

Bishop challenges church to combat racism

By Florence L. Herman
Catholic News Service

NEW ORLEANS — Racism is on the rise in the United States and the Catholic Church through its parishes should take a leading role in combating it, said Auxiliary Bishop Joseph A. Francis of Newark, N.J.

The advances "of the civil rights movement in the '60s were done on the legal and judicial fronts. But it wasn't done on a moral basis," said Bishop Francis, who was in New Orleans recently to address 175 priests at a conference on racism and how parishes can help eliminate it. "Moral conversion," he said, "never took place."

Bishop Francis, who chaired the U.S. bishops' committee that wrote the 1979 U.S. bishops' pastoral letter on racism, "Brothers and Sisters to Us," is a noted speaker and workshop leader on the issue of racism. Concerns have surfaced about the rise of racism in the United States and what some see as a reversal of gains made in the 1960s by slain civil-rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others.

The nation Jan. 21 will observe the official holiday commemorating the birthday of Dr. King, who was killed in 1968.

In inviting Bishop Francis to speak, New Orleans Archbishop Francis B. Schulte noted that "recently in several parts of the United States there has been a resurgence of distrust and enmity among people of different backgrounds and ethnic heritages."

Bishop Francis noted that the U.S. bishops' 1979 letter declared racism "a sin," but "you seldom hear that proclaimed from the pulpit," he said.

Bishop Francis, who leads sessions around the country on the issue, said it was time for priests to "talk about racism and its effects."

"They are the leadership in the parishes

who should model gospel values, particularly when we see racism on the rise," he said. "Racism is such a negative thing. It feeds on the fears of the people. The church has to speak out, to respond in a positive way."

His workshops, he said, address the fear priests may have in speaking out about racism, a fear that "people will reject the teaching and us."

"The real fear is that people may diminish support of the parish financially and in other ways," he said.

Bishop Francis said in his view it is young people of college age who are fuel-

ing the resurgence of racism.

"They will rally for anti-apartheid in South Africa and cheer Nelson Mandela, but they object to minorities too close to home," he said.

He said he sees a growing number of people in high places such as college campuses deriding minorities.

"They are ignorant of the importance of these cultures and their contributions to our country," he said. "The students are picking up on that attitude, and it's reflected in the rise of racism and the strong bias against homosexuals. It shows a lack of respect for the dignity of individ-

uals."

But, Bishop Francis said, he believes that this will pass.

"In a few months, the students will have another agenda — the war in the Middle East," he said. "Young people are being taken from college campuses to fight over there."

Many people say the church shouldn't be involved in politics when it comes to issues like racism, Bishop Francis said, but he sees such issues as more of a reason to be involved.

"When laws, politics and politicians are immoral, the church has a moral right to speak up about their actions," he said.

A prime example, he said, is abortion. "People risk civil disobedience and demonstrate to protest the Supreme Court's decision on abortion. That decision is immorally sinful and we have to oppose people who espouse that."

The church cannot tell people "whom to vote for, but we can urge them to vote for people who have moral consciences," the bishop said.

Bishop Francis added that not all has been negative in race relations since the 1960s. "Some very good things have happened."

For example, he noted, in New Orleans relationships between blacks and whites "is superior to that of the Northeast, where I live, both socially and economically." Isolation of the past in schools and in the workplace has been replaced by "tremendous social contact," he said.



AP/Wide World Photos
PACIFIST FBI AGENT — John "Jack" Ryan stands before "The Last Supper" mural at the Catholic Worker House in Peoria, Ill., Jan. 10. Ryan, a 21-year FBI agent fired after refusing to investigate a peace group, is suing the FBI for religious discrimination. Ryan cited his religious beliefs as the reason for his insubordination.

Pope aims to publish encyclical by May

By Agostino Bono
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II hopes to publish a new social encyclical by the beginning of May, and a Vatican spokesman indicated that the document will focus on the relations between rich and poor countries.

"There are continuous requests from the Third World that the pope keep speaking about this issue," press spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls told Catholic News Service Jan. 8.

On Jan. 1, the pope announced plans to publish a social encyclical to mark the 100th anniversary of *Reformae Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII's landmark encyclical that set the foundations of modern church social teachings. But the pope has not yet announced a publication date of his en-

cyclical.

