

# U.S. Bishops Charge Plan in Priest's Death

By Melinda Gipson  
RNS Correspondent

Washington — In the wake of the murder of an American priest in Guatemala, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has charged that his death is part of "a very careful, studied plan to intimidate the Church and silence its prophetic voice" in that country.

Archbishop John R. Roach of St. Paul and Minneapolis, president of the NCCB, said in a statement that the murder of Father Stanley Rother, who was shot to death by "unidentified gunmen," could only be interpreted in the context of a "pattern of

murder, intimidation, and the denial of human rights to life, nutrition and health care" which afflicts all Guatemalan citizens.

According to the conference, Father Rother, a priest of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, had returned to Guatemala in April to continue his work among impoverished Indians. He and his associate pastor, Father Pedro Bocel, had fled that country last January after being informed that their names were on a death list.

"Father Rother's murder, like that of the four women missionaries in El Salvador last December, joins the

Church in the United States with the Church of Central and South America, which has had scores of bishops, priests, Sisters and laity killed in the last 10 years," the archbishop said. "Here as in other places throughout Latin America the Church has chosen to accompany in faith and suffering those who bear the burden of injustice and violence."

The State Department has made no response to charges about a pattern of abuses in Guatemala, except to say that it is considering sending more "security assistance" (military aid to the country).

Indirectly, the State

Department was pressured for a more detailed response at the confirmation hearing for the newly installed ambassador to Guatemala, Frederic L. Chapin.

An Amnesty International report on Guatemala charged

that "tortures and murders are part of a deliberate and long-standing program of the Guatemalan government" and that "the selection of targets for detention and murder and the deployment of official forces for extra-legal operations can be pinpointed

to secret offices in an annex of Guatemala's national palace under the direct control of the president of the republic."

The AI report was featured prominently in the hearing Chapin had before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

## Assumption Doctrine Explained

The Assumption: (R3) Lk. 1:39-56. (R1) Rv. 11:19; 12:1-6,10. (R2) 1 Cor. 15:20-26.

The modern world began in 1858 with three books: Darwin's "Origin of Species" (which took man's mind away from God as his origin and taught the inevitability of biological progress), Karl Marx's "Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy" (which deified man), and John Stuart Mill's "Essay on Liberty" (which led man to think he could do as he pleases).

To counter these false philosophies, the Church, four years before, defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. She protested that only one person in all the world was sinless; and therefore that progress is not inevitable, that man is prone to sin, and best preserves freedom only when he acts according to the divine will.

Modern man ignored the dogma. Blithely, with unbridled optimism, he zoomed toward his utopia. But the Franco-Prussian War came. Then World War I, then World War II, then the Korean War, then Vietnam. And the Optimistic Man became the Pessimistic Man, seeing himself as full of dark, libidinous drives. As in the definition of the Immaculate Conception — the Church reminded the world that perfection is not biologically inevitable, so now in the definition of the Assumption she gives hope to pessimistic man.

Modern despair is the effect of a disappointed "Playboy Philosophy" and centers principally around sex and death.

The primacy of sex is due in great measure to Sigmund Freud. The primacy of death to disillusioned libertines. Modern man had put his hope in the world. When the world disappointed, some of the moderns began in disgust to withdraw from the world and spawned Existentialism. Philosophers like Sartre and Heidegger were born of a

detachment from the world, but not as the Christian ascetic, because he loves God, but because they were "fed up" with the world. They were contemplatives, not to enjoy God, but to wallow in their despair, to make a philosophy out of it, and death the center of their destiny.

The doctrine of the Assumption affirms not sex but love. One of the effects of love is ecstasy. Ecstasy lifts one out of the body. Sometimes writers or poets or orators experience this mildly when they are "carried away by their subject." St. Catherine of Siena often levitated, was raised from the ground while praying. Love literally swept her off her feet. When one considers the intense love of Jesus descending to Mary and Mary's intense love ascending to her Son, together with her immunity from sin, it is easy to see how she could be lifted out of the world, body and soul. In Christ, love is an Ascension; in Mary, an Assumption. By the Assumption, the Church lifts the sacredness of love out of sex, without denying the role of the body in love.

Life is the second pillar on which the Assumption rests. In this doctrine, the Church, like a kindly mother whose sons are going off to war, strokes our heads and says: "You will come back alive, as Mary came back again after walking down the Valley of Death." As the world fears defeat by death, the Church sings the defeat of death.

In 1854, the Church spoke of the soul in the Immaculate Conception. In 1950 she spoke of the body in the Assumption. Deftly she says, "We are meant for the Lord, body and soul." She has us say, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Therefore there is nothing in a body to beget despair.

Mary is gone to heaven, body and soul, for the same reason her Son has — to intercede for us and to bend our hearts to His. Earnestly, then, ought we to pray: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us."

(These thoughts were inspired by Bishop Sheen's "The World's First Love." Read it. It is beautiful.)

## Deacon Ordination Slated

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will ordain seminarians Robert S. Bourcy, Patrick L. Connor, Dennis R. Sewar and James E. Willsey to the Order of Deacon in ceremonies at 10 a.m. on Saturday, August 29, at Sacred Heart Cathedral. A reception will follow in the hall of the Cathedral Rectory.

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