

### **ON THE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE CHURCH**

*I am a young priest and I was ordained barely six months ago. During the past days, we have been reading and hearing so much about the demonstrations against the Cardinal of Manila and the Hierarchy of the Philippines. Now, last time, in the meeting of the Legion of Mary in our parish, among those present, were two young men who were among the demonstrators. There was a discussion among the boys... Out boys objected to the demonstrations, but the two participants defended their position. They soon approach me and asked for my opinion. I too objected to and even condemned the demonstrations. But the two participants wished to hear nothing of my opinion. They said that I was too fresh from the Seminary and therefore I was not qualified to know of these matters. They were very sure of their stand because they also had priests to advise them and that these priests knew well their business.*

*I wish that the BOLETIN would comment on these questions:*

- 1. Can you say that these demonstrations are inspired by the spirit of the II Vatican Council?*
- 2. Or are these demonstrators to be considered as public sinners?*
- 3. In any case, how should I treat them if, perchance, anyone of them approaches me for confession?*

### **OBSERVATIONS**

Our interrogator asks for some comments on events that have occurred for many days, and, if the demonstrators make good their promise, the demonstrations are to be continued; for they have promised to go on with their picketing until Cardinal Santos resigns and until they, the demonstrators, are provided with all the detailed accounts of all Church's

properties in the Archdiocese of Manila, and, of course, until the demonstrators themselves have passed judgement on His Eminence's administration and have prescribed for him the right manner of administering and distributing such properties for the benefit of the poor according to their idea of Christian and social development.

These are the "*demands*" of those demonstrating under the banner of the so-called Christian Social Movement. But, if we consider the claims of the group demanding the implementation of all things prescribed or suggested by the Second Vatican Council, we may be sure of more picketing for the next few months and the next few years. For this reason our comments must be restricted to some observations that *the matter of fact* in these demonstrations may be placed in focus for our young priest.

1. Young and fresh from the seminary as our priest may be, he, in opposing, even in condemning, the demonstrations is, of course, in line with the most elementary prudence required in the matter. In fact, even the parish boys of the Legion of Mary who, in their spontaneous objection to the demonstrators proved to possess a greater sense of faith and Church's belonging than the demonstrators and much greater spirit of religiosity than the priests behind all this sad business. Notwithstanding the name appropriated by the movement, we consider these demonstrations and this picketing to be neither Christian nor social.

a. *Not Christian.* Because, by their nature, such acts as these demonstrations are directly against the very constitution of the Church which is a divine institution hierarchically instituted by Christ and not a human institution that depends on the will or rights of the individuals as is the case with nations or other human institutions. These acts moreover, are directly against the legitimate authority of Cardinal Santos and other members of the Philippine Hierarchy, who are constituted according to a divine right and appointed to their respective diocese by the Pope, who is the Vicar of Christ himself. These acts are too and, to the extent of their influence on Fellow-Catholics, are effective means of destroying the filial trust and confidence of the ordinary Catholics towards their bishop, a condition *sine qua non* that the faithful render in love and obedience to the fathers of his soul. It is self-evident that in matters *spiritual*, without the faith and confidence of the people of

God in the ability and honesty of their Shepherds, no spiritual good at all can be expected from their ministry. Once the pastors are discredited, no other means remain in the Church for the bishops are the very ones appointed by God and by the Vicar of Christ for the task of sanctifying the members of the Church. This preeminent duty of bishops applies also to their authority over the priests whom the bishops have ordained and have called to their aid and whom they have trained at great pains in Seminaries for long period of years and at no mean cost.

It is equally evident that the faithful who have been accustomed to think of their Cardinal and of their bishops with reverence and respect and even with affection and pride, especially now that almost to a man they are chosen from among the very families of our Catholic Philippines, after having witnessed the imprudent challenge of these young men directed and backed by their own priests, will never be the same in their attitude towards their Bishops and shepherds. Thus the activities taken under the name *Christian* destroy a most needed element in our religion, the affectionate confidence of the faithful in his Father in the faith.

b. *Anti-Social*. Neither will these demonstrations do any good for the social advancement of our Catholic poor, be it in matters of land reform, or in the myriad other projects without which no land reform can be of any great avail. Such projects will require the knowledge, as well as the means and equipment in forms of capital, and few a thousand other things without which all dreams of rural and social developments become sheer utopia.

