

**Editorials**

**The U.S. Bishops  
... An Apologia**

The members of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, known better as the U.S. bishops, make an easy target.

When they speak "conservatively" on religious matters, as they are often wont to do, they are apt to be termed reactionaries.

When they speak "liberally" on public matters, as they are sometimes wont to do, they are called idealists or dupes or worse.

Little matter that they often disrupt such stereotyping by, for instance, staunchly opposing abortion (generally considered a conservative position) or oppose the death penalty (generally considered very liberal).

And when they are silent on some issue, they are branded in various ways, according to the eyes of the beholder.

Used to such slings and arrows, they knew full well that they would be wide open to verbal attack by considering a pastoral on war and peace, which has become more specifically a document on nuclear warfare. Yet they did so.

And why? Probably for two general reasons — to guide their Catholic flock and to stimulate more informed discussion of what is probably the number one issue for the world today. And in speaking to their brothers and sisters of a common faith, they have found themselves addressing the wider community as well. Just ask the White House.

At their conference in Washington, the bishops, each of them personally, received a letter from a White House staffer arguing the morality of the pastoral. Bishop Matthew H. Clark feels that this shows that the administration is aware that the moral aspect of this issue is relevant and dilutes the argument of those who say that the bishops were merely sticking their noses where they do not belong, namely into politics.



U.S. defense plans call for deployment of the MX nuclear missile, shown here in a Defense Department exhibit in Washington, D.C. The statement being prepared by American bishops suggests that the addition of such weapons "invites attack." (NC Photo)

Bishop Clark emphasized another point — these bishops of ours are realists. They are not ivory tower eggheads, taking an expected position.

Think of it. They come from all walks of life, from every corner of this nation and with all kinds of personal political ideologies.

They neither speak glibly nor shallowly about the great question of nuclear armament in a factionalized world. Collectively they are neither avowed pacifists or crusaders. Neither do they claim to be omniscient; indeed, they debated openly among themselves about the pastoral. They are humanly perplexed about the morality of nuclear deterrence; they are hung up on the tradition of the just war theory. They seek guidance from God and their collaborators in the faith.

And they are sensitive to the fears of the populace. They wish to assure us that they are not endorsing unilateral disarmament. They want all to know that they do insist on monitoring and verification of mutual disarmament among the nations of the world.

The bishops have not acted intramurally; they have consulted many leading government officials, present and former; experts in the field, and even militarists.

The process is not over. The bishops intend to seek further advice from experts in the field and from theologians. They will talk with bishops from

European nations. They will consult locally with their own dioceses. All of this will take place before they vote again on the final version of the pastoral.

Some Catholics feel that the bishops are somehow controverting the position of the Vatican. They should heed these words:

"The Catholic Church teaching is thus clear and coherent. It deplors the arms race, it demands at least progressive, mutual, verifiable arms reduction as well as greater precautions against possible errors in the use of nuclear weapons... she will not cease from exerting her efforts while armaments go on not being entirely mastered, the security of all nations is not guaranteed, and while men's hearts are not won over to ethical choices which can guarantee lasting peace."

These are not the words of the bishop of St. Paul-Minneapolis or of Chicago or of Rochester. They were spoken by the bishop of Rome, Pope John Paul II, also known as Karol Wojtyla, a man probably as aware of the Communist threat as anyone in the world.

The U.S. bishops do not intend to be divisive, either as part of the American family or of the community of faith. In a world facing the enormity of nuclear holocaust, they merely want to heighten consciences, their own as well as others, as to the proper options the human race should take in stewardship of God's world.

**and Opinions**

**From Leonid With Love**

Editor:

Leonid Brezhnev's death finally permits the disclosure that Bishop Aloisius Dreamer, the Ordinary of the Moscow, Pa. diocese, had recently received a confidential letter from the premier. I have come upon this information from an anonymous source whom I know only as "Deep Wimp." Deep Wimp indicates that Bishop Dreamer received the letter only days before Mr. Brezhnev's passing. The verbatim text is as follows:

Dear Comrade Bishop (A. Dreamer):

I applaud you and your associates of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. You have accomplished much in your condemnation of your warmongering, sabre-rattling, imperialist government. It is commendable that you temporarily set aside the opiate of the people for more noble pursuits about which you evidently know everything — that is, politics.

As one politician to another, let me express my gratitude also for your thoughtful restraint with regard to the Soviet Union. As one of your opium-eating predecessors (Aquinas, I believe) once said, "Silence is tacit approval." You certainly agree then that

myself and the Politburo are living, breathing examples of a moral and peace-loving people.

It is wise that nuclear weapons only be entrusted to peace-loving people such as we Soviets; rightly so that you should demand removal of such armaments from the anti-Proletariat enemies of the Workers' Paradise. Even our own people recognize our honorable intentions and therefore never find it necessary to stage demonstrations. When was the last time you recall an anti-government rally in the Soviet? So, you see, our people are very happy.

