

**Editorials**

**Leadership**

The Vatican in general and Pope John Paul II in particular have been providing moral leadership for Catholics in an arena where our own American bishops have not been as forthcoming -- racial bigotry.

The pope continues to advance black Africans into key Vatican positions and has literally gone out of his way to visit places such as Korea and New Guinea to pass along a not-so-subtle message to the rest of the world.

And, coinciding with the latest papal pilgrimage, comes an announcement from Bishop Jan Schotte, vice president of the Vatican Justice and Peace Commission, criticizing the white-minority South African government in a lengthy article marking the 15th anniversary of the Vatican's signing of a United Nations convention on racial discrimination.

The article was published in the official Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, and thus carries the hue of magisterium. The values of racial equality, Bishop Schotte said, are embodied in the life of the church and "inspire the conduct of every truly Christian community."

According to National Catholic News Service, the bishop continued, "A shining example of such behavior comes from those local churches that must confront, often in dramatic ways, systems in which a racist ideology is predominant. Such is the case of South Africa," the bishop said, mincing no words and not worrying about couching his terms.

In that country with its official apartheid, the church is committed, in Bishop Schotte's words, "to proclaiming the Gospel to every ethnic community and to live the good news without artificially and unjustly imposed separations, even when this entails the risk of putting the personal liberty of its ministers in danger."

And these are not merely words; Father Smangaliso Mkhathswa, the first black secretary general of the South African Catholic Bishops Conference, was arrested last October and not released until March after subversion charges against him were ruled groundless during a trial.

If this all sounds remote -- it is not. It is as close as New York State where a bill to end public investment in South Africa is being debated right now.



**Catholics**

Those supporting the bill, including Bishop Emerson Moore, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York City, state that it is time to remove "New York State funds from all corporations or banks whose investments in South Africa help subsidize apartheid. American banks and corporations have over \$6 billion involved in South Africa." Such investment goes a long way to keep South

Africa bigotry alive and implies support for apartheid. Twenty-five other states and 20 cities have already taken action banning such investment and it is time for the Empire State to stand up and be counted. The bill, A3380, is in the Assembly and your local representatives in Albany should be contacted.

Act now; it is a moral issue.

**and Opinions**

**Indulgences Criticized**

**EDITOR:**

After reading Father McNamara's article on indulgences, my hands were shaking, my stomach nauseous and I thought I may burst into tears at any minute. I know this letter won't change anything, but I may feel better if I can vent my frustration.

Although I love the Catholic Church and could never leave the Eucharist, I know that, after reading and studying the word of God, some of the teachings of the Church are not true. The Doctrine of Indulgences is in total opposition to the Scriptures. Jesus suffered and died for my sins so that I wouldn't have to. He said on the cross, "It is finished"

(John 19:30). There is nothing more anybody has to do. (Of course, we must receive His love and respond to it.) Jesus did it all! Redemption was complete! That is why His grace is so amazing, cause it saved a wretch like me!

God promised me in John 3:16 eternal life. I know the Church is powerful, but can it break a promise from almighty God? Can a trip to the Holy Land bring me closer to God than what Jesus did for me? If some poor person doesn't have the \$2,000 to make a Holy Year pilgrimage, will he have to suffer a longer "temporal punishment?" How absurd! It's not only absurd, it's blasphemous! It is saying that what my Jesus did for me wasn't enough! In Galatians 2:21; St. Paul says, "I do not set aside the grace of

God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, then Christ died for nothing." In Hosea 6:6, God says to you and me, "I don't want your sacrifices, I want your love: I don't want your offerings, I want you to know me."

A trip to the Holy Land, saying the rosary, making a three-day retreat, making the stations of the cross, etc., would be a beautiful blessing to you, but they can't earn you something you already possess. It's a free gift! (Romans 5:15). Alleluia!

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**Editor's Note:** The Church teaches that there is a purgatory and a hell. And as Father McNamara pointed out, indulgences are only one way to atone for our sins before we leave this life. And the plenary indulgence can be gained in many ways other than a trip to Rome which was only a Holy Year opportunity. Incidentally, even during the Holy Year, the plenary indulgence could be gained by visits to local churches. And, of course, there are many ways to gain it at any time.

**Peace Achieved Only by Prayer**

**EDITOR:**

My caveat to both politicians and churchmen, so preoccupied with the very real danger of annihilation by nuclear holocaust is to note the following facts:

If a nuclear holocaust is

unleashed it will clearly be a consequence of sin, which both Scripture (St. James 4:1) and Our Lady of Fatima declare to be the cause of war.

If it is true that a nuclear holocaust would result in unprecedented destruction of both life and treasure, it is no less true that today the world is weighed down by a greater burden of sin than ever before. Today we reckon not only with personal sins but also with the social and structural sins deriving from moral permissivism which in defiance of the laws of God have inscribed a "right" to kill unborn children in the very constitutions of states. This is true not only of all Communist states but also of most democratic states.

If one believes in God, it must surely be obvious since wars are a consequence of and a punishment for sin, that the continued existence of legalized abortion is much more likely to provoke God's wrath and to unleash a nuclear chastisement than the mere number and variety of missiles in the armories of the super-powers.

This being so, it is obvious to anyone who believes in God and takes Scripture seriously that if a nuclear holocaust is to be averted, this will be achieved only by prayer, penance and a complete change of heart.

In his message for the World Day of Peace (1/1/84), the Holy Father made this clear when he said, "Unless man has a true change of heart, a re-establishment of peace can



**"WHO DECIDED IT WOULD BE A NEAT THING FOR THE WHOLE BOYS' CHOIR?"**

only be brief and illusory..." Pope John Paul was merely reminding us of what Our Lord had already told us... "Unless you shall do penance you shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3)

It therefore follows that if we would avert the threatening nuclear chastisement, and at the very least save our immortal souls should the chastisement come, man must have a change of heart. This, in turn, means that all Churchmen who are really concerned with peace and the salvation of souls must make it their first priority to call on their flocks to pray and do

penance to atone for the sins of the contemporary world and to effect its conversion. Without a "true change of heart," it is futile to think in terms of progress towards disarmament and peace.

Be it noted, that the basic message of Our Lady of Fatima was given to three illiterate peasant children in 1917, before the Bolshevik Revolution, at a time when Kerensky's Russia was still being hailed as the most democratic state in the world!

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**Guidelines**

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writer's signature, full address and telephone number. They should be sent to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union S., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, no longer than 1 1/2 pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and the letters will reflect the writer's own style.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent elsewhere. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.