It is to be noted that all revolutions, especially the experience of the social upheavals in the last two generations — in Russia, China, Cuba, and Vietnam — have proved that utopic mentality and procedures, instead of bringing real beneficial reforms to society at large, became the instruments of a minority that cash on the social evils of former generations in order to impose, after untold strife and destruction, the rule of a minority relentlessly subjugating millions of other citizens in a society where God is banned and liberties are mercilessly suppressed. We have a vivid example of this in the daily reports of our newspapers on Czechoslovakia for the last sixteen months. For these reasons there can be no doubt that the activities of these demonstrators, if *social* in name, are the most anti-social devise one can imagine at the present moment.

Even in their regard for social amelioration the demonstrations are detrimental to the very work that the bishops have envisioned for the Church, because the action which should be demanded from the Church requires mutual trust and confidence between the bishops and the national authorities and between the bishops and the members of the community, especially those who should be the recipients of the benefits, the farmers, the poor and all have-nots.

2. From the foregoing it is clear that these demonstrations should be considered as a scandal of the first magnitude, with the consequent silencing of the good and the emboldening of the discontented. Thus, we may see the original demonstrators joined by others, the addition of more "demands", the turnover of some demands as if for fear of face-losing, the "demand" for the resignation of still another bishop besides Cardinal Santos, and the prostitution of the word *dialogue* — a noble thing — by people who started vociferating from the first moment. And all these, by people self-appointed in matters that in no way concern anyone of them.

Neither can we pass in silence over the columnists who help the demonstrators with pious advice for Cardinal Santos and, in some instance, with the most irreverent expressions against the Pope, and gross blasphemies against Christ.

On the other hand, we cannot but lament the silence of those *whose braveness is taken for granted* such as the cursillistas and others. Yet, two honorable exceptions should be recorded here. First, is the letter of Dr. Aleli R. Guzman Quirino (Sitio Alto, San Juan, Rizal) in the column *We the people of The Manila Times*, April 2, 1969, after she had read about "*the students carrying placards demanding to know so many things from Cardinal Santos*". This letter mentioned some activities of the Archdiocese which would credit any civic-minded organization. Apparently the mentors of these students either ignored such activities in favour of the poor or forgot to tell them to their mouth-pieces.

The other example is the following letter which appeared in the same section of *The Sunday Times*, April 6, signed by Romeo Melendres of 140 Ching Kiang st., Pasay City. We consider this letter a

sort of encouraging document and, certainly, one to offer comfort and satisfaction to the reader regarding this unfortunate affair:

### PICKETS AT SAN MIGUEL

SIR:

Last Holy Thursday afternoon, when I went with my family to the San Miguel Church, I saw the pickets with Dean Jeremias Montemayor of the Ateneo de Manila. I am an admirer of Dean Montemayor and his equally gifted colleague in the Christian Social Movement, Sen. Raul Manglapus, but I wonder what is so Christian or honest or intelligent about the placards Dean Montemayor was carrying that afternoon.

Many placards demanded in rather vulgar terms the resignation of Cardinal Santos. Does this mean that Bishop Lopez was lying when he was quoted by the Manila Times as saying that Cardinal Santos had asked the Holy Father several times to allow him to retire?

Besides, when, where and how did Messrs. Montemayor, Manglapus, and company hold the "fair hearing" that led to the judgment that Cardinal Santos should be ousted? What authority did they have—even assuming that they are the "outstanding Catholics" of the Philippines—to review and reverse the decision of the Holy Father on this point?

Other placards denounced bishops who have cars. Since when did this become a crime? Dean Montemayor himself has a nice car; Senator Manglapus has several car; including a flashy sports car; and the Jesuits who employ Dean Montemayor have more than enough cars. When Messrs. Montemayor and Manglapus give up their cars for the poorest free farmer they head, then their picket will cease to be hypocritical; when they force their Jesuit employers to give up their cars, then their picket will be less dishonest.

But even if all these were to come to pass, their puerile and inane demands simply do not measure up to the supposedly intelligent guidance and direction of the Christian Social Movement.

The arguments in the second part of this letter are *ad hominem*, but they are evidently cogent. However, the arguments about *who is*

who in the Church, the Pope or these demonstrators, holds a virtuality as apodictic as any dogma of faith as our questioner will find below in the very words of the Second Vatican Council.

