

Vatican Offers Mediation to U.S., Russia

Rome (NC) -- The Vatican is willing to assist the United States and the Soviet Union resume talks following the Soviet Union's withdrawal from intermediate-range nuclear disarmament negotiations, said Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, papal secretary of state.

Cardinal Casaroli made the offer Nov. 24 after returning from the United States where he met with President Reagan. He told an interviewer on Italian national television that "the Holy See is disposed to make a mediation attempt to encourage dialogue between the superpowers in favor of peace."

The Vatican's role, the cardinal added, "would not be a mediation in the technical sense of the word but a work of bringing (the parties) nearer to overcoming difficulties."

Cardinal Casaroli said he was "certain that all parties (in the nuclear talks) have good will."

"The will for peace exists almost necessarily," he said, "if for no other reason than for the consideration of the disadvantages which the lack of peace signifies for everyone."

The offer does not mean, however, that Cardinal Casaroli is planning a trip to Moscow to parallel his visit to Washington, a Vatican official told NC News Service Nov. 28.

"The initiative would have to come from the other side," said the official, who works daily on Eastern European matters for the Vatican and who asked not to be identified by name.

On Nov. 24, the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano, had lamented the Soviet walkout Nov. 23 from the

talks, calling it a "worrying development" and saying that negotiation is the "only means to put an end to the arms race which threatens peace."

The Vatican official, however, said he did not see the walkout as the irrevocable end of the negotiations and did not know whether direct Vatican intervention was necessary to get talks resumed.

"The suspension of talks was more or less expected by both sides," he said. "There was some face-saving there, a fairly predictable psychological reaction. The countries are in a position where they can still decide to talk."

Cardinal Casaroli said the church wants to be a mediator for peace. This means "making yourself the spokesman to the two parties" and "searching concretely for something which might be possible to do in a determined moment to overcome

the difficulties."

Besides offering to mediate, the Vatican has increasingly pressed its appeal for negotiations. On Oct. 27 Pope John Paul II wrote private letters to President Reagan and Soviet President Yuri Andropov urging negotiations on disarmament. Cardinal Casaroli, told reporters during his trip to the United States that responses from both leaders had been "respectful and positive."

During his Sunday Angelus message Nov. 27, regarding the breakoff of the disarmament talks, the pontiff asked prayers that the negotiations resume.

Vatican mediation in the disarmament stalemate would not be a first for the church under the current pope. The Vatican is currently involved in a mediation, begun in 1979, to resolve a territorial dispute between Argentina and Chile.

Reagan Signs Bill Lifting Vatican Ban

Washington (NC) -- A bill lifting a century-old ban on U.S. diplomatic relations with the Vatican was signed into law by President Reagan Nov. 28.

The measure was signed by Reagan as part of a larger bill authorizing programs for the State Department. The Vatican relations measure had been attached to the bill by Congress earlier this year.

A White House spokesman said Nov. 28 he did not know

whether or how soon the Reagan administration would proceed with the appointment of an ambassador to the Holy See.

The measure does not require appointment of an ambassador and instead merely ends an 1867 prohibition on such an appointment. But Reagan administration officials in the past have voiced support for formal diplomatic ties with the Vatican.

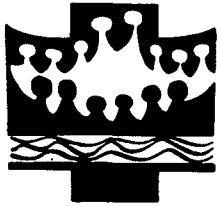
Since he assumed office in 1981 Reagan has had a "personal representative" to the Holy See, William A. Wilson. The Vatican's current apostolic delegate in the United States, who does not hold ambassadorial rank, is Archbishop Pio Laghi.

Other recent U.S. presidents also have appointed personal representatives to the Vatican.

The proposal to end the ban on diplomatic relations with the Vatican was introduced last summer by Rep. Clement J. Zablocki (D-Wis.) and later was attached to the State Department bill by Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) on a voice vote of the Senate.

Congress gave final approval to the entire bill and sent it to Reagan Nov. 18.

Insights In Liturgy



By Father Robert Ring

Advent Hope

Father in heaven, the day draws near when the glory of your Son will make radiant the night of the waiting world. May the lure of greed not impede us from the joy which moves the hearts of those who seek Him. May the darkness not blind us to the vision of wisdom which fills the minds of those who find Him. ("Sacramentary," second Sunday of Advent, Alternative Opening Prayer.)

One of the signs of effective prayer is that it can acknowledge who we are, temptations and weaknesses included, yet point to our dreams, creating a vivid image of the call to wholeness that God has given us. In announcing that the day draws near when Christ will radiate the night of the waiting world, the alternate opening prayer for the second Sunday of Advent does just that. The world is filled with darkness, but we know that Christ our light can and does enlighten it.

All too often, the lure of greed does impede us. Sadly, though Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus, who came to bring the Good News to the poor, to give sight to the blind, to proclaim liberty to captives and to announce a time of favor from the Lord, it becomes in our culture a time to celebrate wealth and greed. How often do we hear one little one say to another, "How much did you get for Christmas?" Consequently, while Advent could best be utilized by divesting ourselves of the unnecessary, of giving of our plenty to those in need, it can so easily become instead a time of acquisition. Buying abundantly for others as and throwing out plenty of hints as to what I want, it happens so easily we fail to notice. We need to pray as a community. May the lure of greed not impede us from the joy which moves the hearts of those who seek

him. Having to be honest that we do succumb to the greed, we pray that its power not overtake us; we have also tasted the joy. We pray that that radiant joy may be the center of our hearts during Advent. The joy of finding Jesus in others, of giving of ourselves and knowing His love.

