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tion — not annihilation, not incineration, but transformation.

When the prophets envisioned God's final triumph over evil, they did so in terms of just such a transformation of the universe. "Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth. The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind" (Isaiah 65:17).

Continuing in this tradition, the New Testament author of Revelation gave this imaginative picture of the eternal city of God. "Then I saw new heavens and a new earth. The former heavens and the former earth had passed away and the sea was no longer. I also saw a new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband" (21:1-2).

If the author wrote of the passing of the former universe, it was

in terms of a transformation. This transformation meant the elimination of all evil.

It is toward a glorious destiny that we, under God, are to guide our universe. St. Paul expressed the idea in this memorable passage: "I consider the sufferings of the present to be as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed in us. Indeed, the whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:18-20).

In a very real sense, the glorification of Jesus' body in the resurrection is not only the model of our ultimate glorification but the pattern of the final transformation of the whole universe.

(Father Castelot teaches at St. John's Seminary, Plymouth, Mich.)

Reflections on the pastoral

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peace movement said she appreciated the process the bishops went through. "I felt less alone, that there were leaders in the church who felt as I did. It gave me hope."

A priest said he had been strongly affected by the testimony of medical experts on the effects of nuclear weapons. "Anything that destroys like that," he said, "has got to have some responsibility attached to it. That's a moral issue."

"I don't think my kids have paid much attention to it," said one father. But when I spoke with his daughter, the president of our teen club, she told me the pastoral is being discussed in her high school religion classes. "It's a big thing there."

The person who supported the bishops' pastoral most strongly was a former Vietnam military officer. "When you create weapons with that much devastation, you're talking about a lot of death.

"I visited Hiroshima in 1951," he continued. "That one bomb wiped out family after family

after family. I thought then, what a waste — wasting human beings."

He added: "I've seen death — and I'm not sure we need to continue to learn how to kill people."

What struck me as I spoke with these people was how deeply concerned they are. And I was struck by their mostly positive feelings toward the pastoral. I had deliberately sought to interview a cross section of parishioners, including several people who a year ago had opposed the bishops getting involved in this pastoral.

Above all I was struck by a sense of frustration. People know something has to be done for peace, but they don't know what to do. That bothers them.

But as the bishops point out in the pastoral, faith gives hope and hope gives the "capacity to live with danger without being overwhelmed by it."

(Kauffman is a free-lance writer in Washington, D.C.)

FOOD...

...for thought

The threat of an industrial plant closing hung over a Midwestern city two years ago. At that time, a couple visiting from another city were struck by a homily they heard during Mass.

The priest spoke of the plant, a major source of jobs in the community. He pointed to the effects the plant's closing could have on individuals who worked in the plant, on families, on the total community.

The homilist focused the attention of the entire congregation on the lives of the people of that city — their need for hope, their current anxiety.

The Christian community is directly concerned about these people who need hope, the priest suggested. The Christian community in that city was concerned that people's value and dignity not be lost from view as a large corporation worked toward a decision that would affect so many jobholders.

The homily that Sunday was just one more reminder of the scope of Christian concerns — concerns which stretch outward into the lives of people: to the rights of the unborn; to the jobless, the hungry; to those who suffer discrimination; to those fearful of what a modern war fought with the most powerful modern weapons could mean.

Recognition of the value of human life is what underlies these concerns of the church.

In their 1983 pastoral letter on war and peace, the U.S. bishops put it this way: "At the center of the church's teaching on peace and at the center of all Catholic social teaching, are the transcendence of God and the dignity of the human person. The human person is the clearest reflection of God's presence in the world; all of the church's work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person."

For the bishops, decisions about nuclear weapons rank among the most pressing moral questions. "While these decisions have obvious military and political aspects, they involve fundamental moral choices," the bishops stated.

But it is not a matter of extending the scope of church concerns into purely political areas for purely political reasons. The content and context of Christian peacemaking is not set by a political agenda or by an ideological program, said the bishops.

Christians, they added, are "called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment, but by our Lord Jesus."

...for discussion

1. Why do you think the war and peace debate has captured the attention of so many people in the past few years?

2. What does the word "peace" mean to you?

3. What practical steps can you take to become a peacemaker — for example, at home or in society at large?

4. Father James Bacik, interviewed by Katharine Bird, thinks some people may avoid thinking about the issue of nuclear war because it is so painful. Do you agree? Is it a painful issue?

5. The issues of war and peace, abortion, racism and hunger have been called moral issues by church leaders. What makes these issues moral issues?

SECOND HELPINGS

"Talking to Children About Nuclear War" is a new book by William Van Ornum and Mary Wicker Van Ornum. The authors present the book "for adults and young people who want to talk with each other about nuclear war but don't know how." The threat of nuclear war evokes strong feelings in people — including "fear, anger, cynicism, bewilderment, denial, despair." Often, the book indicates, adults are surprised to learn that their children already are very aware of living in a nuclear age. The book helps adults overcome their reluctance to discuss modern warfare with children. "We believe that talking to children about nuclear war is a responsibility that should not be left to others," say the authors. (Continuum Publishing Co., 370 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017. Hardback, \$12.95; Paperback, \$7.95.)