



A dialogue is joined

Diocesan women reflect on the St. Valentine's Day report issued by Bishop Clark's Diocesan Commission on Women in the Church. See Pages 6 and 7.



Joyful Noises

In its 12th annual performance of 'serious church music,' the Diocesan Festival Choir celebrated the Easter season with Schubert's Mass in G. See Page 9.

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World & Nation in Brief from NC News

World

Priests list peace conditions

Manila, Philippines — Two former Divine Word priests who became anti-government rebels have said the communist-led New People's Army in the Cordillera Mountains will accept a government peace offer if the military withdraws from the area. But the rebel priests, Fathers Conrado Balweg and Bruno Ortega, listed several conditions for peace. Father Balweg said that it would require the agreement of local tribal people, an end to "landgrabbing" in tribal lands and removal of the military from the area.

Sale of newspaper a concern

London — Britain's major Catholic magazine has expressed concern over the sale of *The Universe*, the country's largest Catholic newspaper, to an agency of the British and Welsh bishops. The *Tablet*, based in London, questioned whether *The Universe* could remain independent after its sale to Catholic Media Trust. "Editorial independence must not only exist but be seen to exist," *The Tablet* said in an editorial. "How will the bishops treat assumptions that they are responsible for the contents of a publication on whose trust board they sit?"

Bomb scare at Rome school

Rome — Notre Dame International, a sixth- through 12th-grade school in Rome run by the New York-based Holy Cross order, was evacuated April 28 following a bomb threat. A police search of the co-ed institution revealed no explosives, and students returned to classes 90 minutes later. The 216 students, many of them children of embassy employees, were evacuated to the nearby headquarters of the Sisters of Divine Providence. Holy Cross Brother Thomas Dziekan, principal, said the incident was the second in the current academic year.

Nation

School health clinic opposed

Tallahassee — Florida's bishops have opposed proposals in the Florida Legislature and the Dade County public schools that would permit establishing health clinics and distributing contraceptives on public school premises. The bishops said the proposals "would only augment the harmful effects of present secular-based programs." A bill in the Legislature would provide a pilot program for school-based health clinics providing an array of pregnancy prevention services, including birth control counseling.

Fear of terrorism stems action

New York — To counter the fear of terrorism, the U.S. Catholic Office for Pilgrimages will try to enlist at least 1,000 people in a Pilgrimage for Peace to the Holy Land, Rome and Assisi next January. "I got the idea immediately after the bombings at the Vienna and Rome airports in December," said Father John Lazar, director of the U.S. office, which was established last year by the Vatican's agency for pilgrimages. "I felt something had to be developed that would be a visible sign against the powers of evil," he said.

Mild-mannered professor stands his ground

At Highland Hospital, Father Curran discusses his case with reporters

By Karen M. Franz

On the heels of issuing his "final response" to Rome with regard to retraction of his statements of dissent, Father Charles E. Curran entered a small room at Highland Hospital to talk to the media of his home town. Just three weeks earlier, he had written to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, telling the Congregation that he could not and would not retract his dissenting positions.

Assuming a professorial pose behind the podium, Father Curran told the assembled reporters that the press conference had been arranged to "preserve the integrity" of the hospital's symposium on neo-natal care, at which he was to speak later that day, April 25.

Father Curran's participation in the symposium had been arranged six to eight months ago, approximately the time at which the Vatican had concluded its seven-year investigation of him. The symposium had been scheduled, however, long before Father Curran's March 8 trip to Rome, which once again focused worldwide media attention on him.

Before opening the floor to questions, Father Curran reiterated his assertion that the primary issue in his case is not the substance of his dissent but his right as a theologian to dissent from non-infallible teachings of the Church. "Anybody who supports me doesn't necessarily support all of my positions," he said. "People who support me support my right to dissent."

In response to questions, Father Curran again outlined the chronology of his case with the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He has been in correspondence with the Congregation since it began an investigation of him in 1979.

"It's a private process," he explained. "You don't know you're being investigated. They appoint an attorney for you, but you don't know who he is because you don't know you're being investigated. Obviously he wasn't very good, because I flunked."

