

## Guest Editorial: U.S. must aid talks in Northern Ireland

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The following guest editorial was written by Brother Patrick Flanagan, S.J. Brother Flanagan — currently assistant to McQuaid Jesuit High School's rector-president, Father James F. Keenan, S.J. — lived and worked in Northern Ireland during 1978 and 1979.

London newspapers reported recently that a new peace plan was imminent for the people of Northern Ireland. This kind of publicity raised great hopes for all those concerned for progress in the Anglo-Irish peace dialogue.

A new start is needed today in Northern Ireland; and America can make an enormous contribution now as peacemaker.

While I lived and worked in Belfast, I met many families and became very friendly with them. The Irish are a wonderful people. I had the good fortune of giving a number of retreats while I was there and participated in two extraordinary ecumenical retreats.

While the mediator's lot is not an easy one, to me, this is where work for peace in Northern Ireland must begin.

see the people of the Shankill and Falls roads come together in prayer. It was deeply moving to see them weeping and embracing one another. Herein lies the hope: there must be forgiveness on everyone's part. Forgiveness can heal all wounds if only we work at it.

It seems that prayer accompanies suffering. In all the turmoil and violence, I could just about find a prayer meeting in various neighborhoods every other night of the week. Most of these groups were coordinated by the CLC (Christian Life Communities).

The issue is justice; injustice has been rampant, vicious, brutal, abundant and intolerable. In the main, these gross injustices stem from social and economic problems created by the British. Injustice has to be revealed. Human rights violations have been so severe and so persistent that looking away and keeping up the pretense that British propriety would never allow such abuses is almost a form of complicity.

The policy of silence and perverse political neglect should no longer prevail. Americans outraged against human rights violations in Argentina or El Salvador have the same right to

speaking out against these governments as against Britain's violations.

Civil rights have to prevail. They must be incorporated into a representative government of all the people. This does not now exist.

Dehumanizing and deplorable housing has to be corrected very soon. The people are in dire need of adequate housing; their tiny houses are unbelievable.

The question of jobs — unemployment — has to be worked out. Jobs have to be developed and created. Unemployment is extremely high. I remember in some areas it was reported to be as high as 50 and 60 percent. Wonders can occur when jobs are available for all and people come together to work and sweat, rubbing elbows with one another.

Most frightening is the physical violence. When I was there, kneecappings and firebombings seemed to be at a peak. The hurts are many and varied, emotional and psychological, as well as physical. Man's inhumanity to man presents a terrible and unbelievable atmosphere.

The court system and the civil laws are especially devised by the British for Northern Ireland. They are deplorable. The laws of internment (pre-trial detention) are terribly unjust and should be eliminated completely.

These laws should never have existed. They have done terrible harm and bred hatred. How would you feel if you were "detained" for an undue length of time without a trial, without lawyers? These unjust laws have enabled the police and the British Army to search homes and sometimes ransack them without warrants. They could arrest people and hold them for long periods of time without trial. Many of these people were innocent of any activity or crime; some of them were tortured and brutalized.

This has been substantiated by the famous Bennett Report, Amnesty International and the Strassbourg Report.

American and/or European facilitators or mediators are desperately needed. The people need help,

and now. They need outside guidance and direction. It is commonly known that they have had little effective leadership at any level.

We have to be positive. A new start is needed today in Northern Ireland. I contend our government has an obligation to use its influence in motivating Britain to begin to seek a resolution that will offer political equality to all of Ireland.

American intervention in other troubled areas of the world has too frequently been based on financing one faction or the other. Our record of success with this approach has certainly not been very good, and more and more Americans are realizing the cold immorality of contributing to bloodshed in a safely distant country, for example, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Equally insidious, however, is our apparently selective inactivity and the puzzling unwillingness of a great and powerful nation to condemn repetitive violations of basic human rights in Ireland. The failure to speak out unequivocally against these injustices and to use our enormous influence to secure peace amounts to a condoning of injustice and hatred; to sharing in the waste of young, innocent lives; and the imprisonment of the elderly in chains of fear.

Ireland has made a vast contribution to our country; we cannot forget this. We should not dismiss the people of Northern Ireland merely because their numbers are small or because their struggle is embarrassing to England.

I think the United States and European community can now provide a wonderful contribution as peacemaker by offering our talents, our energy and our efforts as facilitators and mediators to these beautiful and suffering people of Northern Ireland. In a means similar to the Camp David peace forum, we can offer our expertise and specialists to serve as negotiators to work for peace and justice in that wonderful land.

We Americans have to make this clear to President Reagan, Secretary Shultz, and to our representative senators and congressmen.

## And opinions

### Writer urges readers to consider corresponding with prison inmates

To the Editor:

I concluded my May 22 letter to the editor with the statement that "the concern and involvement of ordinary citizens are needed to penetrate the massive walls of these institutions (prisons) and to make them more responsive to the needs of our society."

How can this be done?

