

War, Peace, Bishops and Women

By Msgr. William H. Shannon

In 1962 a group of women dedicated to the cause of peace assembled in Rome. They came from many different countries. Dorothy Day was there from the United States, Hildegarde Goss-Mayr from Austria. There was also a woman from Hiroshima who had brought with her a grim token of the Hiroshima holocaust: a piece of bone from a victim of that tragedy that was encased in glass.

When these women learned that the bishops at the Council were discussing the war-peace issue, they began quietly a 10-day fast. They did not publicize the fast, as they did not wish to appear to be bringing pressure on the bishops. It was only on the last day of their fast that the bishops learned of it. Archbishop Roberts of England announced it to the Council Fathers.

The women very much wished to meet Pope John XXIII. They wanted to express their concerns about the critical issue of war and peace. They also wanted the woman from Hiroshima to have the opportunity of presenting the token of Hiroshima to the Pope. Hildegarde Goss-Mayr was a friend of Cardinal Bea. She contacted him and asked about the possibility of a papal audience for this international group of women. Cardinal Bea was very sympathetic, but said it was too late to arrange for an audience. He said, however, that he would arrange for the women to have a position very close to the Pope at the general audience. He promised further that he would call the Pope and tell him of the presence of this group at the audience.

In his talk at the audience, Pope John expressed his joy at the presence of these women and mentioned that he had been informed that they had an offering to present to him. Following the audience, he went to the place where the women were, spoke briefly to them and received the momento of Hiroshima.

This touching story shows how truly Pope John was a man of peace. He was deeply moved by the fact that a group of women who were concerned about peace-making had come to visit him; and he wanted to see them. He made no inquiries as to whether or not they were Christian (actually they represented various religious traditions). Nor did he make any inquiry into their life-style. It was enough for him that they were concerned to do something about what he saw as one of



About 100 Sisters of Mercy gather with sympathizers at the Seneca Army Depot's troop gate last Monday night for a prayer service.

the truly crucial issues of the day — if not the most crucial of all.

Pope John knew well that if nuclear bombs were dropped, they would not make any distinction between Christian and Buddhist, between believer and non-believer, between men and women. Pope John realized that the struggle against war and the more difficult struggle — the struggle to make peace — was not simply a Christian problem. It was a basic human problem. It could be solved only by all men and women of good will working together to achieve what his successor, Pope Paul VI, would plead for so eloquently when he addressed the United Nations in New York and said: "No more war! No more war!" This has been the persistent message of the popes of modern times. Our present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has spoken so clearly: war must be consigned to the past of human history.

Following the papal initiative, the bishops of the United States in their pastoral letter have spoken a resounding "NO"

to nuclear war. Indeed, so strong was their condemnation of counter-value (the direct killing of civilians) and so weak and sceptical was their guarded acceptance of counter-force (nuclear weapons aimed at military targets) that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the American bishops came very close to saying that war today can scarcely ever be justified.

Though they present the traditional conditions for a "just war," they come to the conclusion that, given the capability of modern weapons, it would be most difficult to believe that these conditions could be met in a war today. Indeed, it is intriguing to note how, in the pastoral, there is very close to a convergence of the "just war" theory and the movement for non-violence. Both come at war from different perspectives. But they converge in their practical conclusion: that today all war must be outlawed. Those who hold to the "just war" theory would arrive at this conclusion because they would see the practical impossibility of the conditions for a "just war"

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BOOKS

The Shocking 'Clemency' of Ray Blanton

Reviewed by Joseph K. McKenna NC News Service

"Marie: A True Story," by Peter Maas. Random House (New York, 1983). 240 pp., \$16.95.

When author Peter Maas first heard about Marie Ragghianti's role in toppling the administration of Gov. Ray Blanton of Tennessee, his reaction was, "My God, I can't believe this."

After finishing Maas' book about Marie, a reader can't help but utter the same words.

Marie Ragghianti was chairman of the Board of Pardon and Paroles of an administration which included six members who were indicted in 1979 for selling pardons and paroles. Because of legal complications no one was convicted in the "clemency for cash scandal."

