

Pax Christi Assesses U.S. Bishops' Peace Letter Impact No Progress Seen on Nuclear Arms Control

San Antonio, Texas (NC) — Conditions for establishing peace set by the U.S. bishops in their 1983 pastoral letter on war and peace "are not being met" by the current U.S. government, according to a statement by Pax Christi USA.

2 Bishops Denounce Nuclear Armageddon

Washington (NC) — Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit and Bishop Leroy Matthesen of Amarillo, Texas, were among the first signers of a petition denouncing Armageddon ideology applied to nuclear weapons use.

The two bishops signed the "statement of religious concern" at a Pax Christi conference in San Antonio, Texas, the weekend of Oct. 6. The statement was prepared by the Christic Institute, a Washington-based religious policy center.

The statement reads: "We join with religious leaders throughout our country to denounce the ideology of Armageddon as a perversion of Holy Scripture and a danger to the peace and security of our Republic."

"We respectfully urge the presidential candidates of both parties to repudiate any association with the extremist worldview of nuclear Armageddon and to explain clearly their differences with this ideology in regard to the question of nuclear war."

The Christic Institute defined Armageddon ideology as the belief that certain world events have signaled the end of the world and that nuclear warfare beginning the end-times has been foretold in the Bible and is therefore inevitable.

The statement was written by the Christic Institute after consultation with religious leaders. Bishops Gumbleton and Matthesen signed the petition along with Jim Wallis, editor of Sojourners magazine, at a Pax Christi conference attended by Christic

Institute cofounder Jesuit Father William Davis. Most of the petitions were mailed by Oct. 9, and the Christic Institute sought responses by Oct. 17.

The statement concludes: "We call upon all men and women of faith to join us in reaffirming the fundamentals of our religious traditions. God is revealed in Holy Scripture as creator, not as destroyer. He summons the nations to reconciliation, not to ideological hatred."

Bishop Matthesen said Armageddon ideology is a "very dangerous theology" since "it's really saying that God wills a nuclear conflagration."

He said he is especially concerned because the Religious Right which endorses this ideology is associated with the Reagan administration.

Bishop Gumbleton said Armageddon ideology "sets forth very clearly what is, I think, a gross misrepresentation of Scriptures."

He said the vengeful God portrayed by these fundamentalists "is not the God I know of Scriptures."

Bishop Gumbleton added that the ideology sets forth "dangerous religious ideas" because it "justifies a nation like ours to use nuclear weapons."

The Christic Institute has linked the president with this Armageddon ideology, saying Reagan has mentioned Armageddon several times and has said that it might happen in this generation.

The statement added there "is no reasonable basis to assume" that present policy-makers have "any intent" to meet those conditions.

The 13-page statement, "The Challenge of Peace: Its Promise and Impact, An Assessment," was released by the U.S. branch of the international Catholic peace movement at its 11th annual national assembly in San Antonio, Oct. 5-6.

The document said the 1983 pastoral established two conditions for the possession of nuclear weapons: they could be justified only in reasonable numbers and only as a tool for negotiations.

"It is the judgment of this assessment that these conditions are not being met," the statement said.

"Up to the present time progress toward the control and elimination of nuclear weapons has proven an illusory hope, and there is no reasonable basis to assume, given the record between May 1983 (the date of the bishops' pastoral) and the present, that there is any likelihood it will be fulfilled; or, for that matter, that there is any intent on the part of our present policy-makers to do so," the statement said.

The statement, while not naming President Reagan, sharply criticized the current administration for what the statement said was its continuation of the arms race which

the bishops had condemned in their letter.

Despite some government assurances, according to the statement, "there is every indication that our present and continuing policy objective is to retain or recapture the nuclear superiority and the nuclear war-making capability the bishops specifically rejected as being a morally unacceptable objective."

The statement also said Congress was partly at fault for approving most of the administration's defense spending requests.

While the statement did not endorse any political candidate, it called voters to "do everything possible" to prevent nuclear destruction.

"This means changing the policies — and, if need be, personnel — responsible for the atmosphere of increasing tension and animosity."

"These policies must be replaced by serious and sincere decisions to end our continuing escalation of the production and deployment of new weapons, our quest for nuclear superiority and the capability to wage nuclear warfare," it said.

The statement criticized the administration for not opening arms talks with other nations, especially the Soviet Union. But there, it said, the United States is not at fault alone.

"We do not overlook the failures and shortcomings of the Soviet Union and other nations which have contributed to the steadily worsening world situation."

"Even so, it is fair to say that the major burden of failure lies with our nation, especially with the persons charged with responsibility for negotiations and the manner in which negotiations have been conducted."

Al Smith Dinner: Cheers for Reagan, Jeers for Mondale

New York (NC) — The 1984 Al Smith Dinner was President Reagan's night.

A standing ovation for him by the largest crowd in the 39-year history of the annual fund-raising event was loud and long.

So was the booing for his Democratic opponent Walter Mondale when Mondale's letter of withdrawal from the Oct. 18 event was read.

The annual Smith dinner, honoring the former New York governor and 1928 Democratic presidential nominee, was established by Cardinal Francis Spellman in 1945 to raise hospital charity funds. Prominent politicians are asked to speak, and the dinner has become a highly prestigious New York political event.

New York Archbishop John J. O'Connor announced that this year's attendance of 2,000 was not only the largest ever, requiring use of two overflow rooms where diners watched proceedings by closed circuit television, but according to Waldorf-Astoria Hotel officials the largest "private" dinner ever held there.

