

NEEDED: Cooperation, Collaboration

Third in a five-part series
By Jerry Filteau

WASHINGTON (NC) -- "America needs a new experiment in cooperation and collaboration" to revitalize its social sense, says the first draft of the U.S. bishops' planned pastoral letter on Catholic teaching and the American economy.

A five-bishop committee, headed by Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee, wrote the draft.

At first sight, the document's chapter on collaboration looks strange and out of place within the list of U.S. economic concerns that make up surrounding chapter headings -- unemployment, poverty and welfare, food and agriculture, and U.S. foreign trade and aid policies.

The recommendations on collaboration also look remarkably "soft" or nebulous compared with those in other parts of the document. Their possible impact is harder to measure or analyze in economic terms, and they cannot be translated as easily, or for the most part at all, into direct programmatic or legislative action.

They depend, rather, on diverse, multi-level, and often voluntary acts and programs of cooperation by different and sometimes antagonistic groups.

Despite those difficulties, the chapter on collaboration is in many ways central to what the whole document seeks when it calls for a new American experiment in economic democracy, an experiment that would do for economic rights and economic participation what the country has done over the past 200 years to guarantee its citizens civil rights and freedoms and political democracy.

The new experiment in economic participation "has a moral and cultural aspect" as well as strictly economic dimensions, the pastoral draft says.

It notes that many observers think the United States is going through "a crisis of citizenship -- the loss of a vision of the good of society as a whole."

To restore the cultural and moral framework of mutual responsibility for the common good, a "sense of solidarity" is needed, the document says. This, it says, can be developed by enhancing "genuine participation and...the sharing of responsibility in economic society."

One of its primary proposals in this area is to advance "a new partnership between workers and managers," one that goes beyond such generally accepted procedures as collective bargaining to cooperative ownership, profit-sharing and other forms of more extensive worker participation in the ownership and management of enterprises.

In particular, when industries face "painful choices" of plant closings or other transitions due to economic shifts, it is "patently unjust" to exclude workers from any say in such decisions, the draft says. It also says that managers and investors must share with the workers in the economic burdens that such transitions bring.

The draft document also calls for local and regional cooperation of public and private sectors in job creation. It notes that private enterprise, especially small business, is the chief source of new jobs, while at the same time cities and regions most in need of such new jobs are the very ones that are least attractive to new business. For this reason it

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urges local, state and national government to play a strong role in giving tax and other incentives to encourage investment in hard-hit areas.

Existing business, labor, financial and academic institutions can provide expertise and other assistance to help innovative entrepreneurs willing to take initiatives in such areas, the document says.

It also notes that the church can play a major role in helping local communities and regional groups to collaborate on such projects. It cites the Campaign for Human Development, the U.S. bishops' program of self-help for the poor, as a model for such community-based action.

It also urges formation of more local cooperative organizations based on shared economic goals, such as consumer and producer cooperatives.

On the national level, the document notes that federal policies already have significant effects on almost every aspect of economic activity.

Introducing the question of economic planning -- whose very mention, it says, "is likely to produce a violent allergic reaction in U.S. society" -- the document stresses that economic planning does not in itself imply "centralized planning boards, command economies, inefficient bureaucracies, mountains of government paperwork and entangling skeins of red tape."

Pope John Paul II's call for societies to "make provision for overall planning" in the economic domain simply means that governments have a limited but necessary role to play in fostering and coordinating the economic planning which already goes on at many levels throughout society, the draft says.

"In an advanced industrial economy like ours," it comments, "all actors of society, including government, must actively and positively cooperate in forming national economic policies."

In such planning, it says, the impact of policies "on the poor and the marginalized is a primary criterion for judging their moral value."

NEXT WEEK: Global issues.

Theologians Take Differing Views Of Pope's Human Sexuality Talks

Rome (NC) -- At the end of five years of talks by Pope John Paul II about married love, culminating in a strong defense of the encyclical "Humanae Vitae" (Of Human Life), several theologians have expressed differing views about the purpose and effect of the pope's teachings.

In interviews with National Catholic News Service, some said they saw the weekly talks as offering a new approach to sexuality and therefore enriching the debate about the encyclical, which condemned the use of contraceptive birth control.

Others said the talks, with their strong language and frequent repetition, were meant to reaffirm the birth control teaching and church authority. The talks signaled a time to end theological dissent and to begin applying the teaching, they said.

The Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church said a pope's "frequent repetition of the same doctrine" was one guide to the authority of non-infallible statements. Some theologians have argued that if church leaders did not forcefully re-assert "Humanae Vitae," modifying the teaching would become more likely.

Respect Work of God

Vatican City (NC) -- Here is the Vatican text of Pope John Paul II's remarks in English at his weekly general audience Nov. 21.

On the basis of the doctrine contained in the encyclical "Humanae Vitae" (Of Human Life), we are tracing an outline of conjugal spirituality. The spiritual life of married couples depends on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and, in a particular way, on the gift of respect for the work of God. Respect for the work of God, together with the virtue of chastity, safeguards the dignity of the conjugal act, for it helps a husband and wife to manifest their affection in full conformity with the truth of the language of the body and with due consideration of the duties of responsible parenthood.