Despite the personal costs, indeed the dangers, of exposing her bosses, Marie felt she couldn't do anything else. "Even to 'look the other way' when all this dirt is

flying through the air," she wrote in her diary, "would be to prostitute myself and my integrity."

Marie's unwavering loyalty to truth was costly. Finally fired on trumped-up charges in 1977, she had to fight for her reputation in open court. Others' involvement in the worst corruption case in that state's history also proved costly: four men, including a close friend of Marie's, were dead before the probe ended.

Gov. Blanton was ousted by the state legislature three days before his term was to have ended in an effort to stop him from granting clemency to any more convicts. The day before the legislative action he granted clemency to 52 convicts, 23 of whom were serving sentences for murder convictions.

Although he said he took this action to comply with court orders to reduce state prison populations, the governor was under a federal grand jury investigation.

Gov. Blanton was convicted in 1981 on charges of mail fraud, conspiracy and

extortion involving the sale of state liquor licenses in return for a percentage of the profits. In March of this year, the conviction was overturned because, the judge ruled, jurors in the case had been prejudiced by pre-trial publicity.

Maas, best known for his books "Serpico" and "The Valachi Papers," spent 19 months researching and 13 months writing Marie's story. The result is a fast-paced narrative in a punchy New Journalism style.

As a non-fiction work, "Marie" succeeds on three levels — the political, the feminist and, surprisingly for a work from a major publishing house, the religious.

NFP Info

Natural Family Planning Education of Rochester has scheduled information sessions, Sept. 9, at the Main Conference Room, Rochester General Hospital, 7:30 to 9 p.m.; Sept. 12, Kearney Building, St. Mary's Hospital, 7:30 to 9 p.m., and Sept. 30, Lakeside Hospital, Brockport, 7:30 to 9 p.m.

All sessions are free but pre-registration is required by telephoning 464-8705.

Very carefully, Maas lays out for the reader the corruption in the Blanton administration — a corruption as Byzantine as that of Watergate. "Before it was all over," Maas writes, "Tennessee's political power structure would be a shambles. Scandals would erupt everywhere. Reputations would be shattered and indictments returned."

The Blanton administration simply had not counted on the fight of one 34-year-old woman, "essentially alone, who by conventional lights seemed to have everything to lose and nothing to gain" by fighting. In numerous articles, Marie Ragghianti, who also

overcame a broken marriage and many of the problems of raising three children alone, is being touted as a model among contemporary American women.

Yet what is most interesting about "Marie" is the spiritual theme weaved throughout the story. A deeply devout Catholic, she found sustenance in her faith as the Blanton administration slandered and threatened her.

More and more newspaper articles are being written about this courageous woman, and filmmaker Dino DeLaurentis, who made the film version of "Serpico," has reportedly bought the movie rights to the story. But it is Maas' book that will likely be the best remembered version of Marie's story.

(McKenna is a reporter for the Catholic Universe Bulletin in Cleveland.)

DEATHS

Sister Bernadette, DC

Word was received last week of the death, April 27, 1983, of Sister Bernadette Dissett, a member of the Daughters of Charity for 64 years.

Sister Bernadette died at the congregational motherhouse in Emmitsburg, Md.

Born in Rochester, Sister Bernadette was a graduate of St. Bridget's School, Nazareth Academy and St. Mary's School of Nursing.

She entered the Daughters of Charity in 1919.

In later years she studied at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

She is survived by her sister, Mrs. James H. (Agnes) Sentner, and a niece, Bernadette Sentner, both of Rochester.

Sister Bernadette was interred in the Sisters Cemetery in Emmitsburg.

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THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

EDWIN SULEWSKI FUNERAL DIRECTOR
Is the grief of death anything like grief following divorce?

Yes! Many of the feelings are the same because the reactions to a loss are similar. Feelings of anger, guilt, sorrow, depression, jealousy and changes in sleeping, eating and work effectiveness may all be the same. Many times a newly divorced or widowed person thinks his or her feeling of loss will never end. They may be frequently reminded of their former spouses and may feel prolonged anger or guilt. Both groups can be aided by friends who are willing to listen and include the widowed and divorced in their plans. Avoid pat answers that suggest how a person should feel or suggestions that take the topic away from that presented by the bereaved. Convey that you are more interested in your problems than theirs.

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