Prison Pen Pals (Box 82188 San Diego, Cal. 92138) is a volunteer-operated program that arranges for people on the inside and people on the outside to correspond with one another. Just send in a statement of your interest with a stamped self-addressed envelope, and you will be mailed a description of prisoners looking for pen pals. Sister Evelyn Ancilla (Convent of the Transfiguration, 495 Albion Ave, Glendale, Cincinnati, Ohio 45246) directs a prison-ministry program that includes such correspondence. Alcoholics Anonymous members willing to write to prisoners in AA can request additional information from the AA General Service Office, P.O. Box 459 Grand Central Station, New York, N.Y. 10163. Narcotics Anonymous members who would like to correspond with inmates in NA should contact World Service Office, 16155 Wyandotte St., Van Nuys, Cal. 91406.

If you are a Vietnam veteran, think about writing to an incarcerated Vietnam veteran. If you are a college student, what about corresponding with a prisoner taking college courses? If you are recovering from an addiction, why not share sobriety with a prisoner coming to grips with his or addiction? If you have a special hobby, correspond with a prisoner who has a similar interest.

A real pleasure for me is correspondence with inmates. We talk about the hassles of doing time and of what is wrong with our penal institutions. We talk about ourselves and about life in general; we discuss literature, politics, philosophy, all manner of things.

### Writer says talks with Sandinistas don't work

To the Editor:

The June 19 editorial "Reflections on Days Past" and the picture of "mock" guerrillas on the front page with CIA emblems was a sad example of how communist propaganda uses a Catholic publication.

Endorsing the position of the U.S. Catholic Conference on Nicaragua, the Courier-Journal asked why the spread of communism and totalitarianism couldn't be better handled by negotiation.

Hasn't that been tried before? During the first two years the Sandinistas were in power, the United States under President Carter sent the Sandinistas five times the aid the Somoza government received from the United States during the previous two years.

Long before the United States supported

What about inmates who try to exploit pen pals? I've learned some lessons about this. Be firm and don't allow anyone to take advantage of you. If one pen pal situation doesn't work out, try again. Let it be known that you cannot be counted on to send stamps, money or packages, to run errands or to secure legal aid. This will keep the con artists from doing a number on you.

There are many prisoners who will appreciate your correspondence and friendship with no other expectations. Your letters will be morale boosters for them.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer once said: "You must give some time to your fellow man. Even it's a little thing, do something for those who have need of help, something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it. Remember, you don't live in a world all your own. Your brothers are here too."

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### Copies of apostolic letter to youth published

To the Editor:

The young people of our diocese will be happy to learn that, in connection with the United Nations' designation of 1985 as "International Youth Year," Pope John Paul II has written an apostolic letter addressed to them, entitled "To the Youth of the World."

The International Youth Year was meant to focus the attention of the world on those who are in their late teens and early twenties, and the apostolic letter was meant to focus the concern of the pope and the Church on the aspirations and fears of these young people.

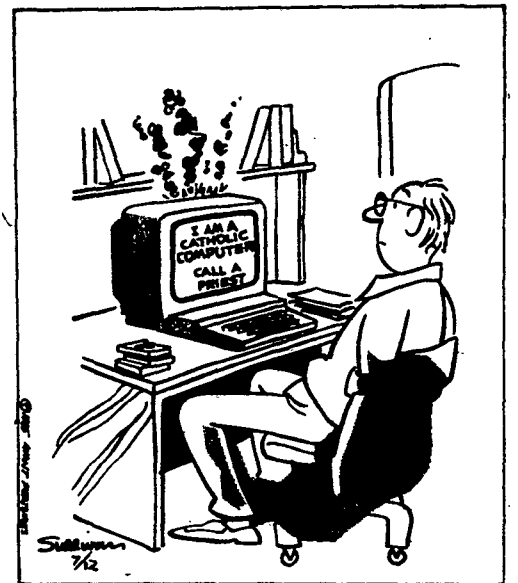
It is a beautiful, timely and needed document, which deserves to be read and studied by young and old, Catholic and

non-Catholic, and especially by anyone who ministers to the young in any way.

As we all know so well, our young people today — surrounded by so many kinds of pressures, temptations and occasions of sin — need wise and unambiguous spiritual and moral guidance. In the Holy Father's message, they will find much of the good counsel that they need so desperately at this stage of their lives, which the pope calls "a key stage in the life of every human being."

Copies of this apostolic letter (at \$1.10 each, postage included), as well as many other books, audio-visuals and other educational materials of excellent Catholic quality and content, can be obtained by writing or calling the St. Paul Catholic Book and Film Center, 525 Main St., Buffalo, N.Y. 14203, (716)847-6044.

Father Paul Bonsignor  
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Corning



## Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writers' signatures, full addresses and telephone numbers. They should be sent to: Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, and no longer than 1½ pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made, and the letters will reflect the writers' own styles.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space reserved for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent to other publications or persons. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.

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