We should not omit here to point another lethal effect of this unfortunate scandal, that of creating a false image of the Church, both as an institution and as to her economic possibilities, in the Archdiocese of Manila in particular. The Church, being the spiritual society instituted by Christ for the essential and primary purpose of the salvation of souls may have of course a preponderant part towards the accomplishment of any project of a social or charitable character. Yet in this matter the Church's parts must be conceived as emanating from her role of *Mater et Magistra* insisting on the rule of love and justice in every social and economic project. But this role of the Church in no way alters her essential characteristic of a spiritual society with the primary aim of the spiritual welfare of men. Neither does this role of the Church detract from the civic authorities of nations of procuring the social, economic, and temporal welfare of the citizens according to the multifarious means at its disposal and according to the no less multifarious needs of the people. To demand from the Church the many things that these demonstrators are demanding from the Church is to pervert the order of society and to create confusion about the distinction of roles to be played by the temporal and the spiritual authorities. One need not be an economist to see how ridiculous such demands are as far as the riches of the Church in the Philippines are concerned. The immense riches of the Church and those of our Archdiocese are great only in the imagination of these young men. But anyone with a grain of knowledge in economic matter knows that if all the possessions of the Church would be sold and distributed to the poor, they would remain just as poor tomorrow. And who would care for them the day after?

Perhaps it would not be out of place when dealing with this enormous scandal to recall here the fact that, at different times, the opponents of one particular entity in the Church have accused her members of holding to the principle so strongly repudiated by St. Paul, "*Do evil as a means to good*" (Rom. 3:8). We are far from joining in the accusation; yet, in the case of these demonstrations evil is used as a means to a greater evil.

A last consideration of this scandal points to the Christian training that these young men who are used for the purpose of demonstrating are supposed to receive. As it is, their Catholic training becomes for ever jeopardized by the philosophy behind this movement. Given the noble commitment of all young men and the spontaneous attachment of student to teacher, especially if the teacher is a priest, the natural effect of these activities shall be a sort of mesmerization, pardon the word, of each one of the individuals and that of the group, who will have committed themselves to a continuous fault-finding of others — in this case the bishops — who might happen to think differently. The loyalty to Church and authority they should have received at school will inevitably turn into a blind obedience to their mentors and leaders. For, though the boys arrogantly appropriate for themselves the name *leader*, they are just tools. The true leaders remain behind scenes enjoying the performance, with God knows what saintly gusto.

### ANSWERS

The previous observations, we hope, will help our young interrogator that he may see these events placed into focus. Thus, the answers to his specific queries would easily flow from what we have stated above.

1. No. In all honesty, the demonstrations cannot be a genuine manifestation of the *spirit* of Vatican II. The trick of calling it the spirit of the council is already well known abroad, and the organizers of these demonstrations do try to introduce them into the Philippines as a healthy, they say, sign of Church's vitality *in the spirit of Vatican II*. It seems *only* that when *these demonstrations are the very reversal Council's texts*, the hands behind the movement should appeal to the *spirit* of the Council. They know well that such absurdities cannot be supported by the conciliar documents. In fact, we ourselves have come across the case of one demonstrator who, interrogated, candidly admitted that he had read no document and that he did not know what the Vatican II really was.

As for the *spirit* invoked here, the history of the Church tells us that all dissenters against her from the beginning have claimed for themselves a *spirit*. Now they call it *charism*, though we wonder what they do

understand by this word. In itself a charism, if it be true, is a precious gift, a way of God's acting within men for something that serve some salvation's purpose. But, according to St. Paul even the *spirit*, even the *charism*, if it be true, is subject to the judgment of the Church's authorities, the bishops and the presbyters whom "*the Holy Spirit has made the overseers to feed the Church of God which he bought with his blood*" (Acts, 20:28). As far back as St. Jchn the warning had been sounded: "*It is not every spirit, my dear people, that you can trust; test them. to see if they come from God*" (1 Jo. 4:).

But let us come to the very words of Vatican II, that exclude the right of anybody in the Church towards any such "demands" against the bishops of any nation's hierarchy in communion with the Holy Father:

- a. Hence this sacred Council teaches that bishops, by divine institution, have succeeded to the place of the Apostles, as pastors of the Church. He who hears them, hears Christ; he who rejects them, rejects Christ and Him who sent Christ (cf. Lk 10, 16)

Thus, through the bishops who are assisted by the priests, our Lord Jesus Christ is present in the midst of those who believe".

*Dogmatic Const. on the Church*, nn. 20, 21.

This touches on a matter of faith and, as a point of doctrine, cannot be challenged without being guilty of heresy. Yet, in practise, the demonstrators behave as if they are directly subject to Christ and not to their bishops whom they submit to such humiliations and such indignities.

- b. The individual bishops, to each of whom the care of a particular church has been entrusted, are, under the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, the proper, ordinary and immediate pastors of these churches. They feed their sheep in the name of the Lord, and exercise in their regard *the office* of teaching, sanctifying and governing". *Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops*, in the *Church*, n. 11.

This is a matter of Church's government. In theory it cannot be challenged without schism. In practice, however, the demonstrators' pro-



cedure is schismatic in mind and in effect, though they may brag their being more catholic-minded than their bishops.

