

# Independent Church Is Only Effective Means for Social Change, Pope Says

By Agostino Bone  
NC News Service

The Catholic Church, if it is to be an effective critic of social problems and a source of reconciliation in warring societies, must be independent of governments and political systems, according to Pope John Paul II.

The pope went to Central America's violence-torn societies in March to deliver this message forcefully in word and deed. His emphasis on Church independence was apparent in Nicaragua and El Salvador, two countries having radically different governments.

In Nicaragua, ruled by the Marxist-influenced Sandinista movement, which has been accused by the United States of being a soviet surrogate, the pope scolded a priest holding a cabinet post and warned Catholics who support the government not to deform Catholic organizations with alien ideologies.

In El Salvador, a military-dominated government strongly backed by the United States, which sees the Salvadoran civil war as an east-west ideological confrontation, he called for negotiations with the guerrillas as the step to peace, an idea unacceptable to the government. The pope also visited the tomb of assassinated Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero of San Salvador, who was considered a guerrilla sympathizer by government supporters, and publicly praised the archbishop as a "conscientious and venerated pastor."

In both countries the governments stress that religion is on their side. The San-

dominate-provisional government in El Salvador, "In Christianity and revelation, there is no contradiction. The blueprint of El Salvador's program: 'Agrarian reform thanks to God and the government. Armed forces and the people united.'

Indirectly, the pope also kept his distance from the U.S. government by criticizing foreign interference in Central American affairs and the interpretation of the region's political violence as an ideological confrontation. The pope's speeches came at a time when the Reagan administration was asking for increased military aid to El Salvador and came several days after Secretary of State George P. Shultz had criticized "churchmen who want to see Soviet influence in El Salvador improved" through negotiations with the guerrillas.

For the pope, the reasons for the violent upheavals are not ideological conflicts. They are found in the social injustices embedded in the societies and the way for Catholics to solve them is through application of the Church's social teachings.

In El Salvador, a society already in violent conflict, the pope stressed the need for priests and bishops to be agents of reconciliation among the warring parties. In Nicaragua, where Catholics are strongly divided over their political attitudes toward the government, the pope said Church unity cannot be fragile and Catholics must unite behind the hierarchy if the Church is to work effectively toward social justice.

There must be unity to announce the true message of the gospel — according to the norms of tradition and the magisterium

and a unity free of ideological bias or political interests, he said in Nicaragua.

"No Christian, especially those with titles signifying a special consecration to the Church, should become responsible for breaking this unity, acting outside the will of the bishops," added the pope, alluding to five priests who hold high Nicaraguan government posts against the wishes of their bishops.

One of the priests, who tried to kiss the pope's ring at the airport ceremonies when the pope arrived in Nicaragua March 4, was publicly rebuked by the pope who vigorously shook both index fingers at him as if he were scolding a child.

At no time during the trip, however, did the pope change the Church's teachings that it is the responsibility of lay people to become involved in applying Christian social teachings in the political arena.

In El Salvador, the pope was greeted at the airport by President Alvaro Magana, who announced the government's peace plan, which does not include direct negotiations with the guerrillas. The plan, unacceptable to the guerrillas, provides an amnesty for guerrillas who cease fighting to be followed by elections.

The pope quickly distanced himself from the government plan and in a one-sentence addition to his prepared arrival speech, said: "I hope for the peaceful progress of society founded on law and on respect for all in order that all may have the possibility of collaborating in the promotion of the common good in a

climate of true democracy."

Through his one-day visit to El Salvador March 6 the pope stressed meaningful dialogue as the method for ending the fighting and asked priests to be agents of reconciliation.

After the pope left, Salvadoran Church officials defined "dialogue" as preliminary talks between the warring parties to see if there is a basis for serious peace negotiations. Archbishop Arturo Rivera Damas of San Salvador said Church leaders were ready to be mediators in such a process.

The pope's strong call for Church independence from governments, however, does not mean he advocated a Church which becomes part of the partisan political opposition.

