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Economics Pastoral:

Second draft at a glance

Washington (NC) — Here at a glance is what the second draft of the U.S. bishops' proposed pastoral letter on the economy does:

✓ Makes substantial structural changes from first draft to focus more attention on moral analysis of economy rather than specific national policy recommendations.

✓ Retains as central elements the rights of the poor and command of Christianity to give preferential option to the poor; says litmus test of any society is how it treats its poor.

✓ Says meeting fundamental needs of society must come before desires for luxury goods and creation of unnecessary military hardware.

✓ Says that the economy's effect on people and how people participate in the economy are basic moral issues.

✓ Takes four key issues — food and agriculture, employment, poverty, and the U.S. role in the world economy — both to urge significant changes in how the United States handles those problems and to illustrate how Catholic social teachings should be applied to the whole spectrum of economic questions.

✓ Calls for a "new American experiment" in which economic rights are put on par with the civil rights protected in the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

✓ At 49,000 words is more than 20 percent shorter than the 63,500-word first draft, but still slightly longer than the final version of bishops' 1983 war and peace pastoral.

✓ Comes in response to more than 10,000 pages of written suggestions and criticisms and extensive hearings around the country on the first draft, making the new draft the result of perhaps the widest consultation project in U.S. Catholic Church history.

✓ Becomes the new frame of reference for further debate and refinement by the nation's bishops, beginning with their national meeting this Nov. 11-15 and culminating, they hope, in a final document to be issued after further debate and amendment in 1986.



Contemporaries

In costume, Stuart and Frieda Schultz of St. Louis study the Highland Park statue of Frederick Douglass during the Marathon for Catholic Schools. More on Page 13.

Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

New draft of pastoral calls economy basic moral issue

By Jerry Filteau

Washington (NC) — What economic life does to people, what it does for people and how people participate in it are basic moral issues, says the second draft of the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on the U.S. economy.

Issued Oct. 7, the 49,000-word document declares that certain economic-related rights — "life, food, clothing, shelter, rest and medical care" — are "absolutely basic to the protection of human dignity." It says the right to these necessities implies other rights: employment, adequate wages and working conditions, and security in the event of illness, unemployment or old age.

It calls for a "new American experiment" in partnership to ensure the economic rights and participation of all members of society.

"The way society responds to the needs of the poor through its public policies is the litmus test of its justice or injustice," the new draft says.

The first draft of the pastoral on the economy, issued nearly a year ago, affirmed basically the same principles and had the same overall thrust. But structural changes and extensive rewriting have significantly changed the length and tone of the revised document.

The second draft now becomes the framework for further refinement by the nation's bishops, leading to a third draft and then a final document that they hope to approve as a joint national pastoral letter in 1986.

It would be the most comprehensive effort by the U.S. bishops to apply Catholic social teaching to U.S. economic issues since 1919, when they issued their "Program of Social Reconstruction." That program urged such ideas as a minimum living wage standard; abolition of child labor; economic security or insurance plans for old age, unemployment and sickness; protection of workers' rights to unionize; and an end to unequal pay for women doing the same work as men.

Major aspects of that program became

part of U.S. law and policy under President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s.

The second draft of the proposed new economic pastoral is divided into five chapters, starting with an introductory chapter that summarizes the church's responsibilities and concerns in addressing U.S. economic issues.

Chapter 2, which spells out biblical, Christian and general ethical perspectives on economic life, is the heart of the document's moral teaching and the foundation of the rest of its discussion.

From scripture it draws lessons on human dignity being rooted in the creation of man and woman in God's image; on a fuller sense of justice as the right ordering of all creation before God; and on the meaning of Christian discipleship, especially in terms of the Christian view of the poor and the vocation of every Christian to personal holiness, love of God and neighbor, and social solidarity.

The chapter focuses on economic rights as human rights. It calls the right of participation in the economy a fundamental requisite for human dignity and argues that a condition of economic powerlessness is as much a denial of human rights as suppression of one's voice in political matters.

Those Christian and ethical norms indicate "fundamental and urgent objectives" in social and economic policies, the chapter says. It cites three major goals as a framework for assessing policies:

• "The fulfillment of the basic needs of the poor is of the highest priority."

• "Increasing active participation in economic life by those who are presently excluded or vulnerable is a high social priority."

• "The investment of wealth, talent and human energy should be specially directed to benefit those who are poor or economically insecure."

The chapter on Christian and ethical norms also spells out responsibilities of various individuals or groups: owners, man-

agers and workers in the work place, citizens and government. In response to efforts in some quarters to portray government as strictly a necessary evil in economic affairs, it stresses church teaching "that government has a moral function: protecting human rights and securing basic justice for all members of the commonwealth."

"Selected Economic Policy Issues," as Chapter 3 is titled, takes up 40 of the draft's 92 pages of actual text, not counting footnotes, and combines material that made up four separate chapters in the original draft.

It uses four key issues — employment, poverty, food and agriculture, and the U.S. role in international affairs — to illustrate how Catholic social teaching should be applied to economic questions. It states goals to be achieved in each area and suggests specific program and policy decisions, or at least the kinds of policies, that the bishops think may be the most appropriate or effective means of achieving the goals.

"Employment is a basic right," and "full employment is the foundation of a just economy," the draft says.

While it notes that the private sector is the backbone of economic progress and the creator of new jobs, it also notes that government is in fact — and under Catholic teaching ought to be — a significant actor in issues of employment policy. It deplores the political willingness to tolerate "morally unacceptable" levels of 6 percent or 7 percent unemployment and massive defense spending at the expense of human needs.

"Dealing with poverty is not a luxury.... Rather it is an imperative of the highest order," the draft says, noting that some 33 million Americans are poor by the government's standards.

It particularly deplores the greater impact of poverty on women, children and racial minorities and the wide gaps that persist in wealth and income between the richest sector

of U.S. society and the large body of poor and near-poor.

It urges job creation as the front-line attack on poverty, "affirmative actions" to reverse economic discrimination against women and minorities, and promotion by both public and private sectors of "self-help efforts among the poor."

It also urges "reforms in the tax system" to restore greater progressivity and reduce the tax burdens on the poor and near-poor, greater commitment to education of the poor and policies that favor stronger family life.

"A thorough reform of the nation's

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