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Catholic Church Plans
Witness For World Peace

By W. Barry Garrett

VATICAN CITY (BP)-- Some sort of world government to ensure peace, justice and relief of poverty is being strongly urged by leaders in the Roman Catholic Church.

Pope Paul VI himself took the lead in not only endorsing the United Nations but urging its development into an effective international government.

The proposed decree being considered by Vatican Council II on "The Church and the Modern World" calls for a world "constitution" to govern all mankind. Prominent Catholic bishops are calling for a "world republic" and for the establishment of a secretariat in the Catholic Church to promote international justice and development.

Pope Paul in his address to the United Nations in New York asked, "Is there anyone who does not see the necessity of coming thus progressively to the establishment of a world authority, able to act effectively at the juridical and political levels?"

Speaking of the United Nations, Pope Paul called his message "a solemn and moral ratification of this lofty institution." He added that the entire Catholic episcopate is convinced that "this organization represents the obligatory path of modern civilization and of world peace."

Vatican Council II, meeting at a time when modern warfare threatens the existence of mankind, and when problems of justice and poverty can be solved only on an international scale, is calling for international cooperation in new and dramatic ways.

The basis of such calls by the Roman Church is the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of all men, and the love, sacrifice and humility of Jesus Christ as seen in the gospel. This is in part the way the church sees its witness to the modern world.

In a section of the decree on the international community and the building of peace, the Council proposes to say:

"In view of the close ties of mutual dependence existing today between all the inhabitants and peoples of the earth, the pursuit and attainment of the common good now require that the community of nations draw up for itself a constitution that will be suited to its present responsibilities, especially in those many lands which even today are suffering intolerable poverty."

The document goes on to say: "The establishment of a world-wide economic system will necessitate the abolishing of excessive profit-seeking of national ambitions, of the drive for political domination, of militarization, and of efforts to propagate and impose 'ideologies.'"

In a speech that drew the greatest outburst of applause of the four years of meetings of the Council, Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, head of the powerful Roman Holy Office, called for an "international brotherhood without distinction of race, color, levels of culture," and other distinctions among men. He called for the nations to organize sanctions "to punish disobedience to international organizations trying to maintain world peace."

Ottaviani then dramatically declared: "Just as we hear of plans for a United Europe, and as we have the United States of America, the United States of Brazil, why cannot man reach the point where there will be only one world republic, one common fatherland for all men, a Christian republic where the peace of Christ would reign in the kingdom of Christ."

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In another speech Archbishop George Andrew Beck of Liverpool pointed out the obstacles to such international cooperation. "One of the biggest obstacles," he said, "is the 'fragmentation of society' into 120 sovereign states, each of which insists on maintaining its own sovereignty, except through treaties which, in the final analysis, they are free to revoke."

Replying to the objection to such requests that no one would pay any attention to them, Bishop Alfred Ancel, Auxiliary of Lyons, said, "The effectiveness of our statement is not expected to come from the strength of arms but from the fact that acting in the Person of Christ we bear witness to truth before the entire world."

In order to implement the Catholic Church's position on international cooperation a proposal for the establishment of a Secretariat for Promoting World Justice and Development has achieved wide support in the Council.

The purpose of such an organization, according to Msgr. Eduardus Swanstrom, head of the National Catholic Welfare Conference refugee service, would be "to carry on this long-term process of education and inspiration, motivation and moral influence."

Archbishop Angelo Fernandes of India, speaking in the name of 200 bishops of India, Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and Canada, boosted the idea of a secretariat promoting justice and development.

He said that through such an organization the church could use its influence and moral authority "so that gradually the political, social and economic structures of all nations will be oriented, not towards war--not even defensive war--but towards the establishment of true and lasting peace."

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