

Abortion Group Goes to Court Over Catholic Tax Exemptions

New York (RNS) — A national abortion rights group has asked a federal court here to rescind the tax exemptions of Roman Catholic publications and agencies that have become political activists over the abortion issue.

The complaint, filed in U.S. District Court here by Abortion Rights Mobilization, charged that "Catholic

organizations have persistently attempted, for religious reasons, to defeat political candidates at all political levels who defend women's right to choose to have an abortion."

The defendants, G. William Miller, secretary of the Treasury, and Jerome Kurtz, Internal Revenue Service commissioner, were asked "to

revoke the tax-exempt status of all Catholic organizations that are found to have violated Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code."

The code provision not only excuses such organizations from paying taxes but allows donors to deduct contributions from their taxable personal income. The law, however, prohibits tax-exempt

institutions from direct involvement in election campaigns.

"We charge that the Catholic hierarchy has repeatedly violated this law," Lawrence Lader, president of the abortion group told a press conference.

The suit could compel the IRS to demand taxes from "the United States Catholic Conference as well as the parish," said Constance Cook, of Ithaca, who is a lawyer for the abortion group.

Lader cited as evidence of tax law violations, cases in which Catholic newspapers and churches have identified political candidates according to their positions on abortion and urged constituents to vote against those who oppose it.

Alleged violations include:

— Church newspaper articles naming and attacking pro-abortion candidates;

— Election-time statements from the pulpit warning parishioners "that to vote for 'pro-choice' candidates in the upcoming election would be a sin";

— Priests writing letters on church stationery urging other priests to organize their communities to defeat pro-abortion candidates;

— Instances of church members being encouraged to sign nominating petitions circulated by the Right to Life Party after Mass.

Bishops Limit Liturgical Music

San Juan, Puerto Rico (RNS) — The Roman Catholic Puerto Rican Bishops Conference has called in a pastoral letter for the exclusive use of sacred music in the island's Catholic churches.

"Never shall music be taken directly from the theater, or from a repertoire of popular songs," the letter stated. Instead of using secular music,

the bishops urged parishioners to "make use of the treasury of sacred music: the Gregorian chant, the old and modern sacred polyphony..."

The letter warned against the liturgical use of percussion instruments such as drums and snares, known in Puerto Rico as a "bacteria."

Besides exalting sacred music, the letter urges that on

special feast days the Mass be celebrated with special musical accompaniment.

The letter also said the use of the "peace salutation" among persons attending Mass should be stopped and henceforth participants are to limit their salutation "to the persons they have by their side," and the priest is not to leave the altar or extend the peace salutation to the congregation.

Protestant Leader Invites Pope

Edinburgh, Scotland (RNS) — The Rev. Dr. William Johnston moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), has announced that he would welcome a visit to Scotland by Pope John

Paul II. The announcement by the leader of Scotland's largest Protestant denomination was seen as a move to offset highly publicized protests mounted by Scottish Protestant splinter

groups against the proposed papal visit in 1982.

Dr. Johnston said he thought that relations of his church and the Catholic Church "are much closer and more cordial than they have ever been."

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

The Power Of Prayer

Sunday's Readings: (R1) Exodus, 17:8-13; (R2) 2 Timothy 3:1-4:2; (R3) Luke 18:8.

In his last letter to Timothy, St. Paul writes that Scripture is the inspired word of God, and therefore it is useful for teaching. Today's Scriptures teach us about prayer.

The First Reading shows the power of prayer. When Israel fought the fierce and warlike Amalekites, the outcome of the battle depended on the praying hands of Moses. As long as Moses prayed on the Hilltop, Joshua prevailed in the battle on the plains. When Moses, through tiredness, ceased, Amalek prevailed. In the propaganda for false peace today, we may forget that Israel fought many wars at the behest of God; and that peace came ultimately only through war and prayers.

One of the greatest generals in World War II was General George Patton. No matter what poor press he got, no matter the sobriquet of "Blood and Guts," Patton was a Christian who, like so many of the great generals of history, was a man of prayer. It might come as a shock to many that Patton attributed the victories of the Third Army in Africa,

in Sicily, and in Italy to prayer.

When Patton got into France, immoderate rains from September to December bogged down the Saar Campaign. In the fog and rain, that prevented air strikes, the German Panzer divisions made one last all-out effort to turn back the Allies' advance. Patton knew they would succeed unless the rains stopped. So on Dec. 8, 1944, Patton summoned the Third Army Head Chaplain, Msgr. James H. O'Neill, to his headquarters. He asked the chaplain how much praying was being done in the Third Army. Then the General went on, "Chaplain, I'm a strong believer in prayer. Up to now God has been very good to the Third Army. We have never retreated; we have suffered no defeats, no famine, no epidemics. This is because a lot of people back home have been praying for us. We were lucky in Africa, in Sicily and in Italy simply because people prayed. But we have to pray for ourselves."

And do you know what Patton did? He ordered the chaplain to compose a prayer for the cessation of rain. He had 250,000 copies printed. Every man in the Third Army received a copy on Dec. 14 and was urged by the chaplains to pray the prayer. On Dec. 16 the rains stopped as if by magic. The Third

Army moved, relieved beleaguered Bastogne, and struck in time to blunt the last drive of the German Army. The Third Army prayed for fair weather for battle and they got it.

The Third Reading tackles the knotty problem of unanswered prayers. Our Lord tells the story of a widow and an unjust judge. The judge no doubt was pagan, for Jewish courts had three judges. Pagan judges were notoriously corrupt. Poor St. Paul could not get a hearing for years from either Felix or Festus. He finally had to appeal to Caesar-himself.

The point of our Lord's story is not that God is like an unjust judge. Rather the parable teaches by contrast. If an unjust judge answers a prayer, how much more will the Judge of all men who is not corrupt, needs no bribes, who invites us to ask, who promises He will listen — how much more will He listen to us and answer our prayers!

Often He delays an answer. To test our sincerity. For the greatest danger to prayer is mechanical routine. Persevering prayer says we really want what we seek. Moreover, God, sometimes delays in answering prayers, because prayer changes us. Persevering prayer will prepare us for His answer. For often his answer may have to be "No." God knows best.

He knows, He loves, He cares, Nothing this truth can dim, He gives His very best to those who leave the choice with Him.

Seminary Receives Grants

St. Bernard's Seminary recently received two substantial grants to help its educational programs. Lilly Endowment, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana, awarded the seminary \$25,000 under the 1980 Competitive Grants Program in Theological Education, Program I.

The grant will "will help St.

Bernard's to implement a two-year plan designed specifically to enable the Seminary's trustees to acquire a deeper understanding of the particular character and needs of St. Bernard's in the 1980s," according to a release.

The seminary also received a private donation in the form of \$35,000 in life insurance

policies from William Wetzler of Rochester.

Wetzler is the brother of Father Arthur A. Wetzler, an alumnus of St. Bernard's. The contribution "is in recognition of the Seminary's work and the way the school has touched his (Wetzler's) life," according to the seminary.

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