

People and Events Of the World and Nation

Church Experts Differ on New School Bias Policy

New York (RNS) — Religious agencies and individual church-state experts diverged widely in their reactions to the Reagan administration's decision to revoke IRS rules denying tax exemptions to private and religious schools that practice racial discrimination.

In an unexpected turn, the U.S. Justice Department asked the Supreme Court to drop two cases in which the federal government had opposed tax exemption for two religious institutions with racially discriminatory policies.

Whatever the Supreme Court does, the announcement, coupled with actions by the Treasury Department, apparently grants or restores tax exemptions to more than 100 schools previously ineligible.

Some Jewish groups joined the American Civil Liberties Union and civil rights organizations in denouncing the move, which restores exemption to Bob Jones University, in Greenville, S.C., and extends it to Goldsboro Christian Schools in North Carolina. Both institutions have racially discriminatory policies.

The director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs took a modulated view: "To the degree that this decision represents a retreat from racial justice, we deplore it," said Dr. James M. Dunn. "If it is the forerunner of a new era of Reagan racism, we denounce it. At the same time, to the degree that it represents an acknowledgement that the IRS cannot arbitrarily and arrogantly enforce national policy at the expense of religious liberty guarantees, it is a correct decision."

Father Charles M. Whelan, SJ, a professor constitutional law at Fordham University, said, "The Treasury Department's decision to stop racial discrimination as a reason for denying the exemption is laudable. The Internal Revenue Code says nothing about racial discrimination and tax exemption, and if the code is going to say anything, Congress should decide, not subordinate agencies of government."

U.S. Baha'is Leader Disputes Iran Judge On Executions

Wilmette, Ill. (RNS) — The leader of the U.S. Baha'i community says Iran's chief justice was lying when he denied that eight Iranian Baha'i leaders had recently been executed for "spying for foreign powers."

Judge James F. Nelson, chairman of the American Baha'i National Assembly, called the claim by Chief Justice Ayatollah Musavi-Ardibili a "bold-faced lie."

Iran's Islamic Republic News Agency quoted the ayatollah as denying that the eight persons had been executed solely because of their religious beliefs. "No one would be tried for merely ideological or religious reasons," he said. "There is no discrimination in this regard."

Judge Nelson said, "We know from unimpeachable sources that the statement by the Ayatollah Ardibili is a bold-faced lie and a deliberate attempt by government officials to cover up this heinous act."

Conservative Unit Honors Bishop Of Managua

Washington (RNS) — Money that Nicaragua pays France for arms could better be spent "on schools, hospitals, housing and even non-sports fields," the visiting archbishop of Managua said here.

Archbishop Miguel Obando Bravo, who is in the United States at the invitation of Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, arrived just as France disclosed it has agreed to supply \$15.8 million worth of "non-offensive" military equipment to the Sandinista government.

Archbishop Obando reacted: "I believe that peace should be supported not by arms but rather by truth, by justice and by freedom." He added the remarks about the money.

The archbishop was here to accept an award from the conservative, Washington-based Institute on Religion and Democracy for his "long and brave struggle for religious freedom against oppression of the right and the left."

2 Kidnaped Priests Released; Nun Still Missing in Guatemala

Washington (RNS) — Two priests kidnaped by armed men from their mission in Guatemala have been returned safely, but a nun taken in a separate abduction is still missing, church sources said here.

The priests, a Belgian and a Guatemalan, are both members of the Belgian Scheutist order, known in the U.S. as the Missionhurst Fathers.

They were abducted from their mission in Nueva Concepcion by 15 men who first shot and killed a diocesan caretaker, then fled in what were described as "military vehicles or jeeps."

They were released three days later and no information released on their conditions.

Gunmen also abducted Sister Victoria Dela Loca from a church in Esquipulas, near the Honduran border. She is a Bethlehemite, a local Guatemalan order. It was reported that the elderly nun has cancer.

The gunmen were dressed in civilian clothes, carried submachine guns and made a search for "subversive material," before kidnaping the nun.

