

EDITORIAL

Love For All No Malice Towards Any One

Can we criticize the government and still love those who govern? The Joint Pastoral Letter of the Philippine Hierarchy, "The Bond of Love In Proclaiming the Good News" gave a resounding "YES" in answer to this question. In so doing the Bishops closed ranks and stopped the rift that was polarizing them into the opposing camps of "political" Bishops and "a-political" Shepherds.

The letter is notable for its positive approach. Before pointing out the questionable aspects of some government policies it is careful to acknowledge what good it finds in them. It is interspersed with phrases like: "we readily appreciate the efforts of the government..." "we praise the intent of the government..." "we recognize the delicate situation obtaining in the government's efforts to solve the centuries-old problem of Mindanao..."

The authors of the letter even took pains to coin new names that acknowledge the praiseworthy role of the Army and Constabulary: "Guardians of Peace" and "Protectors of National Security". And they do not fail to invite people to pray so that the "Workers of Evangelization" and the "Guardians of National Security" start anew the common task of uniting our People for progress and peace. "Let us remove," they said, "the painful irony that while we share common aspirations, we have nevertheless looked at each other with suspicion and mistrust."

Nevertheless the Bishops are not afraid to say that they "strongly deplore and condemn" the Presidential Arm on Cultural Minorities (PANAMIN) for its responsibility in the harassment, intimidation, arrest and imprisonment of "men and women working for the rights and development of cultural minorities precisely as cultural communities." They also criticize the government for disregarding God-given rights touching on family life; they "voice our people's apprehension lest basic human rights be ignored in the attempt to resolve the problems" of Mindanao.

The government is severely admonished to respect the Church's God-given right to evangelize by forming Basic Christian Communities, which the government should not misunderstand by looking at them as a threat to the existence of the state. The least the Bishops ask for is that "at all times due process be observed in all cases of arrests and deportation of Workers of Evangelization, be they priests, religious or lay workers."

These seem to be bold demands but their restraint would be better appreciated if we notice that not a word is said directly against martial law. Compare this with the position paper of the 17 Bishops, "Ut Omnes Unum Sint" — that all may be one. You will conclude that something must have happened during the Conference to convince the 17 Bishops to abandon their belligerent attitude towards martial law."

At the same time, something must have happened to convince the pacific Bishops that the Church has to "strongly deplore and condemn" certain government practices protected by martial law.

What happened? Through prayer and the Holy Spirit the Bishops came to the deeper awareness that "The Church embraces all men as brothers under the Fatherhood of God. She is not partial to any group. She has a motherly sympathy for the poor and voiceless. She has love for all, no malice towards any one."

May these truths become more deeply a part of ourselves each day.

In This Issue

Justice and peace continue to elude us but we must not give up hope. We must explore new ways of working for them. We must examine ourselves to find out whether we have been neglecting some of the means needed for our task. Have we sufficiently counted on the contribution of lay leaders? Recent developments connected with the Theology of Liberation show a trend towards excessive clericalism in temporal matters. We must let the laity undertake their rightful role of uplifting the temporal order. For this reason we welcome the Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio "Apostolatus Peragendi"* which transforms the Council of the Laity to a Pontifical Council for the Laity and enhances its competence: it will not only deal with matters concerning the apostolate of the