



Francine Patella

At the Root Of the Matter

It may come as a bit of a surprise to some of you to see this month's edition of *Challenge* published in the *Courier-Journal*. Since *Challenge* seeks to address issues of social justice and to educate the people of the diocese about those issues, we feel that it is important to print *Challenge* periodically in the *Courier-Journal*. Those presently receiving *Challenge* are priests and sisters of the diocese, pastoral assistants, religious ed coordinators, principals, human development chairpersons, community leaders and other departments within and without the Division of Social Ministry. However, we wish to widen our constituency and give people who are not presently receiving *Challenge* a flavor of what it is all about. We hope that by printing *Challenge* in the *Courier-Journal* we may encourage people to subscribe to it.

For many of us involved in social justice work, the label "radical" has often been given to us by people who do not understand the nature of what we do. One of the many definitions of radical is "to make extreme changes in existing views, habits, conditions or institutions." As people involved in social justice work, we do seek to question those institutions or policies which rob men and women of their right to develop as full human beings, "precisely because he or she is a person." We seek to change those structures which are oppressive and which encourage violence, poverty, hatred and ambition. But if we are radicals then our radicalism is rooted in something deeper and larger than ourselves and that is in the ministry, personhood and spirituality of Jesus Christ.

Christ came to transform society and "to offer a final solution to the injustice of the world." He sought truth, justice, love, freedom and peace. His precepts

were simple and were reoccurring themes throughout his ministry. These precepts are radical; and to us as Christians they are at the root of all our work.

During Christ's ministry, he not only spoke of a new kingdom to come, but through his actions denounced the hypocrisy and oppression of his time. Christ's greatest action against the evils of society was his own death because he knew "that a fight to the death is shown by dying; if not, [his words] would be just talk, no one would believe."

As Christians, we seek to critique the injustices of our institutions, policies and society at large and offer insights to the "why" of these ills. However, words are not enough; we must take effective action that will remedy the ills of our society. We must be Christ-like in our example, otherwise our words are empty and devoid of meaning.

Before we can "act" as Christians, we need to reflect on how we as Christians are called to respond to the world around us. It is through reflection on world events, in the light of scripture, which enables us to respond as Christ did. Before we can engage in pastoral or social ministry activity we need to have the necessary facts about the myriad issues which confront us before we can act upon them. Through *Challenge*, we try not only to give facts on social justice issues but also present some reflection on them from the light of scripture and Church teaching. We try to utilize the old Catholic action model of Observe, Judge, Act to find out clearly what our faith is calling us to do. To become more Christ-like in action, we have to understand Christ's teachings. We need an interchange of ideas and opinions. We hope that *Challenge* can be a forum for that interchange.

How to Subscribe

If you wish to subscribe to *Challenge*, please send \$3.00, fill out the form below and mail to:

Editor, *Challenge*
750 W. Main Street, Rochester, NY 14611

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REAGAN BUDGET: National Shell Game Begins

By Carol Schwartz

We no longer have a "New Deal," a "War on Poverty" or the dream of a "Great Society." We have Gramm-Latta II, the Reagan administration's budget reconciliation bill for fiscal year 1982. Gramm-Latta cuts a total of \$35 billion from a wide range of social programs including Social Security; CETA; education, housing, health, nutrition, welfare and energy programs; unemployment compensation; and community development block grant monies. In fact, only the military was spared the ax — the defense department is the recipient of an additional \$26 billion. Along with Gramm-Latta, President Reagan and our congressional representatives have given us a three-year, 25 percent across-the-board tax cut bill which heavily favors corporations and the wealthy (specifically, those with incomes of over \$50,000).

According to President Reagan, the tax cuts and spending cuts are necessary to stem inflation and

balance the budget (the theory being that inflation is primarily caused by big government spending). Reagan's economic program, however, is based largely on untested theories. Some of our nation's top economic advisors disagree on its correctness. For one thing, the budget is not really being cut. Careful examination reveals that what is actually occurring is a transfer of dollars from social programs to the military in the form of increased defense appropriations and to the wealthy in the form of tax cuts. Another interesting point: according to a Congressional Budget Office estimate last year, a

\$20 billion cut in the federal budget would result in a decrease in the inflation rate of only one-tenth of one percent! It seems economists disagree on the premise that government spending is the major cause of inflation.

No one disagrees that something urgently needs to be done to control inflation. Sensible people agree that when Congress makes critical policy decisions, it ought to do so with much careful study, thought and discussion. This was clearly not the case with the Gramm-Latta budget bill. When the final vote was taken, the bill was still in rough-draft form — pencil notations and all.

Most of our elected representatives had not even read it, let alone studied it!