The thrust of Pope Leo's document — published May 15, 1891 — was to formulate church social thinking about labor-management relations. Such a document was needed at the time, Navarro-Valls said, because no such doctrine had yet been established.

Today the church needs to detail the responsibilities of rich nations to share their material and intellectual resources with underdeveloped countries, he said.

This is "a wide-open moral field for the church," he added.

The pope already has shown his concern on the issue by stressing the theme, especially in his foreign travels, said Navarro-Valls.

The main question is "how to share development, because this is the right of all,

not just the rich," he said.

This question goes beyond better distribution of the world's resources and includes education and exchange of technical know-how, he added.

The new societies emerging after 40 years of communist rule in Eastern Europe face the same problems as Third World countries in relation to the developed world, he added.

Companies from developed countries cannot regard the rest of the world merely as a market for their goods, he added.

People must also understand that church social doctrine is "part of the moral teachings of the church and not a temporary policy," he said.

"It is a sin to willfully violate these principles," Navarro-Valls said.



AP/Wide World Photos
PROSECUTORS RESIGN — Edward Sidney (right), a Salvadoran prosecutor in the case of six slain Jesuits, speaks to members of the press in San Salvador Jan. 9, as Henry Campos; another prosecutor listens. The two said they were resigning due to limitations placed on their activity.

Haiti

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Leon Badikebele Kalenga.

At the Vatican Jan. 10, spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the Holy See "firmly deplored" the incidents and had intended to send a strong protest to the Haitian government. But he said the government had sent letters making "every kind of apology" for them.

Navarro-Valls blamed the attacks on "very radical" elements and said the incidents did not reflect the government's attitude toward the church.

Longchamp said his sources in Haiti told him the crowds had attacked the nunciature believing Archbishop Ligonde was hiding there.

Archbishop Ligonde had incensed followers of Father Aristide by attacking him in a New Year's Day homily.

In that homily delivered at the capital's new cathedral, packed with government

officials and the diplomatic corps, the archbishop called Father Aristide a "socio-Bolshevik."

Longchamp said Archbishop Ligonde's homily "matches word for word a statement put out by Roger Lafontant the night before."

He charged that the archbishop was "leading the charge" against Father Aristide and making anti-Aristide "propaganda" prior to the coup attempt.

Less than a week after the controversial homily, Lafontant, who was also the reputed head of the Duvalier family's paramilitary Tonton Macoutes, attempted to short-circuit Father Aristide's election with a coup.

A diplomat in Port-au-Prince said the army feared if it didn't act to crush the coup, the Haitian people would turn on the soldiers.

An estimated 50 people were killed in the violence following Lafontant's would-be takeover. Most were suspected Tonton Macoutes who supported Lafontant. Many

of those killed were stoned or hacked to death and later burned in the streets.

"Aristide visited the National Penitentiary last week and said Lafontant should be there," Gerard Pierre-Charles, an economist close to the priest, said Jan. 8. "Today he is — and this reinforces Aristide's image as a prophet."

Although it praised the army's overall defense of civilian rule, Haiti's Electoral Council voiced fears Jan. 8 that some segments of the military might have helped Lafontant, who had at least two tanks and easily kidnapped interim President Ertha Pascal-Trouillot at her home on the night of Jan. 6.

"Fourteen men could not have done it," said one political activist, referring to Lafontant and the number of men arrested with him.

The elections council, a quasi-legislative government body, demanded a full investigation into any military role.

"An immediate public inquiry (must) be carried out to shed light on the cir-

cumstances and complicity that enabled this mis-en-scene (set-up) to go on," the council said.

Quoting unidentified military sources, Independent television station Tele-Haiti reported that the army was searching for four officers suspected of being involved in the coup plot.

Aside from the violence in Port-au-Prince, radio stations also reported one military and four civilian deaths in two days in Cap-Haitien, the Caribbean nation's second city. The reports said that an anti-Aristide army unit had opened fire in the slums.

Occasional gunfire was heard in the capital, and three or four more charred and mutilated bodies were seen on the streets of the capital.

Many barricades and roadblocks in the capital came down, but at certain intersections crowds of young men stopped vehicles, searching for associates of Lafontant.