But it is heartwarming to note your tacit approbation by demanding virtually little of us. You lend credence to our many peace-keeping ventures, most notably Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Afghanistan in 1978, and now, Poland. Obviously, we are the epitome of peace, for the world has hardly heard a whimper from these other Worker Paradises since we rid them of the poison of the revisionist reactionaries.

Once you have succeeded in convincing your government to renounce all arms, my government will be able to spread our form of peace over the whole world. Perhaps you may not need your Prince of Peace anymore, for peace will have been at hand.

But do not fret, my dear

Dreamer! Someday, if your country needs to be purged of revisionists, we will be happy to assist in establishing a new Democratic People's Republic. After all, it is only a short hop across the Bering Strait, and, with your nation disarmed, there would be no bloodshed as the peace-loving Soviet Army liberates the oppressed Eskimos of Alaska. Or our peace-loving ally, Comrade Castro, could liberate the captive Cubans in Florida.

Your thankful friend,  
Leonid

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complete peace in Russia, for to disturb that utopia means death or a long prison sentence. Without our nuclear defense the United States could become one large communist satellite bathed in utter peace. Is this what the good bishops had in mind?

The naive but very good bishops really should consult with the Vatican. I understand its head, the pope, understands completely the credibility of the communists.

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**A Vote Against Bishops**

Editor:

Speaking as a Roman Catholic rather than an American Catholic, please know that there are many of us who are not in agreement with Bishop Clark or the U.S. bishops who are speaking out against nuclear defenses.

The bishops should remember they are not administering independent baronies. The Vatican is the voice of the Church and there are no such political pronouncements emanating from the seat of the Church.

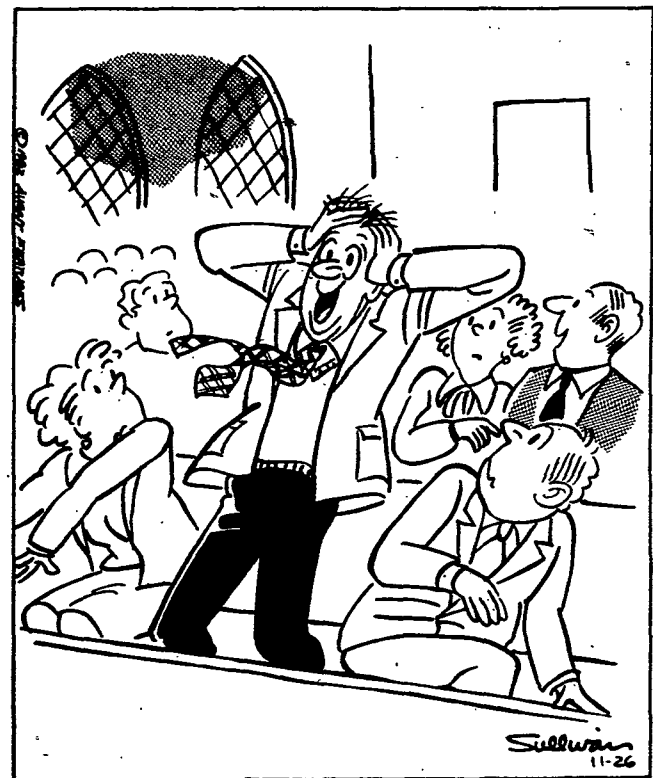
Yes, indeed there are many forms of peace. There is

**Our Genes Are Menaced**

Editor:

Shaped through long eons of evolution, our genes not only make us what we are, but hold in their minute beings the future — be it one of promise or threat. Yet genetic deterioration through man-made agents is the menace of our time.

The parallel between chemicals and radiation is exact and inescapable. The living cell, assaulted by radiation, suffers a variety of injuries. Its ability to divide normally may be destroyed, it may suffer changes in chromosome structure, or the



"IT'S ALWAYS NICE TO SEE THE WORD HIT HOME FOR SOMEONE."

genes, carriers of hereditary material, may undergo those sudden changes known as mutations which cause them to produce new characteristics in succeeding generations. If especially susceptible, the cell may be killed outright, or, finally, after the passage of time measured in years, it may become malignant.

All these consequences of radiation have been duplicated in laboratory studies by a large group of chemicals known as radiomimetic or radiation imitating. Many chemicals used in pesticides — herbicides as well as insecticides

— belong to this group of substances that have the ability to damage the chromosomes, interfere with normal cell division, or cause mutations. These injuries to the genetic material are of a kind that may lead to disease in the individual or they may make their effects felt in future generations.

Perhaps we should remember the question of the 5-year-old boy at Love Canal who asked, "Am I growing to grow up to be a normal man?"

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