As a part of its internal process, the Congregation has the right to invite a theologian to Rome for an interview if the investigation leaves certain areas unclear. In Father Curran's case, however, the Congregation found no areas of uncertainty and

'I do this because I think it is for the good of the Catholic Church in the long run. I wouldn't be responsible if I didn't realize that some Catholics are going to be hurt.'

therefore did not invite him to a formal meeting.

In September, 1985, Father Curran received a letter from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation, stating that the Congregation was ready to close its investigation. The letter gave him two months to retract his statements in four specific areas of dissent.

At the same time, Father Curran learned that the Congregation was willing to meet with him if he requested such a meeting.



Huriyyet Necdet Aydogan

Thus, he went to Rome on March 8 for a meeting with the Congregation.

"Both sides had an opportunity to express their positions," Father Curran said.

At that meeting, Father Curran had proposed a compromise to the Congregation. He had offered never again to teach his course on sexual ethics — a course he has not taught in the last 15 years — and to accept a document written by the Congregation, outlining the areas in which it finds his views erroneous.

Shortly after the meeting in Rome, Father Curran received a letter from the Congregation, asking him for his final response. Two days after Easter, Father Curran sent that final answer to Rome.

The letter, made public April 25, stated: "In conscience at the present time I cannot and do not change the theological positions I have taken."

In his letter Father Curran said he still believed his dissent was "legitimate" and said he remained "quite disappointed" that the congregation would not "explicitly state what are the norms governing the legitimacy or the possibility of dissent...and then indicate how I have violated these norms."

He thanked Cardinal Ratzinger, however, for "your explicit recognition (at the March 8 meeting in Rome) of the fact that I have never denied any dogmas or truths of the faith."

He renewed his request for a compromise, which previously had been rejected by the congregation.

During the hospital press conference, Father Curran explained that his initial hopes for compromise stemmed from an informal statement Cardinal Ratzinger had once made, in which he had drawn a distinction between dissent in teaching and in research.

Yet Cardinal Ratzinger's latest letter to Father Curran stated that unless he retracts his positions, he can no longer be called a Catholic theologian and can no longer teach theology in a Catholic university.

"Are you willing to go that far?" a reporter asked him incredulously. "No, I'm not willing to go that far, but I'll have to," Father Curran responded. "I can't retract now and maintain my integrity."

To some extent, Father Curran allowed, he is being singled out for punishment by the Congregation. He pointed to the response of Catholic theologians in the United States and Canada to a petition drive. Circulated to some 1,800 members of the Catholic Theological Society of America and the College Theology Society and initiated by former presidents of those societies, the petition was signed by 739 theologians, including about 60 heads of theology departments or presidents of Catholic colleges in the United States and Canada.

Perhaps, Father Curran said, he is being

singled out because of his notoriety among dissenting theologians. His greater visibility began in 1966 when he acted as spokesman for theologians dissenting from the prohibition against artificial birth control outlined in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

He came to the forefront again in 1967 when the faculty of Catholic University of America recommended his promotion, but CUA's president and board of trustees voted not to renew his contract. Students and faculty alike protested the university's action, and amid media attention, Father Curran was reinstated.

Additionally, Father Curran notes, his notoriety is partially due to having authored more than 20 volumes on moral theology.

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"If you're tired some night, they're better than sheep," he quipped.

Others, too, have been responsible for his celebrity. He noted that one conservative Catholic newspaper has used him as the target for criticism of liberal theologians. That newspaper, *The Wanderer*, shifted into high gear this month in its efforts to see Father Curran sanctioned.

The Wanderer, a lay-edited, independent Catholic weekly in St. Paul, Minn., asked all its readers to write to Cardinal Ratzinger urging him to impose sanctions on Father Curran and his supporters. The April 17 issue of the paper carried postcards, pre-addressed to Cardinal Ratzinger, for use in the anti-Curran campaign.

On the other side, however, more than 18,000 American Catholics have signed statements urging the Vatican not to impose penalties on Father Curran.

"It is unsettling that Catholics take sides," Father Curran told the reporters, "yet it is important that they take sides because it shows that they take theology seriously."

Father Curran rejected a reporter's attempt to label him either a maverick or a martyr. He said he dislikes being locked into either/or analogies, and said "one cannot be a maverick with the vast majority of Catholic theologians agreeing with you."

He said that no comparison is entirely appropriate, but allowed that the analogy of civil disobedience is the most fitting. "I

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