



Reuters/Bettmann
Bishop Michael H. Kenny of Juneau, Alaska (right) escorted Randall Trinh and three other American citizens through Jordan's Amman International Airport on Nov. 3, 1990. The bishop helped secure the hostages' release from Iraq on humanitarian grounds.

Bishop laments war, criticizes celebration

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — While people in such cities as New York and Washington, D.C., turned out in droves last weekend for parades honoring Persian Gulf veterans, one U.S. bishop feared that the strains of marching music and mounds of ticker tape would obscure the war's consequences.

"Even if one believed that the war was sadly but truly necessary, we should not be celebrating the victory but mourning it," said Bishop Michael H. Kenny of the Diocese of Juneau, Alaska.

As part of his visit to Corpus Christi Church last weekend, Bishop Kenny offered his views on the war during homilies at Masses on Sunday, June 9.

"We should be in mourning because the people we killed are brothers and sisters in God's eyes," the prelate said, adding that the war's disruption of family life and the psychological problems it may have started for some veterans should also be lamented. "We sent them to kill in our name and they have to bear that burden for the rest of our lives," he said.

While leading a non-denominational peace delegation to Iraq last October, Bishop Kenny helped secure the release of four U.S. hostages. In an interview following the Mass, the bishop commented on his trip to Iraq and explained his stance against the Persian Gulf war.

Bishop Kenny, a member of Pax Christi U.S.A., noted that the trip was sponsored by Fellowship of Reconciliation, an international pacifist group with U.S. offices in Nyack, N.Y. The peace group was started by private citizens from Germany and France during World War I.

Accompanied by approximately two dozen other participants, the bishop spent most of his stay in Baghdad meeting with government officials in an attempt to win freedom for foreign hostages. Saddam Hussein was holding Western hostages in order to stall allied action against the Iraqis, he recalled.

"They, of course, continually referred to (the hostages) as 'guests' and made simple reference to the fact that the presence of these 'guests' were protecting innocent women and children," he commented. He also remembered one Iraqi official likening the taking of hostages to the stationing of military troops in hostile areas.

"Don't you send people to places where they don't want to be?" Bishop Kenny remembered the official saying. "Do you think all of the soldiers want to be in Saudi Arabia?" the official asked the bishop.

The peace groups primarily used moral arguments to persuade the Iraqis to let the hostages go free, Bishop Kenny said.

"We were direct in saying that it was a violation of human rights to hold any person against their will, and that if (the Iraqis) had any claims to justice, that they were contradicted by that behavior," the bishop stated.

Despite the enmity between Western nations and Iraq, Saddam's officials afforded the peace delegations a friendly welcome, Bishop Kenny noted.

"To my surprise, we were warmly welcomed by both government officials and by the civilians there," he said, adding: "They didn't want a war. They knew it would be devastating to them as a people and a nation, and they wanted to avert it."

Although he emphasized that he only spent two weeks in the country, the bishop came back impressed both by Iraq's socialistic advances in the country's standard of living and by the oppressive totalitarian atmosphere that stifled any free expression on the part of many of the people he met. The prelate said meeting with civilian adults and children convinced him of the need for the allies to exhaust the negotiating process before going to war.

The bishop added that he had little regard for the U.S.-led coalition's actions before and during the war.

"Apart from general and strong sentiments against any war, I felt particularly convinced that this war didn't come close to satisfying just war principles," Bishop Kenny said.

Arguing that President George Bush never seriously negotiated with the Iraqis, the bishop dismissed the contention that the war was fought to liberate Kuwait.

"The Kuwaitis that have gone in (since the war's end) have continued the violence... the violations of human rights," he said. "(T)he Kuwaitis wanted us to go in so that they could go to do what they're doing now? It seems cynical to say that we went in to liberate them."

In other remarks during his homily and an interview before one Mass, the bishop touched on the issues of ordaining women and married men to the priesthood.

Barring both groups of Catholics from priestly ordination may be costing the church a great deal, the bishop said, pointing out that such a policy "may be denying the church some high-quality leadership, preaching, presiding" and administration marked by "compassion, experience and vision."

Bishop Kenny noted that if a celibate male priesthood is truly God's will, the church must continue it. But he asserted that the arguments for a divinely mandated celibate male priesthood are not apparent.

"If we're saying this is God's will, then it better be palatably clear," he said.

Bishop unveils framework for catechetics in clusters

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

Bishop Matthew H. Clark announced June 5 the adoption of a Transitional Framework Plan for implementing the Well-Integrated Catechetical Plan — the diocesan process for "womb to tomb" catechesis.

A blueprint for developing long-term plans for Catholic schools and catechesis in the Finger Lakes, Southern Tier and Genesee Valley clusters of the diocese, the transitional plan was presented at a press conference at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Elmira.

The final catechetical plan is scheduled for release in the spring of 1992.

The catechetical plan is scheduled to be phased in beginning with the 1992-93 school year, noted Brother Brian Walsh, CFC, diocesan superintendent of schools. The plan will not be implemented fully until the 1995-96 school year, the superintendent noted.

The plan calls for the establishment of three Cluster Executive Boards that — in conjunction with 10 Local Area Christian Formation and Education Boards operating under them — will oversee the development of diocesan catechetical programs in areas outside Monroe County.

The Well-Integrated Catechetical Plan consists of 10 components, including catechetical programs for school-aged children, the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, and sacramental-preparation programs.

Among the proposals in the transitional plan are: standardized tuition rates for the schools; increased parish subsidies for students attending Catholic schools; differing tuition rates for Catholic and non-Catholic students; and the development of funding for tuition assistance and to support catechetical programs.

The 10 local boards, each representing groupings of 8-20 parishes, will be elected in the spring of 1992. The boards will take power on July 1, 1992.

These boards will coordinate the implementation of the final catechetical plan to be developed for the clusters by an 11-member Cluster Commission created in December, 1989, to oversee the planning process.

Local planning boards, which have been in operation since 1988, are scheduled to submit their implementation plans for cate-

chetics to the Clusters Commission by Nov. 1, 1991. School plans for each local area are due to the commission Dec. 15.

The commission will review these plans before making recommendations to Bishop Clark by Feb. 1, 1992. Bishop Clark is expected to announce the implementation plans in March, 1992.

Among aspects still undetermined are tuition rates for schools in the local areas, Brother Walsh noted. Each local area board will determine a standard rate for all of its schools.

In some cases, Brother Walsh acknowledged, tuition standardization may require increases at certain schools that currently charge less than other schools in their areas.

Parish subsidies for parishioner students — which have been \$300 per pupil since 1982 — are scheduled to increase to \$500 in the 1992-93 school year, Brother Walsh noted.

In addition, parishes will be required to contribute to a common fund in each local area for assisting needy students. Aid provided by these funds will supplement tuition assistance currently available from the diocese.

The amount each parish will be asked to contribute to the pool will be determined by the Catholic Schools Office at a later date, Brother Walsh said.

The framework plan calls for students whose parents are not registered members of Catholic parishes to be charged full per-pupil cost. Brother Walsh estimated that the full per-pupil cost for the current school year is \$2,000.

Brother Walsh acknowledged that the plan poses serious financial ramifications for parishes and schools. In light of those ramifications — and of existing needs of parishes and schools — the plan provides for financial assistance beyond whatever additional revenue may be produced through the plan, he said.

Interest income from the diocesan endowment for education — which applies to all educational programs — could be used to support not only schools, but also catechetical programs, Brother Walsh noted.

In addition, each local area can choose to share personnel or to finance programs cooperatively, he said. The diocese is also committed to seeking further funding for personnel and programs where assistance is needed, Brother Walsh added.

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