

Vatican II - 10 years later

Enslavement of people can be subtle

Special, The Florida Catholic

"Human institutions, both private and public, must labor to minister to the dignity and purpose of man. At the same time let them put up a stubborn fight against any kind of slavery, whether social or political."

This statement from the documents of Vatican Council II is a springboard for Sister Anne Parry, SND, who is involved in migrant ministry in the Diocese of Orlando.

Sister Anne believes that even in programs under church auspices people can suffer from enslaving dependence and become victims of tight budgets and harrassed and insufficient manpower.

Looking at social services in the state of Florida which operate under church auspices, the nun asks:

"Have we gone the route of every other agency, become a controlled victim of the economy and so dependent on money as the basis of service that we lose touch with the why of our services?"

Sister Anne contends that the intrinsic value of service by Christian people in church programs is that beneficiaries of the programs experience both dignity and justice in their dealings with personnel in social service agencies.

The pointed question is, she maintains, are we **serving** people or **servicing** them? In the former, people can grow; in the latter, they do not progress beyond the humiliating experience of receiving handouts and hand-me-downs.

This is one form of "enslavement," Sister Anne stated, that is subtle but real, and hard to recognize because it exists under Christian auspices.

Speaking of Catholic agencies involved in helping persons in need, the



Sister Anne Parry

migrant worker said, "No matter what the quality of our service, we institutions must constantly re-raise the question of what we are about and why we are about it."

She stated also that budgets in the church do not always seem to reflect the Gospel's priority for service to the needy.

"Getting together (in the fight against any form of human enslavement)," she said, "brings both hope and strength to the fight. It is disturbing to come to the conclusion that changes in our system have to be made, that there is a lot of political, social and economic slavery around and that change finally does not occur because change is not accomplished first within ourselves working hand in hand with others."

Social change will come about when all people (both the needy and the persons who want to help liberate them from oppressive conditions) act as a



Sister Teresa McElwee

"we" instead of an "I", Sister Anne said.

Such a priority will recognize the interconnectedness of the special urgent problems treated by the bishops of Vatican Council II: marriage and the family, human culture, life in all dimensions, bonds between the family of nations and peace. "Looking seriously at any one of these brings us face to face with the others," she told **The Florida Catholic**.

Social service agencies and all people who are committed to building a just world have to get down to the causes of injustice while they are delivering services, Sister Anne said.

Another religious woman, Sister Teresa McElwee, SND, who is in the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Orlando, stated that Vatican II called for a soul-searching examination of conscience to return to and listen to the Gospels.

She said: The Gospel "is there so that

we may hear and read of Jesus' work among the people who were on the fringe -- the powerless, the people of no social status -- and the compassion and healing he gave them. The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World reminds us to look especially at the poor, to identify with them and to work actively in their behalf.

"After 10 years," Sister Teresa stated, "we, the church, are limping in our efforts to commit ourselves to erase these injustices. The issuance of statements by the bishops' conference -- right to housing, right of the agricultural worker, Food Stamp Program and so forth -- is only part of it."

Pointing to a document issued by the diocesan Justice and Peace Commission, she continued, "There can be no genuine peace or justice in this diocese, this community, or this world so long as human beings are unconsciously exploited by other human beings. Unemployment, home foreclosures, bankruptcies are increasing. Families unable to stand the pressure of potential economic problems are breaking down. Parents and children troubled by financial insecurity find it increasingly difficult to cope with emotional insecurity."

Sister Teresa said that concrete actions both within the church structure and the larger society are lacking.

She added, "All of us together must strive for a renewed awareness and understanding of our responsibility to make the teaching of the Gospels a reality in our lives, to seek out the areas of injustice, to encourage others to be 'enablers,' to help others gain power and control over their own lives and to accept the challenge to work toward changing the structures and systems that perpetuate injustice."

CPA enters bishop-editor dispute

CAMDEN, N.J. [NC] -- At its February meeting in New Orleans, the board of directors of the Catholic Press Association (CPA) will discuss the firing of a Fall River, Mass., diocesan newspaper editor and may adopt guidelines defining the relationship between editors and publishers in the Catholic press.

That agenda was reported in the **Catholic Star Herald**, Camden, N.J., diocesan newspaper, and confirmed by James A. Doyle, executive secretary of the CPA.

In November, Bishop Daniel A. Cronin of Fall River fired Father Edward Byington as editor of **The Anchor**, citing policy differences. The differences arose from the priest's objections to a memo by Msgr. Thomas Harrington, diocesan chancellor, instructing him not to print certain letters to the editor from a local layman active

in the charismatic movement.

Doyle said the Fall River incident, which led to charges of censorship by Father Byington and denials by Bishop Cronin and by the present and former staff of the newspaper, as well as other

disputes, have "brought to the fore" the question of editor-publisher relationships.

The Star Herald quoted Father Jeremy Harrington, president of the CPA and editor of **St. Anthony**

Messenger, Cincinnati, as saying, "In terms of the CPA involvement, and in relationship to including bishop-publishers in a fair practices code, the case is unprecedented and, perhaps long overdue."

Seniors want utilities refund

JACKSONVILLE -- The Congress of Senior Adults (COSA) in Jacksonville is attempting to get back some of the money members have spent for electricity.

Last week, members attended a meeting of the City Council finance committee, seeking a return of nearly \$1 million by the Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA) to customers who had to pay higher electricity bills.

COSA represents low and moderate income people who are in their retirement years. At the meeting, a

typical request to the finance committee was that given by Mrs. Bea Hagel, who said at the Jan. 27 hearing in city hall:

"We are here to request that the almost \$1 million which was given by the Ven-Fuel Oil Company to the JEA be given back to the electricity customers who were charged higher prices on their electric bill because of higher fuel oil costs."

She indicated that the office of Mayor Hans Tanzler "wanted to give this money back to the customers" but then changed plans.

Noting that the press had indicated only a small amount of money would be rebated to each customer, Mrs. Hagel said that when people live on fixed incomes or have low paying jobs, or are unemployed, even a small rebate would be helpful.

The bill, number 7651, upon which the hearing was held, would authorize Jacksonville to spend the Ven-Fuel Oil Company money to pay for electricity for street lights, and to purchase new street lights in new subdivisions.

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