

# Tie Religious Freedom To Diplomacy: Hehir

By Jerry Filteau

Washington (NC) — U.S. diplomacy in Eastern Europe should tie better relations to religious freedom and human rights in those countries, Father J. Bryan Hehir has told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The United States should reassess its present relations with East Germany, Hungary and Poland in light of that principle and recent trends, he said.

Father Hehir, U.S. Catholic Conference secretary for social development and world peace, argued in written testimony for the USCC that there is a "reciprocal relationship" between religious freedom or its suppression and the exercise of other human rights or their denial.

Father Hehir will be the keynote speaker for "Facing the Challenge of Peace: Themes of Hope," a diocesan conference on the U.S. bishops' 1983 pastoral letter, Sept. 28 and 29 at Our Lady of Mercy High School on Blossom Road in Rochester.

"To exercise the right of religious liberty the person must also be guaranteed the right of freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and freedom of association," he said.

The testimony, delivered to the Senate committee July 20, was released by the USCC July 24.

Father Hehir outlined the current situation in three Eastern countries -- Lithuania, Czechoslovakia

and Poland -- to illustrate the principle.

He also warned against taking constitutional or legal guarantees at face value, citing Lithuania as a clear case where apparent legal protections are turned into instruments for suppressing rights.

Father Hehir cited Czechoslovakia as "the worst in all the East European countries" in church-state relations. He said that a "blatant, vigorous and persistent" campaign against the church there includes not only denial of bishops, priests and Religious to minister to Catholics, but also discrimination against believers in education and job opportunities.

The relative freedom of the church in Poland stems from its historic role as a defender of the people's rights and at the same time allows it to be one of the chief forces in the country behind the reassertion of those rights against state infringement, he said.

The USCC spokesman said religious freedom stands uniquely among human rights as a denial that totalitarian states have a right to "claim absolute control of a person's life."

This is so because of the unique object of religious freedom, "a person's relationship with God, or to put it another way, the person's quest for religious truth," he said.

The priest also emphasized that religious freedom cannot be reduced to a private or individual sense of "freedom

of conscience," but must, by its nature, have a social dimension. "The search for religious truth and the expression of faith calls for a community of faith," he said.

This necessary right of free exercise of faith in society, in turn, requires freedom of religious association, freedom of religious expression and ecclesial freedom, he said. He called ecclesial freedom, or the right of churches to exercise their proper roles without legal or political coercion, "the precise category at stake in many church-state conflicts in the world today."

In his 18-page testimony Father Hehir cited numerous examples -- from the denial of religious education to youth to the arrests of priests and restrictions on their movements and actions -- to indicate the extent to which Lithuania and Czechoslovakia deny religious liberty and in the process deny other human rights, such as those of conscience, free expression and free association.

By contrast, he said, the Polish church has been able to use the relative freedom of religion in that country "to be a voice raised in defense of the human person.... The human rights role of the church (in Poland) is one of the reasons why the state has had to restrain much of the kind of crude harassment of priests and bishops, believers and churchgoers, seminarians and religious orders that goes on in Lithuania and Czechoslovakia and concentrate on preventing the church from exercising its duty to teach and defend Christian principles of social justice and political liberty."

Father Hehir said internal liberalization by East Germany and Hungary and moves toward better trade and other relations with the



FATHER HEHIR

West by those countries "point to the desirability of a new assessment of U.S. policy vis-a-vis these countries."

He said that "policy toward Czechoslovakia should remain unchanged, but Poland's recent amnesty for political prisoners may be grounds for lifting U.S. economic sanctions imposed when Poland declared martial law."

"In all such initiatives," he said, "our diplomacy should make it clear that continued improvement in relations will depend in part on the continuation of liberalizing actions in regard to religious liberty and human rights."

## Host Families Needed

The Youth Exchange Service (YES) announced that opportunities are still available for American families across the United States to host teenage students from Europe, the Orient or Latin America for the 1984-85 school year.

The 15 to 18 year old students are carefully screened, have excellent medical insurance and bring their own spending money.

For further information contact Youth Exchange Service, World Trade Center, 350 South Figueroa St., Los Angeles, Calif., 90071, or call 1-800-848-2121.

## Play Scheduled At Auriesville

Auriesville -- "New Star of the New World," a three-act play dealing with the life of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, will be staged after the 7:30 p.m. Mass, Saturday, Sept. 1 in the Shrine Coliseum here.

Kathy Bradish, a member of the Wolf Clan of the Mohawk Tribe, wrote the play, has directed it in Western New York, and will direct it during Kateri Weekend at the Martyrs Shrine, just off the State Thruway.

Young members of the St. Timothy's parish Religious

Education class in Tonawanda will take the parts of the 12 characters involved. They have raised funds for a bus to bring themselves and their friends to the shrine.

All lights, sound system, props, etc., will be brought to the scene by the cast under the management of St. Timothy's pastor, Father John Kean.

No admission will be charged; further information is available from the league office, (518) 853-3153.

## Woman Named

Continued from Page 1. Church and on feminine issues in society and the Church.

The bishops decided to write the pastoral letter on women in society and in the church during their general meeting last November.

The vote to go ahead with the project was nearly unanimous, despite objections to the writing of a pastoral on women by an all-male group of bishops.

Supporters of the project said that the issues the letter will address are significant pastoral concerns which are the responsibility of the bishops to deal with as pastors and teachers of the church. Bishop Imesch said consulta-

tion with women would be an essential part of the drafting process.

Besides Bishops Imesch and Clark, members of the drafting committee for the pastoral are Bishop Thomas J. Grady of Orlando, Fla., Auxiliary Bishop Alfred C. Hughes of Boston, Auxiliary Bishop William Levada of Los Angeles and Auxiliary Bishop Amedee W. Proulx of Portland, Maine.

According to the Aug. 14 announcement, the bishops' committees on doctrine and on pastoral research and practices are to cooperate in preparing the pastoral, and other specialists are to be consulted in developing it.

## Catholic Vote

Continued from Page 1. more consideration to the bishops' positions on the full range of public policy issues the bishops have addressed.

A more sustained public debate over the relation of religion to politics could be useful, but might better be carried out in a non-election year.

As head of the USCC, the bishops' national public action agency, Bishop Malone issued the Aug. 9 statement on politics and religion, supplementing the USCC's

earlier election-year statement on political issues currently facing the country.

### Deadline

The Courier-Journal deadline for copy is noon on Thursday preceding Wednesday publication.



### Renewal

The Rev. Mr. Joseph Rigliano, above, deacon intern at St. Amelia's parish in Buffalo, speaks on "Who Is the Church?" at the eighth annual eight-day Renewal Retreat at St. Patrick's in Victor. As he was preparing to enter the seminary in August 1980, Mr. Rigliano served on the team that first brought the renewal program from Buffalo to Victor. The 13 adults and 26 teenagers who made the Aug. 5-12 renewal raised the total number of participants to more than 400. Mr. Rigliano's sister, Nancy Johnstone, also has been instrumental in the Victor program. Below, As Father Anthony Valente looks on, Brian Pancoast, backed by the parish folk group, leads participants in singing "On Eagle's Wings" as the offertory song.



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