



Peace on Earth

Holy But Not Silent Night

By FR. PATRICK O'CONNOR
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(N.C.W.C. News Service)

It is "Holy Night" but not "Silent Night" in Bethlehem, when pilgrims gather there for Christmas.

Two days before Christmas, one finds a festive stir already in the streets. Indeed, there is only one main street, with side streets and alleys, in what is still "the little town of Bethlehem."

The main street slopes steeply down through the marketplace and widens into the square before the ancient Basilica of the Nativity.

Rabbi Deplores Effect of Disputes In Public Schools

GARDEN CITY, N.Y. — (NC) — Engaging in disputes with public school authorities over religious celebrations "is hardly in the best interests of the children or the community" a rabbi declared here. "We must remember to respect the traditions of others even if we do disagree, and gracefully conform sometimes so long as we do not compromise our basic principles," Rabbi Malcolm Mendelshon of the Garden City Jewish Center said.

It is not just exposure to non-Jewish practices which disturbs children, he continued, "it is this exposure plus the lack of a firm footing in Jewish practices."

"We must remember that we have traditions of our own. The home where Jewish customs are proudly and joyfully observed need not fear to send its children into an atmosphere where non-Jewish customs are observed," he said.

All day on Christmas Eve the town is lively with sound, activity and color. Nights are chilly, but usually the middle of the day is mild and bright with sunshine. A Jordanian army band, composed mostly if not entirely of Moslems, plays tuneful marches up and down the square. Decorations, strung across the street, are crowned with a great star, which is illuminated after dark. Through the evening, recordings of Christmas hymns—the melodies only—are heard all over the town from a loudspeaker.

Cars drive in from Jerusalem, 10 miles to the north, with visitors of many nationalities. People crowd into the little post-office to send cards that will be postmarked "Bethlehem, Dec. 24."

Some of the visitors, regret-

tably, have the air of tourists rather than of pilgrims.

The first big event on Christmas Eve is the ceremonial arrival of Latin Rite Patriarch Alberto Gori, O.F.M., of Jerusalem. He is formally welcomed by the mayor of Bethlehem and other officials and escorted by a religious and civic procession toward the basilica. The Jordanian army band and an honor guard of mounted police on white horses are part of the procession.

The greystone basilica, first built more than 1,600 years ago, passed finally into the hands of the Greek Orthodox clergy, under the Turkish regime, about two centuries ago. Catholics may go through it. They share rights with the Orthodox in the cave-

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Pope John Calls for End To Bloodshed in Congo

VATICAN CITY — (NC) — His Holiness Pope John XXIII has appealed "to all who can and must intervene" to restore peace in a Congo bathed in blood.

Fighting in the Congo "is breaking Our heart," Pope John said.

The Pope spoke of the Congo situation at the end of an address to the International Congress for Vocations. This weeklong congress brought more than 200 specialists on religious vocations to Rome under the auspices of the Sacred Congregation of Religious.

"Since We have a timely occasion to speak on this subject, because you come from all nations of the world, allow Us to confide to you a sorrow that weighs upon Us," he told delegates to the congress.

"The reports that reach Us in these days are not all festive. You

are aware of what has been happening during the past 15 months in the Congo and know that it has become more serious in recent days. While gathering from the tree of political independence those fruits which it had hoped would produce well-being, prestige and peaceful works, behold that blessed land is bathed in blood.

"That nation so young is placed in a very difficult situation, with an uncertain future.

"We who have daily contact with the Blood of Christ in the mystery of the Eucharist cannot remain insensitive to the great sorrows, the ruins and the results both near and far of moral and social disorder . . .

"In the same way that you understand Us, beloved sons and daughters, We trust that We will not be misunderstood wherever these heartfelt words are heard.

"The anxiety created by the evil wrought is breaking Our heart."

Chaplains Invited To Bishop's Home

RALEIGH — Chaplains from the various military bases in North Carolina will have a Christmastime luncheon with Bishop Vincent S. Waters at Little Maryknoll, the Bishop's House, on Wednesday, December 27, 12:00 Noon.

The bishop, who served two years as chaplain at Camp Pickett in Virginia during the early Forties, hopes to make the military chaplains' dinner a regular yearly affair.

Catholic chaplains were also informed that Bishop Waters would be happy to entertain any Protestant military chaplains whom the chaplains might invite for the Christmas luncheon.

reversal of policy

Peace Corps Won't Sign Church Group Contracts

WASHINGTON — (NC) — Peace Corps director R. Sargent Shriver, in a sudden reversal of previous policy, has announced that the corps will sign no contracts with church-related agencies.

Bishop Edward E. Swannstrom, chairman of the American Council of Voluntary Agencies, immediately expressed "resentment" at the declaration.

Shriver, announcing the policy, said it would be a "mistake" for the Peace Corps to sponsor projects conducted by church-related groups.

He disclosed the policy, which he described as an "operational judgment," during a day-long workshop here conducted for voluntary agencies by the Peace Corps.

Bishop Swannstrom, an Auxiliary Bishop of New York, protested strongly.

He said in a statement that member-organizations of the Council of Voluntary Agencies will continue to give "wholehearted support and cooperation" to the Peace Corps. But, he added, they feel "regret and even . . . resentment" at any Peace Corps ban on cooperation with church-related groups.

Shriver's stand appeared to be an about-face from previously announced Peace Corps policy, which had been to cooperate with Church-related agencies in welfare projects.

Shriver himself reaffirmed this policy during an appearance last June 22 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In April the Peace Corps issued a guide book dealing specifically with the question of its relations with church-related agencies.

The guide book, which was approved by Shriver, said in part: "A project which meets Peace Corps criteria and standards will not be barred from receiving Peace Corps support because it is sponsored by a religious or sectarian group . . ."

This policy later came under attack, however, from such groups as the American Jewish Committee, the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

They argued that Peace Corps cooperation with church-related agencies would violate Church-State separation.

But other religious groups, like the National Council of Churches, the National Catholic Welfare Conference and the National Association of Evangelicals, had encouraged the denominations they represent to cooperate with the Peace Corps.

Shortly before Shriver's appearance before the Senate foreign relations unit, the Peace Corps announced that it was negotiating contracts for six projects to be carried out by religious agencies.

Only one contract was ever signed with a church-related agency, however. In this instance the Heifer Project, an interfaith farm

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Chilean Prelates Plan for Division Of Church Lands

SANTIAGO, Chile — (NC) — Farms and estates belonging to all dioceses in Chile will be divided and sold to rural families, the nation's Bishops have announced.

The Chilean Bishops issued their statement after their annual meeting here. They spoke while a new law for agrarian reform is being studied by a congressional committee. The Bishops said they are eager to take the first step and set the example for all Chileans.

The prelates called on all Catholics to cooperate in the reform. They added:

"For our part, conscious as we are, of the situation of the rural population and desirous of cooperating, not only by teaching the fundamental doctrine but also by giving concrete example, we have resolved in this year's plenary assembly to entrust the study of an eventual colonization of all the agricultural properties which are in possession and free use of the hierarchy to a committee of experts . . ."

The Bishops pointed out that while these lands are not nearly as extensive as is generally believed, nevertheless their sale will be a sacrifice for the Church, since the income from them has been used to maintain the charitable and educational works of the Church. A study will have to be made to find other sources of income for these works, the Bishops said.

CHRISTMAS WISH

May Christ the Lord of Bethlehem and of all humanity fill the hearts of all members of our Diocese — priests, brothers, sisters, and laity — with His love, grace, and rich blessings this Christmas and all through the New Year.

✠ Bishop Vincent S. Waters

North Carolina Catholic

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