

National/International Report

Two Catholic bishops arrested in nuclear-test-site protest

By Catherine Faggella

Mercury, Nev. (NC) — In an unprecedented action, two U.S. bishops were arrested May 5 in an act of civil disobedience while protesting U.S. nuclear weapons testing.

Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit and retired Bishop Charles Buswell of Pueblo, Colo., concelebrated Mass for some 250 anti-nuclear demonstrators just outside the Nevada nuclear test site near Mercury, then led 98 of the demonstrators across the police line to be arrested.

Retired Bishop Maurice Dingman of Des Moines, Iowa, did not participate in the protest, as had been anticipated. Instead, he sent a letter expressing his sorrow that he could not physically cross the line and be arrested with them. Bishop Dingman, confined to a wheelchair because of a stroke last year, originally planned to join the demonstration but was told not to travel because of his health.

The arrest of the bishops marked the second time in history that any U.S. Catholic bishop has been arrested for an act of civil disobedience and the first time such an arrest has taken place in protest against U.S. nuclear policy. In 1984, Auxiliary Bishop Emerson Moore of New York was arrested in New York in a protest against South African apartheid.

Noting the lack of previous episcopal arrests, Bishop Buswell said in an interview before his action, "Maybe we're just late doing it."

Twelve other U.S. bishops and the major superiors of 92 Catholic religious congregations endorsed the May 3-5 peace action, which culminated in the demonstration and arrests. The action was co-sponsored by the Catholic peace organization Pax Christi USA and by Nevada Desert Witness, a Franciscan-sponsored peace organization which has conducted protests at the test site since 1982.

The demonstrators were all given citations for criminal trespass, but arraignment was not to take place until June. Organizers expected that the charges would probably be dropped before then because of the prosecution office's decision to halt prosecutions.

Prosecution of the arrested protesters was considered unlikely. The week before, the prosecutor for Nye County, where the test site is located, announced that the county did not have the manpower to prosecute. A more massive demonstration at the test site was expected on May 10, with up to 2,000 protesters expected.

"Nuclear weapons are not consistent with the message of Jesus," Bishop Gumbleton said in an interview before his arrest. He said his position as a bishop did not influence him in his decision — he was there simply "acting



Retired Bishop Charles Buswell, left, of Pueblo, Colo., and Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit were arrested after trying to enter the Nevada test site near Mercury, Nev.

as a disciple of Christ."

The Nevada testing ground has been the site of hundreds of nuclear weapons tests since the early 1950s.

Bishop Dingman's letter said the demonstration was an effort "to help save the human race from total annihilation by a nuclear holocaust."

"My physical limitations do not permit me to be with you in body today," the Iowa bishop said. "In my powerlessness to move I experience the powerlessness of all who feel unable to act against the spiraling nuclear arms race. So I ask you, in the name of Christ the peace maker, to carry me across the line with you, in spirit, as a Gospel witness to a fragile and broken world that desperately seeks peace."

Bishop Gumbleton, national president of Pax Christi USA, said, "We must stop this madness," he said. "We cannot allow the

arms race to propel us to physical and spiritual self-destruction.

"There is no longer, for me at least, any moral alternative. I must actively resist."

The demonstration marked the fourth anniversary of the pastoral letter "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response," issued May 3, 1983, by the nation's bishops.

"So far as our country's administration is concerned, the 'Challenge of Peace' is no challenge," Bishop Buswell declared at Mass. "Its moral demands have been ignored. The Nevada test site and its activity are proof of this fact."

In a telephone interview with National Catholic News Service several days before his arrest, Bishop Gumbleton said his decision to engage in civil disobedience was the result of "a gradual development in my thinking" over several years.

"All of this for me is a spiritual process,"

he said, adding that in giving days of recollection and participating in "faith-and-resistance" retreats, in which he often discussed non-violent resistance, "I had to face up personally to when is that time to resist."

His biggest concern in being arrested, he said, "is not with the civil authorities, but with the Church and my role with the bishops. I want as much as possible not to be a point of division within the Church."