In Nicaragua he criticized not only Church organizations which have become part of governmental or Sandinista structures, but also criticized the "charismatic" Church, a movement which strongly opposes the government and which the pope said was trying to set up an alternate Church structure.

In El Salvador, he praised Archbishop Romero, assassinated in 1980 while celebrating Mass, but criticized guerrilla interpretations that the archbishop supported violent revolution.

"In remembering him, I ask that his memory always be respected and that no ideological interests try to use as an instrument his sacrifice as a pastor given to his local Church," said the pope.

## DEATHS

### Sister Mary Emmanuel Johnson, RSM

Mass of the Resurrection was celebrated March 16 for Sister Mary Emmanuel Johnson of the Sisters of Mercy, who died March 14, 1983. Father James Malone, SJ, presided at the final rites in the motherhouse chapel.

Sister Mary Emmanuel was born in Brooklyn in 1896, and taught in Brooklyn Catholic schools for three years before entering the Sisters of Mercy at the age of 30 in 1927. She made her final profession of vows in 1933.

From 1927 to 1936, she taught in diocesan elementary schools, among them, St. Thomas the

Apostle, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Holy Cross, Rochester; Holy Family, Auburn; St. Ann, Hornell; and St. Patrick, Owego.

A heart condition forced her to give up teaching; and from 1936 to 1943, she was laundress and housekeeper at St. James Mercy Hospital in Hornell.

From 1943 until her retirement in 1968, Sister Mary Emmanuel had the role of housekeeper for the congregation's motherhouse on Blossom Road. This ministry included day-to-day housekeeping and setting up and preparing for the annual Sisters' retreats in April and

June for 100-150 retreatants each.

"Almost all the novices in the congregation worked with Sister Emmanuel at one time or another and learned both the care and value of material things and the beauty created by attention to detail. Nothing was wasted — everything was spotless. There was never a better steward of this world's goods than Sister Emmanuel," said Sister Elaine Kolesnik, congregational spokesperson.

Sister Emmanuel is survived by two nephews, Andrew Johnson of Florida and Robert Johnson of Binghamton.

### Sister Elizabeth Marie Dicherico, SSJ

Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Elizabeth Marie Dicherico of the Sisters of St. Joseph was celebrated in the motherhouse chapel March 8 by Msgr. William H. Shannon.

Sister Elizabeth died March 7, 1983, at the age of 89.

A native of Italy, Sister Elizabeth Marie entered the congregation from Watkins

Glen in 1914. She was a graduate of Nazareth Normal School.

She taught in diocesan parochial schools for 55 years. Among those schools are St. Casimir and St. Anthony, Elmira; Holy Apostles, St. Lucy, and St. Anthony of Padua, Rochester.

In 1967, she was feted at a testimonial dinner in Elmira by more than 200 former pupils. Sister Elizabeth Marie retired from active teaching in 1971.

She retired to the congregation's infirmary in 1975 because of ill health.

Sister Justin is survived by one sister, Mrs. George (Eleanor) Geary; and nieces and nephews.

### Sister Justin Schneider, SSJ

Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Justin Schneider of the Sisters of St. Joseph was celebrated in the motherhouse chapel by Father John Mulligan March 9. Sister Justin died March 6, 1983, at age 88.

Sisters of St. Joseph for many years. Among those places St. Agnes Institute and St. Patrick's Convent, Corning.

Sister Justin entered the congregation in 1915 from St. Francis Xavier Parish. She served in convents and institutions staffed by the


## Annual Luncheon Slated

The Catholic Women's Club will sponsor its annual luncheon and fashion show on Saturday, April 23, at Brooklea Country Club.

All clothes to be exhibited will be provided by Suburban Fashions.

Mrs. Theresa Rychman is chairman for the event. She will be assisted by Mrs. Lucille Blum, in charge of arrangements. Commentator for the program will be Mrs. Jeanne Sullivan of Suburban Fashions and Mrs. Virginia Harmon will accompany on the piano.

Proceeds from the event will benefit the CWC Scholarship Fund. Reservations may be made by contacting the CWC office between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. at 271-9173, or by calling Mrs. Rita Kramer at 377-4014.

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