Respect for the work of God also keeps the conjugal act from being deprived of its interior meaning, from losing its personal, ethical and religious dimensions. It fosters in a couple a grateful awareness and veneration of the majesty of our Creator and the spousal love of our Redeemer. It gives them greater liberty from the constrictions of concupiscence, leaving them more free to give themselves to one another as a gift. Respect for the work of God makes the husband and wife more attentive to the person of the other, with a deeper appreciation of their dignity as man or woman. In this way, it creates an interior attitude which is conducive to personal communion and which enables them to remain united in faithful love all the days of their life.



No pope had ever spent so long on a single theme.

"It isn't a matter of theological arguments, but of assertion of authority," said Father Sean O'Riordan, a professor at Rome's Alphonsian Academy of Moral Theology. Father O'Riordan, 68, who has written a book on the theology of marriage, said he saw the talks in the context of an overall effort to return to a stricter discipline in the church.

Father Diarmuid Martin, an Irish priest on the Pontifical Council for the Family, agreed that Pope John Paul has, in a way, gone outside the historical debate over birth control.

"A lot of theological discussion attacks 'Humanae Vitae' from what some consider 'internal weaknesses.' The pope doesn't attempt to reply to those theologians. Rather, he says, 'I'm beginning from a biblical-anthropological premise, and I arrive at the same conclusions,'" Father Martin said.

Father Martin credited Pope John Paul with responding to the 1980 Synod of Bishops, which had urged an exploration of the roots of the birth control teaching. He suggested that the pope's new approach -- beginning with the person and the significance of the person's sexuality -- would "enrich the debate over 'Humanae Vitae' and make it more positive."

Most of the theologians agreed that in his 16-week analysis of "Humanae Vitae," the pope did not break new ground. But some saw new and deliberate areas of emphasis in church teaching on birth control.

Archbishop Edouard Gagnon, who heads the Pontifical Council for the Family, said the pope's cautionary statements about natural family planning were one such emphasis. In his talks, the pope stressed that natural family planning methods, while allowed for in "Humanae Vitae," should not simply be used as a technique to avoid children, but must be used for serious reasons.

Natural methods, unlike contraception, rely on sexual abstinence during the fertile times of a woman's cycle. The increasing accuracy of such methods has made them more popular since the time of the encyclical.

Archbishop Gagnon said that some promoters of natural family planning have come to see the methods as "correct in themselves." The pope was making it clear that this was not so, he said.

The pope's statement during one of the talks that the conjugal act "ceases to be an act of love" when contraception is used was another area that seemed to go farther than "Humanae Vitae." Not all theologians took the pope's words literally.

Father Pierre Primeau, who left the Pontifical Council for the Family in November after three years as undersecretary, said the statement was probably intended in a philosophical way.

"There are many couples who love each other while practicing contraception," he said. "Their love has to be purified, that's all."

Father Primeau said that while "the pope may feel the time for debate has ended," Catholic couples may still have trouble with the teaching.

"If they try to see, but don't see, the evil of contraception, I think that they don't sin," Father Primeau said. Couples should study the church's position and try to accept it, he said, but if they cannot accept it "then they should follow their conscience."

From the beginning of the papal talks, theologians were clearly an intended audience. In July, the pope specifically asked all theologians to reread and seek a better understanding of "Humanae Vitae" in connection with his discourses.

Archbishop Gagnon said later in a Vatican press conference that the talks aimed at filling a "serious gap" in church teachings which had been left by theologians. "The pope cannot wait any longer for the doctrine to be confirmed and spread," he said.

During his return from an October trip to the Dominican Republic, Pope John Paul was asked by NC News if he thought his talks would prompt U.S. theologians to better promote the church position on birth control. He replied, "I hope so -- a deepening of the doctrine is necessary."

A Vatican theologian who met with the pope during preparation of the final 16 talks, Msgr. Carlo Caffarra, told reporters in July that dissenting theologians were largely to blame for nonacceptance of "Humanae Vitae" by some Catholics. He singled out four theologians as examples: Father Charles Curran of The Catholic University of America; Father Hans Kung of Tubingen University in West Germany; Father Franz Bockle of The University of Bonn, West Germany; and the late Father Marc Oraison of France.

The debate, however, continues. For example, German theologian Father Joseph Fuchs, author of several works on moral theology and professor emeritus at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University, recently took issue with Msgr. Caffarra and Pope John Paul over a key objection to contraception.

In an article published in the July-August issue of "Rassegna di Teologia," an Italian journal, he criticized what he called a "super-anthropomorphic" view of God in a talk by the pope and a later article by Msgr. Caffarra.

Father Fuchs' article, written before the pope's final series of talks on "Humanae Vitae," found fault with the argument that contraception is an intrusion into the rights of God, who is seen as having the power to decide new births. This view seems to reduce the couple to a merely biological role, Father Fuchs said.

In one way, Father Fuchs, who declined to be interviewed on the papal talks, embodies the ongoing debate about the teaching. He was a member of the Vatican commission appointed to study the question of birth control in the 1960s. Father Fuchs joined with the majority in justifying a relaxation of the church's position against contraception. Pope Paul's encyclical rejected that advice, noting that the commission's conclusions were not unanimous.