "violence, sex, obscenity and bad taste" in films.

He said it appears that the movie industry has "no self-standard of judgmental process" to curb the influx of offensive films.

Dore Schary, honorary national chairman of the ADL, made his plea in a letter to Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, Inc. The letter was released to all ADL directors.

Mr. Schary, a playwright, screenwriter, and movie producer, said that in writing the letter he was carrying out the ADL mandate to "challenge defamation not just of Jews but of all faiths and minorities." Acknowledging that "no one can either

legislate or eliminate bad taste," he said "one can certainly raise a voice of protest."

"Nasty Habits defames and ridicules men and women of the Roman Catholic faith who have dedicated their lives to their calling and they do not deserve the cavalier and quite obscene treatment they receive in the film and the gimmicks of advertising," he stated.

Schary, while expressing his "personal abhorrence of censorship," said he nevertheless feared that "we may, by the plethora of language, obscenity, nudity, explicit sex and gory violence, accentuate and provoke strait-laced censorship" in the film industry.

"It seems to me that possibly a meeting of the leadership (of the film industry) is called for to examine the rising tide of protest that I see even in our colleges where I lecture and teach. Even our young people are beginning to feel that some barricades should be raised to stem the four waters," he said.

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