

At Trident Sub Breeding Ground, Christians Split on Nuclear Issue

By Richard C. Dujardin
Religious News Service

A group of demonstrators, including two Roman Catholic nuns, breaks into the Electric Boat shipyard at Groton, Conn., and stages a prayer vigil aboard a Trident submarine. They pour blood down the hatches, dent the vessel with hammers and damage sonar equipment.

In Seattle, a Catholic bishop says he is deeply saddened that his diocese would be used as a port for the Trident submarines, suggesting that Puget Sound might be renamed Auschwitz because of the vessel's ability to deliver as many as 408 nuclear warheads into separate Soviet targets.

In Texas, another bishop says it is immoral to work in a plant where nuclear bombs are assembled and urges Catholics employed there to quit.

Elsewhere, among the major religious denominations, church leaders head drives aimed at reversing the arms race, calling nuclear war immoral and expressing support for a freeze.

Debate over the use of nuclear weapons has become a sensitive issue virtually everywhere.

It could be argued, though, that it is especially so in southern New England where substantial numbers of families earn their incomes from the building of Trident submarines at Electric Boat.

How have churches serving families working at Electric Boat reacted to the challenge? Ignoring it in some cases, and by confronting it head on in others.

Consider the United Church of Christ at Westerly, R.I., where many Electric Boat workers live. Church members have gone to New York to join in anti-nuclear demonstrations, and have become involved in a letter-writing campaign. The pastor, the Rev. Patrick W. Larracey, has expressed support for disarmament from the pulpit, unilateral and otherwise.

Not all parishioners agree, however, and some have been quite vocal.

The pastor said, "It's been the cause of much discussion, sometimes very heated. But at least we haven't swept it under the rug."

At St. Mary's Catholic parish in Charlestown, R.I.,

however, the social action committee gave up on plans to take a "strong public stand" on the issue, largely because so many parishioners are so directly involved with Electric Boat.

"It is a very difficult issue to touch upon in a sermon because feelings do run so deep," said Father John F. Heaney, pastor. But that is not to say that the issue is ignored, he added. When a delegation of Buddhist peace marchers passed through town on the way to the United Nations, the parish's social action committee played host and provided dinner.

"That's the kind of approach we've decided to take. Emphasize the positive efforts that would promote peace, rather than the negative things that arouse antagonism."

Still, in some churches even that is thought to be going too far. At Immaculate Conception parish in Westerly, there have been some items in the weekly bulletin about the bishop's position on nuclear arms, but that's about it, said Father Edward L. Cloonan, pastor.

"What you have to understand is that we're so isolated down here. Our parishioners have been much too busy supporting our annual bazaar to get involved in these things."

Father John D. Broderick, pastor of Our Lady of Victory parish in Hopkinton, said that in the three months he has been assigned to the parish, the nuclear issue has not "come to the fore." About 75 percent of his parish's 275 families have an affiliation with Electric Boat.

Personally, he said, he would "love to see us beat our swords into plowshares." He thinks most of his parishioners probably already recognize that "nuclear bombs aren't the greatest thing in the world." But he doesn't think his parishioners should look for other jobs.

"I don't think any of our parishioners are doing any work that is going to jeopardize their eternal salvation. You can morally work on something without intending that it be used as a vehicle for destruction. You could argue that a car could be a destructive instrument, too, but that doesn't make it immoral to build a car."

In fact, nearly all of a dozen clergy interviewed said they did not regard work on Trident submarines as immoral. And it could be argued, many suggested, that the missile-carrying submarine is an instrument of peace, aimed at deterring the possibility of nuclear war.

Deacons Ordained Aug. 14

Bishop Matthew H. Clark will ordain to the diaconate four diocesan seminarians preparing for the priesthood at 10 a.m., Saturday, Aug. 14, at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. The rites, to which the public is invited, are for Frank E. DiSano, David J. Faraone, Richard T. Farrell and George R. Norton.

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They Bring St. Alphonsus' Spirit to the 20th Century

(The Redemptorist Fathers this year are celebrating the 250th anniversary of their foundation by St. Alphonsus Liguori. The following appreciation of St. Alphonsus was written by Father Philip Lavin, CSSR, associate pastor of Our Lady of Victory Church. The feast of St. Alphonsus is Aug. 1)

Pope John Paul II wishes religious orders and congregations to act in the spirit of their founders.

The priests at Our Lady of Victory-St. Joseph Church on Pleasant Street in Rochester are happy to follow St. Alphonsus Liguori, their founder, especially in 1982, the 250th Anniversary of The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

In 1723 Alphonsus, then a 27-year-old lawyer in Naples, Italy, lost an important case through an oversight. He abandoned the law, hung his sword on the altar, became a priest and founded the Redemptorists. Today nearly 5,000 priests and brothers are his sons in 55 countries.

We ask, what could an Alphonsus possibly say to people of today's world — a world in which there's television, airplane, radio, telephone, x-ray, laser beam, movies, computer, satellite: a world in which men have walked on the moon, a world of seemingly, illimitable

science? Alphonsus would only answer with a single word, "Souls." Christ, the great love of Alphonsus' life, died for souls and for their salvation. Alphonsus would spend himself for the same purpose. In fact, he would seek out the "most abandoned souls," vowing never to waste a moment. He kept that vow till he died in 1787, aged 90 and crippled with arthritis.

Alphonsus is the hero of modern Redemptorists. If they wished to follow their founder perfectly, what would they do? They would spend many hours praying, remembering his words, "Pray and you will be saved; do not pray and you will be lost." They would be constantly available for hearing confessions, remembering that Alphonsus was called a prince of moral theology, the science of the confessional. They would preach especially on the four great truths: heaven, hell, death and judgment — but would stress the infinite love and mercy of God. They would visit the Lord in the Tabernacle many times a day. They would always have hold of the Blessed Mother's hand. They would write clear and solid books and pamphlets to excite readers to love God and Mary and the Church.

Where God and the Church and souls were concerned Alphonsus was fearless. He would not be intimidated by

today's educated, sophisticated, scientific, advanced people. He would only see these people just as they are in the sight of God — souls for whom The Most Holy Redeemer suffered and died. And he would make every effort, with God's grace, to save them.

In 1732, when Alphonsus founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Italy, he didn't see the Church of Our Lady of Victory-St. Joseph on Pleasant Street in Rochester. But he sees it today, as he watches his sons conducting the Novenas to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, faithful to the spirit of St. Alphonsus Liguori, their founder. He watches them and he is glad — glad that he hung up his sword on the altar, glad that he became a priest, glad that he founded The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

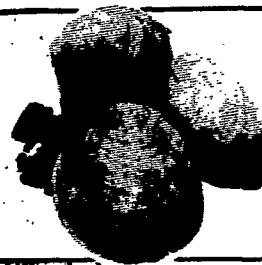
Free Swim

Project SEED and the Edgerton Park Recreation Center are offering a free recreational swim to any disabled person. Staff and volunteers will assist in both the water and locker rooms. The program is open 9:30-11:30 a.m., Mondays through Fridays. Further information is available by calling Adele Carlson, director of Project SEED 428-6769

Deadline

The deadline for submitting news to the Courier-Journal is noon on Thursday preceding the following Wednesday's publication.

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