

Bishops Blast President Over El Salvador Issue

By John Dash

Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Bishop Robert Spears Jr., the Episcopal Bishop of Rochester, have joined with clergymen across the country denouncing the present course U.S. military aid to El Salvador has taken.

The action taken is in the form of a letter to the members of the Senate and the House of Representatives charging President Reagan with "grave violation of the trust placed in the office of the Chief Executive" in seeking further money for military activity in that country.

At a press conference last week, Bishop Spears characterized President Reagan's recent statements on the situation in El Salvador as

"self-serving and cynical at the very best."

It is the administration's contention that conditions Congress had set last year for further military aid to El Salvador have been met.

The religious leaders' letter, however, states, "We submit that the president could not properly make the certification to Congress that the government of El Salvador is making a 'concerted and significant effort to control gross violations of internationally contrary evidence from established and reputable human rights organizations'."

"Furthermore, we submit that the president could not properly certify that the government is making

continued progress in implementing essential economic and political reforms, including the land reform program."

"In addition, the Salvadorean government has clearly not demonstrated its good faith to 'begin discussions with all major political factions which have declared their willingness to find and implement an equitable solution to the conflict.'"

The religious leaders charged that "the president has compromised his moral and legal responsibilities to what appear to be ideological interests. To follow his leadership in uncritical association with government-sponsored murder and repression in El Salvador would compromise our own values as a nation and create further divisiveness among our allies in the world. Our strength as a nation derives from the moral integrity of our ideals and beliefs, and from the extent to which our actions in the world are consistent with those beliefs."

"As religious leaders, we therefore call upon you to exercise your constitutional responsibility with integrity by immediately terminating military aid to the Salvadorean government, including the training of 1,600 Salvadorean troops on U.S. soil," the letter read.

The letter further asked congressmen "to do all in your power to bring about negotiations between all parties involved. In view of mounting evidence that deported refugees in many cases face arrest and death, we further urge you to grant political asylum to Salvadorean refugees until their safe return to their own country is possible."

Other diocesan signatories to the letter include the Diocesan Sisters Council; Father William Spilly, Rural Office of Human Development; John Walker, executive secretary of the Office of Black Ministries; the Central Administration of the Rochester Sisters of Mercy; and Mary Heidkamp, director of the Department of Justice and Peace.

Parish Sets Ecumenical Lent Talks

Sister Barbara Moore, RSM, executive director of Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministry, will be the first speaker in St. Christopher Church's ecumenical Lenten lecture series featuring talks on the weekly Gospel.

Sister Barbara will speak on "The Fulfillment of God's Promise," 7:30 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 28, at the church, 3350 Union St., North Chili.

Sisters of Mercy Vote To Oppose Nuke Armament

The Congregation of the Rochester Sisters of Mercy has passed a referendum vote to take a stand for nuclear disarmament. After a five-month process, the congregation has joined the bishops, religious communities and concerned individuals who are working against the nuclear arms buildup.

Last Fall, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious stated its opposition to "the production and deployment of the MX missile, the neutron bomb and other planned instruments of destruction."

Sister Jean Marie Kearse, superior general of the Rochester congregation, stated: "We cannot be content to let the Holy Father or the Vatican Council speak for us once we have sensed in our own hearts the values to which the Gospel and our Church call us... as women of Mercy, we are called to explore the avenues of response available to us... the time for prayer and action is now. The greatest evil is when good people do nothing."

The Mercy and Justice Committee and the Executive Council jointly initiated the proposal for the resolution.

El Salvador

Continued from Page 1 negotiated settlement of the conflict there.

As long ago as a year, the bishops had firmed up their position on the matter, taking the pleas of both martyred Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero and Bishop Arturo

DeSales

Continued from Page 1 same time provide funds for debt service, and any unexpected contingencies.

"We are grateful to everyone who worked hard to put the drive over, and to everyone who contributed so generously to make it such a success," Caravita said.

The drive is under the leadership of Bernice Anania, Sam Boncaro, Martin Lawler of Geneva, and Helen Wetzel of Waterloo.

And there is still more to do for the 200 workers who participated in the campaign. According to Norman McGowan, who coordinated the fund-raising, "Everything went according to the game plan," and follow-up phone calls are already being made to alumni, thanking them for their support or reminding them of the campaign's needs.

