

Catholics And the U.S. System

Continued from Page 1.
repudiates. Among these, the document:

- Insists on a "major new policy commitment to achieve full employment," declaring that "current levels of unemployment... are morally unjustified" and that "the generation of new jobs to provide work for all who seek it is the number one task facing the domestic economy of the United States today."

- Calls for a fundamental redistribution of wealth in the country to correct "gross inequalities" that are "morally unjustifiable," notably through a reversal of the direction of the Reagan tax law changes.

- Urges a new battle against poverty as "an imperative of the highest priority" and demands "major reform" in the "woefully inadequate" public welfare system.

- Rejects virtually all major changes that the Reagan administration has injected into U.S. foreign aid policy in the past four years. It calls those policy shifts a "gross distortion" which moves U.S. policy directly away from rather than toward international economic justice.

Among far-reaching programs for social justice, the only comparable precedent in American Catholic history is the 1919 "Bishops' Program of Social Reconstruction." That document called for then-nonexistent national policies to end child labor, to establish a minimum living wage for all workers, and to create national illness, disability, unemployment and old age security systems -- programs which have since become an integral part of the American social fabric.

The new draft is the product of nearly four years of work by a five-bishop committee headed by Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee. It is, however, only the first of three rounds of writing and revision. The nation's bishops are to debate and vote on a final document in November 1985.

Release of the first draft was delayed until after the recent national elections because of the potential for political misuse of it in the campaigns.

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Bishop Matthew H. Clark
President

Anthony J. Costello
Publisher &
General Manager

Carmen J. Viglucci
Editor

Rev. Louis J. Hohman
Episcopal Advisor

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The document is divided into two major parts:

- "Biblical and Theological Foundations," divided into two chapters, spells out the Christian understanding of economic life and the ethical norms which Catholic social teaching has developed out of that understanding.

- "Policy Applications," divided into five chapters, seeks to apply the ethical norms to specific issues facing the United States today -- employment, poverty, food and agriculture, collaborative economic planning, and the impact of U.S. policy on the world economy.

The topic of food and agriculture was added to the project for the pastoral only recently. That chapter appears only as a heading in the first draft, with a promise that the full chapter will appear in the second draft, which is scheduled for completion next spring.

Contrary to fears expressed beforehand by some leading conservative voices -- notably Fortune and Business Week -- the pastoral draft does not repudiate or sharply criticize capitalism itself as an economic system.

Rather, it praises many of the accomplishments of the U.S. economy and the role investors and owners play in economic life, but within that framework enunciates significant changes that it says are needed to make the whole political-economic system work more justly for all.

On employment, it says the role of private entrepreneurs in job creation is of primary importance, but it also insists on a strong role by local, state and national government and by unions in promoting further job creation and in achieving a national policy goal of "full employment."

On the central ethical principles concerning work, the draft says, "A job with adequate pay should be available to all who seek one. This right protects the freedom and obligation of all to participate in the economic life of society.... Employment is crucial to self-realization for the worker and to the fulfillment of material needs. It also forms the first line of defense against poverty."

Liturgy Column

Preparation of the column, "Insights in Liturgy," was unavoidably delayed past press-time this week. The column, prepared by the diocesan Liturgy Office, will resume next week.

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American Lay Commission:

'What doth it profit a nation to redistribute scarcity? The first systematic task is to produce abundance'

Washington (NC) -- A group of prominent lay Catholics has called the "free market profit system" the most effective economic system -- and therefore ultimately the most moral one -- to resolve national and global problems of poverty, unemployment, economic planning and world trade and development.

That free market system best meets the demands of the Catholic Church's social justice teaching, said the Lay Commission on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy in a 120-page letter released Nov. 6.

"Capitalism," it said, "seems to be a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for political and civil liberties and also for economic development." And economic development, it said, offers the only real basis for greater social justice.

"What doth it profit a nation to redistribute scarcity? The first systemic task is to produce abundance," the Catholic lay group declared.

"In summary, we believe that the new principles of political economy forged in the American experiment offer rich materials for critical reflection in Catholic social thought," the group said.

It roundly attacked centralized statist and socialist governments. Not only do they tend to suppress the civil freedoms valued by Americans and defended in church teaching, but they also tend to produce economic stagnation, reducing the access of their citizens to the material goods required to meet their economic needs, the commission said.

The Lay Commission on

Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy was set up by former U.S. Treasury Secretary William E. Simon and neo-conservative theologian Michael Novak. It spent about \$100,000 in hearing testimony and developing its findings over the past six months.

It said it was presenting its work as an independent lay Catholic contribution to the public dialogue occasioned by a decision of the U.S. Catholic bishops to issue a national pastoral letter on Catholic social teaching and the American economy.

The commission released its letter, titled "Toward the Future," in New York and Washington as voting booths across the nation were closing Nov. 6. The group had decided to wait until after the elections to avoid any appearance of seeking to influence them, but at the same time decided to release its findings before the first draft of the bishops' pastoral to avoid appearing as a reaction to it.

The lay commission argued that this system, despite its faults, has empirically showed itself as the best able to liberate the human race from the "two ancient enemies" of "tyranny and poverty."

The bishops' pastoral letter was slated to focus on five contemporary issues -- poverty, unemployment and job creation, international economic relations, economic planning, and food and agriculture -- as key questions illustrating the demands of morality on the American social order.

The lay commission did not touch upon food and agriculture as a separate topic, but it treated the other

four and added the family as another topic.

The bishops' letter was expected to spell out specific economic rights -- such as adequate food, shelter, health care, employment and old-age security -- as fundamental human rights. It was expected to articulate the duties that fulfillment of these rights imposes on individuals and the various sectors of society, with particular attention to how U.S. society should guarantee those rights for the poor and the weak.