Reagan and Mondale were invited to speak. But on Oct. 12, Archbishop O'Connor received Mondale's letter stating the Democratic candidate regretfully would miss the dinner in order to study for the Oct. 21 debate with Reagan.

Archbishop O'Connor, expressing disappointment, avoided criticizing Mondale. But the dinner audience was not as ready to "understand," and general booing broke out when the letter was read.

Although Mondale did not personally ask to be represented by a substitute, William Hennessy, state Democratic chairman, asked if Mondale's running mate, Rep. Geraldine Ferraro, D.-N.Y., could attend instead. Board members of the Smith Foundation unanimously voted no.

Refusal to accept Ms. Ferraro drew some criticism. Dinner officials responded that traditionally only presidential candidates are invited, although Vice President Spiro Agnew represented President Richard Nixon in 1972. But a Smith Foundation director said the Agnew appearance had been arranged in advance and had not come up as a last-minute substitution.

Drive a Success

The Aquinas Magazine Drive was termed a success by the school this year, with students selling more than \$62,000 in magazine subscriptions.

COURIER-JOURNAL

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Vol. 96, No. 5 October 24, 1984

Courier-Journal (USPS 135-580)
Published weekly except week after July 4 and Christmas, by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy 35¢. 1 year subscription in U.S. \$15. Canada and Foreign \$20. Offices: 114 South Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607, (716) 454-7050. Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, N.Y. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

October is National Family Sexuality Education Month

By Anne Wegman

October has been established as the month to recognize the role of the family in the sexuality education of their children.

In 1983, "Educational Guidance in Human Love" was released by the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education. It states, "Education in the first place is the duty of the family which 'is the school of richest humanity.' It is, in fact, the best environment to accomplish the obligation of securing a gradual education in the sexual life...The affection and reciprocal trust which exist in the family are necessary for the harmonious and balanced development of the child right from birth. So that the affective natural bonds which unite parents to children be positive in the highest degree, parents are in pride of place in realizing a peaceful sexual balance and in establishing a relationship of trust and of dialogue with their children in a manner appropriate to their age and development...Christian parents must know that their examples represent the most valid contribution in the education of their children."

Departments, agencies and affiliates of the diocese are continually working to support, nurture and supplement families in this awesome task.

How then, you might ask, does the diocese support families in this responsibility?

In the Fall of 1983, Bishop Matthew H. Clark established a Task Force on Adolescent Sexuality in an effort to build a link in services offered across the diocese. The task force sought to find shortages in programming, address the particular needs of adolescence and to grapple with the diocesan response to the continued need for sexuality services and programming.

- The Office of Family Life offers marriage enrichment, marriage preparation, special programs on request for parents, and ministry to the divorced and separated. These programs focus on building the couple's relationship and affirm individuals. A goal is to enable participants to grow in their own sexuality and integration, giving witness to a loving God in and through family life, thus enabling Christian parents to be examples to their children.

- The General Education Department designed and implemented, in the 1960s, one of the country's earliest sexuality education curricula within the Catholic schools. It has since been updated and a new handbook to assist parents is in the development stages.

- Catholic Family Center has a long-standing history of adoption service. An adolescent pregnancy program, marriage counseling, and service to the Hispanic community with adolescent sexuality services are among the other areas of programming.

- The Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry (FLOSM) received a grant in 1983, and again in 1984, to work with single mothers. Support is offered to women by providing basic needs including emotional support, parenting skills and referral for counseling, employment and education development. FLOSM has also sponsored workshops to

increase community awareness of the growing population and needs of single mothers.

- Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry (STOSM) continues to network and refer to services in the broader Southern Tier community. Educational programs, films and counseling are also available. A new national pilot grant was awarded for primary prevention of adolescent pregnancy in which family educational programs will be the focus.

- The Human Life Commission houses information, pamphlets and books. Films and speakers are available, particularly on the topic of abortion. Among projects sponsored by the Human Life Commission is the Puzzle Project, a reconciliation/counseling service for women and men experiencing tensions regarding their personal involvement with abortion. Many parishes are networked to the commission through their Human Life representatives.

- Natural Family Planning of both Rochester and the Southern Tier offer instruction in the use of the Natural Family Planning method. Also, Rochester has fertility awareness sessions for women.

- Melita House is a residential facility for unwed pregnant women. It is an outreach ministry of the Sisters of Mercy.

- The Office of Youth Ministry offers programs to youths and parents dealing with sexuality topics. Resources, material and consultation are available to assist in the development and implementation of sexuality programs. Family Retreats/Christian Family Renewal is also offered through the Youth Ministry Office.

- Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) offers many workshops to groups of youths and adults. Among these are programs on relationships, self esteem, communication and families in crisis.

These are just some of the many services and programs offered through diocesan affiliated agencies, programs and departments. All seek to share in the mission of the Church and collaborate with families as they pass Catholic values from one generation to another. Thus, addressing "the difficulties which sex education often encounters within the bosom of the family solicit a major commitment on the part of the Christian community. In this field the Catholic school, the parish and the ecclesial institutions are called to collaborate with the family" (1983, "Educational Guidance in Human Love").

While many of these services assist families both directly and indirectly, gaps continue to exist. So, a month set apart with an educational theme can bring attention to the responsibilities of family, shared by the faith community. The work of the Church continues as "the congregation for Catholic education turns to the episcopal conferences so that they promote the union of parents, of the Christian communities and of educators for convergent action in such an important sector for the future of young people and the good of society" (1983, "Educational Guidance in Human Love").

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