This year's campaign and its success is imperative. Its outcome will have a vital impact on the March 8 decision by the Board of Trustees whether to close DeSales.

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The basis was stated: "As women of faith and peace, we are dedicated to the preservation, respect and enhancement of human life. We take our stand based on the Gospel call of Christ, 'I have come that you may have life, and the Old Testament command, 'Thou shall not kill.'"

The Central Administration (CA) approved the proposal at its December meeting. CA members met with each community of Sisters to discuss the proposal.

Sister Diane Marie Erskin, after her meeting with a CA representative, said, "I believed when I was young

that one day there would be peace if we really prayed. I guess forgot that along the way. After reflecting (on the proposal), I came to believe again that prayer can lead to peace."

The statement calls for a commitment on the part of the congregation as a whole and each individual Sister to work toward nuclear disarmament by praying each day the "World Prayer for Peace," fasting every Monday, engaging in study and self-education on nuclear disarmament, writing letters to lawmakers and bearing public witness to the Gospel of peace until nuclear disarmament is achieved.

Lenten Regulations

Today, Ash Wednesday, is a day of fast and abstinence from meat. Good Friday is the only other day of both fast and abstinence.

Other Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence from meat.

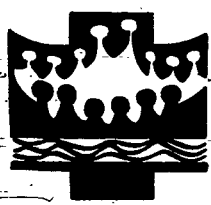
The fast is defined as one full meal a day, with two lighter meals. It is required of those 21-59 years of age.

The prohibition against meat on Fridays applies to those 14 years of age and older.

A Catholic should not likely excuse himself from these practices.

Insights In Liturgy

By Father Robert J. Kennedy



Lent: A Baptismal Season

Imagine an in-the-vestibule interview with Mary or John Q. Person-in-the-Pew. They are asked: what is the season of Lent all about? The answers, of course, would vary; it's about giving up things or it's about doing penance or it's about doing something extra. These are the expected answers and ones based on our training and experience.

It would be a bit of a surprise then if someone answered: "Lent is about Baptism." And surprising as the response would be, it would also be the most correct. Lent is about Baptism about those who are preparing for it and those who are renewing it.

From the earliest days of the Church's history, the sacraments of initiation (what we now call Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) were celebrated in conjunction with the paschal feast, the Vigil of Easter. Incorporation into the death and resurrection of Christ occurred when this event was annually remembered. Before the peace of Constantine in 313 A.D., lengthy and intense preparations were made by adults and households for their initiation. However, after that date, so many wanted to be Christian (although their motives were not always pure!) that preparation was watered down. A 40-day "desert experience" called Lent (Springtime) developed as a period of intense spiritual reflection and preparation by the catechumens for their Baptism at the Easter Vigil.

Thus the foundation of the Lenten season is Baptism and with the restoration of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, it remains so today. Those preparing for membership with Christ in the Church at Easter enter

upon the Period of Purification and Enlightenment on the First Sunday of Lent. After a period of formation in faith through instruction, prayer and service, the catechumens among us are chosen as candidates for initiation, and this Lenten period becomes a type of retreat in which the candidates purify their hearts and motives and draw nearer to Christ.

This witness of the catechumens challenges the rest of us, who are among the "faithful," to reflect on the meaning of our own baptism. In effect they say to us: "We want to join you and live your way of life; your faith and Christian living are very attractive to us."

If we ever heard these words spoken to us directly, we might swallow hard and wonder whether our faith and lifestyle would attract anyone to Christ. How well have we lived our baptismal commitment? This is the central Lenten question, and grappling with it touches catechumens and full Church members alike.

Grappling with our baptismal life: that's what Lent is all about. Have we recognized with gratitude the presence of God in our lives; have we committed to knocking down the barriers that keep us apart, and to build up in unity the Body of Christ; have we placed the values of the Gospel first in our lives, befriending the stranger, the powerless and the needy; are we even listening to the Word of God as it is spoken to us? The answers to these questions are probably better than we give ourselves credit for, but they are far from perfect. And so Lent is a season of Baptism: joyous anticipation for those to be initiated at Easter and joyous renewal for the rest of us.

For your penance then, look like you've been washed!

Rivera Damas that the U.S. not involve itself in the military crisis as the basis for their action.

Subsequently the U.S.

bishops, both singly and collectively, have voiced their opposition in congressional hearings, statements, letters and meetings with administration officials.

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