We will be facing some changes when the federal budget actually takes effect on Oct. 1, 1981. Unfortunately, most of the hurtful changes will be carried by those who are already hurting — the poor and the near poor. Serious questions about the justice of our federal social policy will be raised and these questions need to be carefully examined in the light of the Gospel message.

The Ball Is in Our Court

By Rev. Charles Mulligan

The ball is in our court now as Church. The government says that it wants to get out of the way of the churches and let them get back to what they do so well — helping the poor.

But we are so accustomed to watching from the sidelines that we may not be ready. Bishop Clark wrote to all pastors and published the letter in the *Courier-Journal*. He said there would be serious effects on the lives of the poor. He asked parishes to study the budget cuts. He thought that parishes in poorer neighborhoods might take the summer to reflect on how they could prepare for new ways of helping.

Parishes in more affluent areas might plan new ways to help. He asked that one person be appointed to coordinate these efforts and promote sharing. Get ready during the summer. "Anxious waiting followed by surprise at the demands that come to us does not fulfill our call to stewardship."

That was June 17 — three months ago. Lord, the reason we didn't see you hungry, sick, homeless, jobless, in prison was because we had been so accustomed to the government doing it and, besides, it was the beginning of the year and really busy in our parishes.

Education Offered HD Units

Do you feel overwhelmed by the critical social justice issues of today? Do you wish to respond, but don't know how? We can help you. We are offering to Human Development Committees a five-session training program of parish based social action strategies. If you or your Human Development Committee is interested, please contact the Department of Justice and Peace, 750 West Main St., Rochester, N.Y., (716) 328-6400.

Fee: \$7.50 per person + covers cost of textbook and materials.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

New Date Set for Campaign for
Human Development
Appeal Sunday, December 6
Collection Sunday, December 13

Respect Life Sunday
Saturday, January 30
Sunday, January 31

The 'Third World' Is Just Next Door

By Lourdes Perez

"Part of our purpose is helping people understand, yes, the going is rough in the U.S. — but it's not rough the way it is here, when you're starving to death." (NCR, July 3, 1981.) These words were spoken by Father Gregory Schaffer, a priest of the Diocese of New Ulm, Minn., who works with the Indians in San Lucas Toliman on the shores of Lake Atitlan in Guatemala. Similar words can be repeated by missionaries throughout the Third World countries. Just talk to our 12 missionaries who have recently returned from spending at least three weeks in Tamulte, Tabasco, Mexico, about not having a drop of water in all of the town during three weeks, or seeing children who look like five years old and are twelve due to lack of food.

This is the reality which exists in Third World countries — countries which are not far away, just south of our border the other side of the Rio Grande. And it is the responsibility of the International Justice and Peace Commission to bring these concerns and reality to the awareness of the people in the diocese in a way which enables all of us to respond positively according to our Christian heritage. In a time when all indicators show that many people are pressed for jobs, for money to pay utility bills, for money

1981 Mission To Tamulte

If you are interested in learning about the missionary work of the International Justice and Peace Commission in Tamulte, Mexico, two missionaries will be available to give a slide presentation to a group or parish describing their work and accomplishments. You may contact the International Justice and Peace Commission, 750 West Main St., Rochester, N.Y. 14611, (716) 328-6400.

to put food on the table, it is only natural to keep our eyes very close to home. But we have to remember that our sisters and brothers, as the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us, are not only those who live next door and share with us a common heritage — or the same color of skin, but they are also those far away who share with us the likeness of our Creator.

The scope of the work of the Commission is big and it can only be done thanks to the many concerned volunteers who compose not only the Commission, but also its working task forces. During this coming year our task forces will deal with a myriad of issues. The Human Rights Action Task Force will deal with human rights violations throughout the world and the task force for justice in Latin America will

try to offer us ways in which we can bring justice and peace to the trouble region of Latin America, especially El Salvador. As one of the reflections from Bishop Clark's visit to our missionaries in Brazil, Chile and Bolivia, he suggested that we become more aware of the effect multinational corporations have on the everyday life of people in developing countries as well as to our own lives. The Social Responsibility Task Force will try to research this issue and provide alternatives in which stock holders can act in a responsible Christian way. Work this year will again focus on *Operation Breadbox* which seeks to inform people on this issue of world hunger and promote ways in which we can enable others to help themselves.

All in all, it will be an exciting year and one which demands from all of us an awareness of what is happening to our brothers and sisters throughout the world because of decisions being made at home. Then and only then can we respond responsibly. Much is being said about the spread of communism throughout the world. As Christians, we have to find the response to this threat not in false securities but in the message of Jesus. As the last three popes have insistently proclaimed: in order to have peace, seek justice, and this is the responsibility of all.