Darkness too can and often does blind us. As a community of the redeemed, we should be filled with the most profound hope, welling up as a response to the love of God we have experienced in Jesus. Seeing how God touches us each day, bestows on us as individuals and as community the most diverse and unique of gifts -- case for hope, but too often darkness can dampen that hope. If left unchecked, it can extinguish it. In a world filled with violence, daily exposure to injustice around the globe; aware that even our best efforts sometimes fall far short of the mark -- how easy to lose hope.

We pray in Advent for "the vision of wisdom which fills the minds of those who find Him." The prayer says more than meets the eye. We don't pray that such wisdom will be ours, for that belongs to God alone. Rather, we pray for the vision of wisdom. We have tasted it when things suddenly have resolved into clarity for us; tasting it, we pray that this Advent will bring a renewed vision, insight into the wisdom of God.

In short, this opening prayer we address to God during the second Sunday of Advent alerts us to dangers along the way, helps us to acknowledge that we have indeed fallen, yet reminds us of what joy we have also tasted. The words offer us assistance to pray that our Advent be a time of growth in that joy, that wisdom, that knowledge and love of the Savior who came among us that we might taste the fullness of God.

Cable TV Helping Poor

American Cablevision and People's Cable will sponsor their annual Canned Goods/Toys for the Underprivileged program in conjunction with the Salvation Army for the second year.

Anyone wishing to donate toys or canned goods can leave them at cablevision offices (American Cablevision, 21 Gotham St.; American Cablevision of Webster, 1000

Picture Pkwy., or People's Cable, 800 Linden Ave., Pittsford) or the Salvation Army, 60 Liberty Pole Way, Rochester.

A bonus for persons donating toys or canned goods worth \$5 or more is a free cable connection. Current subscribers can upgrade their services with no charge for installation.

Fr. Louis J. Hohman



The Open Window

Do Councils Miss Mark?

Dear Father-Hohman, I have read with interest your description of ideal parish councils but my experience is that not only do they not in reality come close to the ideal, but most of them that I have seen are abysmal failures. In many cases they foment a kind of rivalry and animosity which was not there in the first place. Parish government by a pastor alone may be autocratic but it certainly is efficient and most of the time benign. Why bother with this whole thing?

P.L.

Dear P.L.

Let me answer your last question first. For one thing, Vatican Council II has long since called for participation of the laity in ministry and leadership. While it did not specify the form of that participation, the best thing we have come up with yet is the concept of parish councils. Somewhere down the line that may give way to another form, but that is down the line. Secondly, the principle which says that the wisdom of the many is always as good or better than the wisdom of the one is still valid. That is true especially when the source of that wisdom is the Holy Spirit dwelling in each of us. It does not seem feasible to abandon

ship on parish councils simply because we have some failures. And they are fewer than most people think.

What are the basic causes of the failure of parish councils? After having personally witnessed over 90 councils in the diocese and through an evolution of thought about them, I have come to the conclusion that there are three causes of the failure of parish councils which are the central and most important ones. This week I will simply name them. In subsequent weeks I will address each in some depth.

1. By reason of training and/or temperament, some pastors seem unable to accept the idea of shared responsibility and team leadership.

2. Lack of a spirit of prayerfulness both personal and communal. If the main work of the council is determining God's will for this time and situation then it is essential to be in touch with God.

3. The use of adversary, political, majority vote techniques in arriving at decisions, rather than consensus or discernment of the will of God.

I believe that when any one of these three is not at least being striven for, the likelihood of parish council success is proportionately diminished.

Fr. John Reedy



-Looking for the Lord

The Gift Of Seeing

The past few weeks have been for me a time of unusual highs and lows.

The lows didn't surprise me. Three weeks in a hospital, even with kind, professional care, becomes a drag - all those strange, undignified things being done to you according to a schedule which could make sense only to a computer.

The high moments came unexpectedly, gradually developing into a pattern.

From the beginning, there was a steady flow of visitors: family, members of my religious community and then many friends, people with whom I have worked, people whose lives, joys and sorrows I've shared in the past.

They kept coming, usually for only a brief visit, but the intensity of concern, the things said, told me that there was something more going on than the kind-but-customary expression of sympathy.

I was deeply moved by many of these visits, but also somewhat puzzled. A friendship might go back many years; we had shared efforts, celebrations, griefs. A lasting warmth remains when we get together.

But this didn't seem to explain the obvious intensity of many of these people as they expressed their hopes for me, their concern and love.

Then, in the early morning hours, when I couldn't get to sleep, I suddenly realized what was happening.

These people were a recapitulation of 31 years of my priesthood.

Their visits were an incomplete but representative snapshot album touching all those years of my priestly life.

It has been an unusual

pattern. All this time lived on one campus, in one city. Never assigned to ordinary parish duties. I had come to know most of these people as we worked together on projects we considered important...or because they came to me with particular questions they wanted to discuss.

These people, in their hospital visits, calls, notes, made reference to things I had said or done, things which had slipped from my memory or which I never saw as particularly helpful.

These men and women were and are my friends, but the pattern which emerged during these early morning thoughts made it clear that my presence to them, at special moments in their lives, had been more than the support of a caring friend.

For many, it was hard to formulate, but somehow I had represented God's presence to them through the life of the church.

This pattern of memories revealed an experience most priests have had in isolated incidents. After dealing with a painful, complicated problem in confession or direction, he will see that something he said or the way he said it had been just right for this person at this time.

But he will be left wondering: Where did that approach come from? I never considered it before. It didn't come from teachers or from reading.

And then he realizes, he knows, that his guidance had come from God in a special way. He knows that God had used him, as priest, to touch the life of this person.

I have long recognized and treasured such special moments in which I was convinced that God has used me as an instrument of His presence in these lives which He touches.