Archbishop Kelly Calls Tuition Aid Key Bishops' Goal

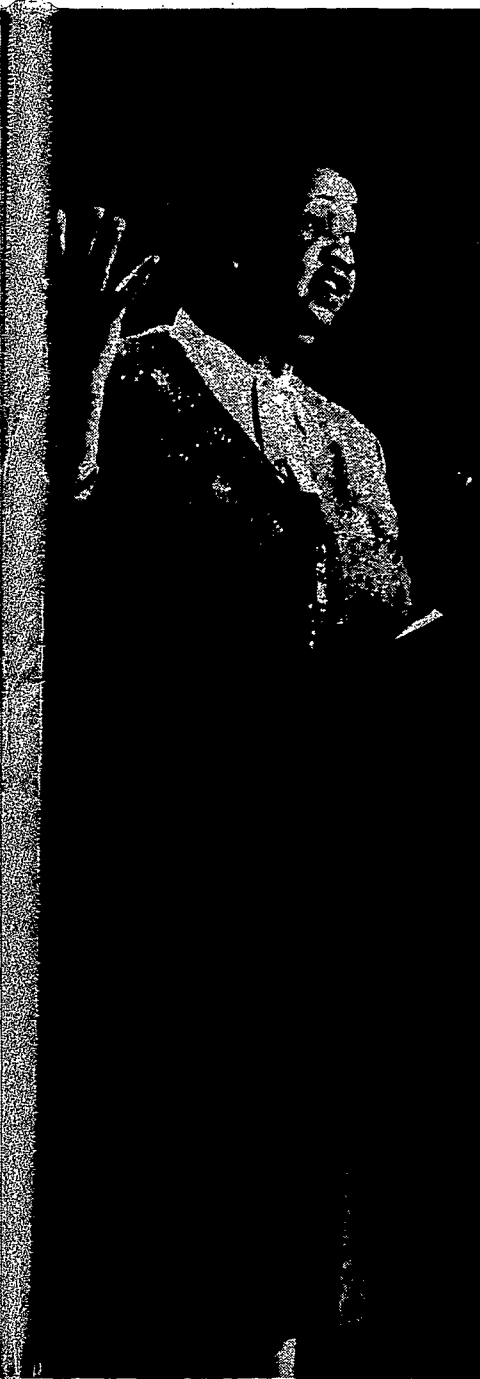
Washington (RNS) — Action on tuition tax credits in Congress' next session may be critical for the survival of nonpublic schools, says Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly, general secretary of the U.S. Catholic Conference.

Archbishop Kelly, newly appointed archbishop of Louisville, Ky., has been in the forefront of the Catholic fight for tax help for parents with children in nonpublic schools. He takes up his new post in February, just as the new session will be beginning.

In a letter to the nonpublic-school community, he recalled President Reagan's recent pledge to Catholic education "to work with this Congress to fashion the kind of legislation which provides tax relief to the families which pay tuition in addition to supporting their public schools."

People Make News

Kathryn M. Garry, a leader of antiwar and race-relations movements in the Rockville Centre, N.Y., Catholic diocese, is the winner of the 1982 Martin Luther King Jr. Award of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. . . . Two Americans were among nine bishops consecrated recently by Pope John Paul II in Rome. Msgr. Thomas O'Brien, 46, of Indianapolis, who will be bishop of Phoenix, Ariz., and Msgr. Anthony Milone of Omaha, Neb., who will be auxiliary bishop of Omaha, were consecrated. . . . And a heroic life came to an end in Joliet, Ill., when Bishop Romeo Blanchette died Jan. 10 of Lou Gehrig's disease. He was 69. He resigned in January 1979 after serving 13 years when he learned he was suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a terminal disease of the muscles. Despite the disease, Bishop Blanchette continued his ministry from his hospital bed, including writing a column for the diocesan newspaper. He would dictate his column letter by letter because he couldn't speak. He would indicate the letter he wanted by winking when his secretary — who recited the alphabet — came to the right letter.



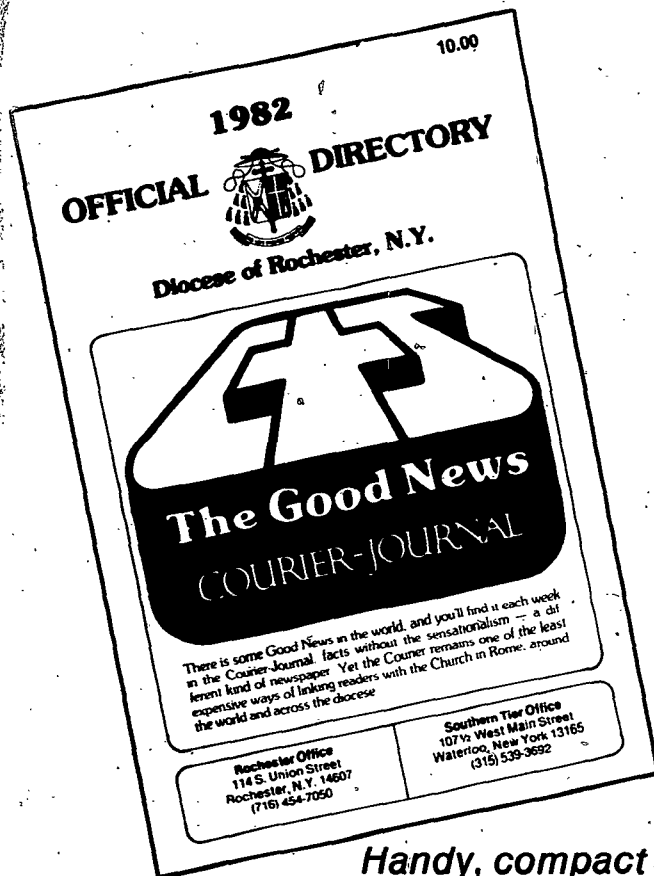
Photos by Terrance J. Brennan

King Celebrated

Dorothy I. Height, left, president of the National Council of Negro Women, speaks at Colgate Rochester last Friday during the Martin Luther King Jr. celebration. Above, Sister Toinette Eugene, assistant professor of Black Church Studies at the Divinity Schools, speaks at St. Briget's Church Friday night. Below, Colgate student David North sings during the program at Colgate Rochester.



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