- c. The lay people have the right to form organizations, manage them, and join them, *PROVIDED THEY MAINTAIN THE PROPER RELATIONSHIP TO ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY*. . . .

Regarding institutions and programs directed to the secular order, the duty of the Church's hierarchy to teach and provide an authentic explanation of the moral principle to be applied in the secular order. They also have the right, after enlisting the help of experts and weighing the matter carefully, to make judgments on whether such programs and institutions conform to moral principles, and to decide what is required to protect and promote supernatural values. *The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, nn. 19, 24.

This is a matter of action and discipline. It cannot be challenged without rebellion.

The foregoing considers only the Council's doctrine on the exclusive competence of our Cardinal and our bishops towards anything that can be called *lay apostolate*. Now, in regard to the administration of Church's properties, the demonstrators and their mentors, be they priests or lay citizens who consider themselves the exemplary Catholics, are equally wrong in their sinful demands. The Church has a sacred law on the matter. Both in the right and procedure of acquiring property and its administration, this sacred law binds all ecclesiastical administrators from the Secretary of State of the Vatican, through all bishops of the world, to the lowest cleric and clerk, in a way similar to those who administer the properties of nations. Now, a great part of Church's properties in all countries has been accepted from donors for some special purposes of charity and justice, that should be discharged either within a period of time or in perpetuity, either in favour of the living or for the souls of the faithful departed. On account of this intention of donors, these funds are called *pious foundations* or "*obras pias*", for instance *San Juan de Dios Hospital* and *Hospicio de San José* to mention only two. In

administering Church's properties especially in matters concerning the funds of the pious foundations or that of the "obras pías", Cardinal Santos and the bishops, far from being free, are obliged in justice to observe, perhaps in perpetuity, the conditions accepted by themselves or by their predecessors in the original contract with the original donors. Moreover, the Cardinal and the Bishops are responsible to the Holy See for their proper administration. Only the Holy See is not judged by anybody. (Can. 1556). And here are we have a bunch of boys who are still at school, ably managed by teachers, politicians, and priests demanding "To know so many things" from Cardinal Santos. Can any absurdity be conceived greater than this?

Thus, our young priest may have reasons enough to convince anyone who is not mesmerized as we said, that *the spirit of Vatican II* is just a ghost living in the attic of the demonstrators' imagination.

2. — Yes, because of their insistence in their sinful demands, as well as the publicity they have aroused, the demonstrators should be considered as public sinners. And in virtue of the reasons given above, the demonstrators are greater public sinners than those referred on in the moral books of the past. They are however, less responsible than their mentors and those priests behind them. Perhaps the words of Our Lord to Pilate will give an exact evaluation of responsibility in this case: "*The one who handed me over to you has a greater guilt.*" (Io. 19:11).

3. The answer to the last question is very easy. If anyone of the demonstrators approaches the young priest for confession, this young priest, and any other priest for that matter, should receive him with utmost benevolence and treat him with the greatest understanding. The case of the demonstrators approaching any priest at random and telling their activities on the matter, is not easily supposed to occur because of that thing we have called mesmerization which easily produces in young men a sort of information for the priests of their dreams. No doubt they would consider themselves the model catholics. Instead of acknowledging any guilt they think they are doing "*a holy duty to God*" (Io. 16:2), to use the prophetic, if ominous words of Our Lord. When for confession and guidance, they approach these priests, they naturally become more conformed in their opinion.

But, if any one of the demonstrators approaches a priest for confession, the priests must receive him kindly and help him to understand his plight. However, before he absolves the penitent, the boy should promise seriously to separate himself from such activities, if he is still engaged in them and to offer an apology to Cardinal Santos. This last will be extremely easy, even by letter, and the boy can be sure of only a paternal reception from his Eminence. In fact, the rejoicing over the one sheep for the good shepherd will exceed his joy over the ninety-nine others who did not demonstrate against him.

Another condition for the grace of absolution is that the boy promises seriously to undo towards the public, in general the evil to the reputation of Cardinal Santos and the bishops. This obligation goes in proportion to the influence each demonstrator has had towards the destroying of the good reputation of the pastors. The amount of responsibility will be different for different individuals. All will have a measure of influence for the mutual influence of each one towards the mesmerization of the group. A public apology, even in the press should be required as much as possible. If for material damage material restitution is required in the words of St. Augustine, "*non dimittitur peccatum nisi restituatur ablatum*", how much greater is the obligation of restitution by these demonstrators, the active cause of so much discredit of their shepherds, and so much evil to the church and society!

• QUINTIN M. GARCIA, O.P.