"Yet I hear, from all the spectrums in the Church, people saying they're grateful this is happening," he said.

"I know there's going to be that hostile reaction from some," he said, "but I hope to help people understand why some of us have to do this. We need to respect one another, and respect why we come to this."

Contributing to this story was Jerry Filteau in Washington.

U.S. alien amnesty program begins; bishops urge keeping families intact

By Laurie Hansén

Washington (NC) — A year-long federal alien legalization program began May 5 with the U.S. bishops seeking President Reagan's help and with immigrants lining up at many new church-run legalization centers nationwide.

Immigrants also attended parish informational sessions on the legalization process. Lay volunteers, clergy and religious — some fluent in Spanish, Italian, Polish, Creole, Chinese, Korean and Tagalog — answered applicants' questions about eligibility and began to pre-register those who appeared to qualify.

In Washington, an official of the U.S. Catholic Conference testified before the House Budget Committee April 30 that the Reagan administration's decision to spend nothing to implement alien legalization shows a lack of commitment to the law.

In a letter to Reagan dated May 4, Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, said he decided to write "because of your longstanding concern regarding the importance of the family."

He said without Reagan's intervention, "we feel that lack of a national policy will surely result in the separation of families."

Church officials have expressed concern that families will be split up when some aliens qualify for legalization but their spouses do not, in cases where the spouse came to the United States since 1982.

In many cases immigrant wives and their children have followed the male breadwinner to the United States after he has found employment in this country.

On the first day of the legalization program, Archbishop Mahony tried to allay concerns of aliens lined up for legalization assistance and said he had called for a halt to immigration raids.

The archbishop told reporters at St. Vibiana's Cathedral in Los Angeles that "to reduce fear and anxiety we have called for a halt to immigration raids until this first phase of legalization is over."

The cathedral is the site of one of 11 processing centers throughout the Archdiocese of Los Angeles opened by Catholic Charities May 5.

Some 120 Catholic parishes and community centers in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles have been pre-registering aliens seeking legalization since last year. As of May 1, the archdiocese had pre-registered 297,849 aliens, said Rosa Sipler, head of the archdiocesan legalization program.

In the Diocese of Brooklyn, N.Y., Father Ronald Marino, diocesan director of legalization, said in a May 8 interview that 5,000 immigrants pre-registered for legalization at informational sessions held in eight parishes in the first three days of the program.

The diocese, expecting to process more than 100,000 aliens in the upcoming year, has trained priests and volunteers answering legalization questions at 220 sites. Information is available in Spanish, Italian, Polish, Creole, Chinese, Korean and Tagalog, an official language of the Philippines, the priest said.

Three diocesan priests, all from Ireland, surprised Father Marino by announcing to him they are illegal aliens. Like many of their



In Arlington, Texas, 4-year-old Emilio Rodriguez stays close to his mother as she waits in line at the Immigration and Naturalization Service Office.

parishioners, they will apply for legal residency through diocesan channels, he said.

Testifying before the House Budget Committee April 30, Gilbert Paul Carrasco, director of immigration services for the U.S. Catholic Conference's Migration and Refugee Services, called "zero funding of legalization" the "most telling imbalance" in recent Immigration and Naturalization Service budget proposals. He said the Reagan administration's decision to spend nothing to implement legalization shows a lack of commitment to the law.

The legalization program is to be funded by charging aliens application fees. The cost is \$185 per adult and \$50 per child up to a

maximum of \$420 per family.

Immigration issues also received attention in Mexico, where that nation's bishops said the country must reform its economic system to deal with a potentially large influx of expatriate Mexicans expected to return home because of a new U.S. crackdown on illegal aliens.

They said the government's neglect of rural areas has forced people to illicitly seek jobs in the United States.

In a series of press conferences, Mexican bishops also told reporters they did not believe the law would be fully enforced by Washington and that U.S. Catholic bishops were seeking to protect aliens' human rights.