The lay letter took a significantly different tack. It emphasized the importance of promoting a political-economic system that does the most to create jobs and to increase the amount of goods available to fulfill human needs.

It did not, however, spell out its own recommendations for assuring the protection of economic rights for those who fall outside that system for reasons of age, disability, or other circumstances.

It affirmed the basic rights of all persons to such necessities but stopped short of backing specific solutions, saying that people of good will differ on the best ways to resolve such problems.

At the end of a lengthy section on poverty and welfare, for example, the letter said: "The goal for all remains the same: the poor should be uplifted to dignity and self-reliance; poverty should be ended. Yet creative thinking about how actually to help the poor, without making matters worse, is in short supply."

"Thus, partisans of different points of view have produced a variety of concrete proposals.... Re-

cognizing broad differences of opinion among our fellow Catholics and other citizens, we value a pluralism of approaches, with partisans of each respecting those who disagree, all measuring their own progress by the commonly shared goal."

The letter sharply challenged excessive reliance on government action to fight poverty, commenting: "Poverty is not primarily a problem for the state. It is a personal and community problem which each of us and all our appropriate associations, not only the state, ought to address."

It similarly challenged reliance on the government in other areas, rejecting protectionist policies in international trade, questioning the ability of central governments to do effective economic planning, and arguing that excessive government regulation is among the chief causes of unemployment and economic stagnation.

Although the document clearly upheld the American political economy as a primary model, it acknowledged a legitimate pluralism of cultures around the world.

Simon, who chaired the commission, said in a statement accompanying release of the document, "We have resisted the idea that Christianity can be identified with a particular political system or set of economic or social policies."

"However," he added, "we do believe that Catholic social teaching and the American experience have a great deal in common.... Our success as a nation is not an accident, but the result of the wise ordering of our institutions."

Cardinal Ratzinger of Vatican:

'We see a world where wealth is the measure of everything, where values proposed by Catholicism are considered scandalous'

Milan, Italy (NC) -- Many U.S. Catholics choose to dissent from the church's teaching authority rather than dissent from the secular values promoted by their wealthy nation, said Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

"Regarding North America we see a world where wealth is the measure of everything and where the values and lifestyles proposed by Catholicism are considered, more than ever, as scandalous," the cardinal said in a wide-ranging interview with Jesus, a Catholic monthly magazine published in Milan.

The cardinal also painted a bleak picture of the post-Vatican II church worldwide, saying many Catholics have used Vatican II "to pass from self-criticism to self-destruction" of Catholic unity.

"We expected a new enthusiasm and many people have ended up discouraged and bored. We expected a leap forward and instead we find ourselves faced with a progressive process of decadence which has developed in large measure under the slogan of a return to the council..." he was quoted as saying.

In the U.S., "the morality of the church is lived as if it

were a remote, strange body of thought which contrasts not only with the concrete habits of life, but also with the base model of thought," he said.

Many U.S. moralists "believe they are forced to choose between dissent from society or dissent from the magisterium," the cardinal said, and many select dissent from the magisterium.

They adopt "a commitment to a secular ethic which ends up unhinging men and women from their profound nature, leading them to a new slavery in the name of liberating them," he said.

Cardinal Ratzinger was not quoted as naming any U.S. church people in his criticism. The quotes on the U.S. were part of a lengthy interview he gave between Aug. 15 and Aug. 18 to the magazine. The interview is the basis of nine articles in the November issue. An introductory note to the articles said that Jesus plans to publish the entire interview in book form at the beginning of 1985.

In the articles, Cardinal Ratzinger said national bishops' conferences should not substitute their authority for the authority of the bishop in his local diocese and that a balance is needed between pre- and post-Vatican II teachings.

He also criticized individu-

alist theologians who work outside the church's magisterium, defended current prohibitions on inter-Communion with Protestants and defended missionary activities from accusations of cultural imperialism.

Cardinal Ratzinger attacked "efforts to rebaptize God in the feminine tense" and said that the Catholic faith seems stronger in Eastern Europe which is under Communist rule than in Western countries.

"On the doctrinal plane, there is hardly any problem with Catholic theology in this region (East Europe)," said Cardinal Ratzinger.

The late East German Cardinal Alfred Bengsch of Berlin "used to tell me that he saw a graver danger to the faith in Western consumerism and in a theology contaminated by this attitude than by Marxist ideology," he added.

Cardinal Ratzinger said, however, that Marxism is the most dangerous of contemporary atheistic philosophies because of its moral pretensions.

A "Judeo-Christian inheritance" in Marxist ideology has been transformed into a prophetic vision which excludes God and "which manipulates for its own political ends the religious force in

man, his hope for the reign of freedom and the life promised by the Bible," he said.

Speaking of developments since the Second Vatican Council, Cardinal Ratzinger criticized what he called "an anti-council spirit according to which everything which is new or presumed to be so would always be better than that which already exists" and according to which "the history of the church would have a rebeginning" with the council.

He said that "it is necessary to refute this talk of a pre- and post-conciliar church. There is only one church which is on the way to the Lord," he said.

The cardinal said he opposes efforts to turn the church clock back to the pre-Vatican II era but also said that Catholics must "search for a new balance after the exaggerations of an indiscriminate opening to the world, after a too-positive interpretation of an agnostic and atheistic world."

The cardinal also said that the growth and power of national bishops' conferences runs the risk of overshadowing the authority of individual bishops in their own dioceses.

Vatican II "wanted to reinforce the role and responsibility of the bishop," he said.