

The New President Of The NCCB . . .

An Interview With Archbishop Joseph Bernardin

By WILLIAM H. MARSHNER

(Conclusion)

In the lengthy interview which Archbishop Bernardin granted to this reporter on Nov. 14th, a number of his answers threw important light on his approach to issues of national importance for the Catholic people: issues such as school aid, abortion, textbooks, the authority of pastors, and parental rights. The interview itself was not pitched to these issues, nor was it intended for publication; largely, it was an exploration of problems local to Cincinnati, a major archdiocese on which I am preparing an in-depth report. However, since Archbishop Bernardin has recently replaced Cardinal Krol as president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, it seemed timely to place some excerpts from this before a national readership.

The survival of Catholic schools is central to the survival of Catholic identity, as we have known it in America. Why, therefore, did you support a levy for public schools this year?

A. I remained neutral on a similar levy proposed the year before, my first year in Cincinnati. This year, on the basis of my reading of the situation, documents that I saw, conversations that I had, I felt that the case for an increase of the levy was much better. In addition to that, the State of Ohio had passed a rather generous Auxiliary Services Bill. This is not what we wanted; we wanted more direct forms of aid, but at least, given the Supreme Court's current position, this was the most the State could do. This money, for the services themselves, was to be given to us through the public school system, like instructors for special groups, counselors, and so on. And so I felt that since the State was making an effort to help us within the limits imposed by the Supreme Court, and since we were collaborating with the public school system in getting these services, that this was added reason for me to endorse it. But in

endorsing it, I made it very clear that I was not committing the Catholic community to this, because I really could not commit the Catholic community to it. This was something that every voting citizen would have to decide for himself. I had studied the issues involved, and I felt that I could support it, and I simply recommended that everyone else study the issues and then do what he felt was best. . . . I didn't say the Catholic Church was for this.

Q. Is there any program in the Catholic schools which is there as a response to a State or Federal requirement? In order to qualify, to receive any of these auxiliary services, for example, is there some type of program that the schools have to have — health courses or something of that kind?

A. Not to my knowledge. There are certain requirements which we have to have for accreditation, but, you know, this has been in existence for some time and has nothing to do with any kind of funding or auxiliary services. But to my knowledge there is no particular program that is required.

Q. I was wondering because under the Federal Inter-Agency Day Care Standards there is a provision for health and sex education. I was wondering if there was some tie-in.

A. To my knowledge, certainly no one has mentioned it to me — and I think I would have heard.

Q. Do you feel that there is still any hope of any Federal tax credits or other substantial aid to the Catholic schools?

A. Not in the foreseeable future. Now, of course, conceivably there could be a change in the Court. If that change is in favor of Catholic schools, then certainly something could be done. I am not ruling it out as an absolute impossibility; but I don't see this coming in the near future. And what I'm telling my people here is that we will take advantage of the auxiliary services and all the rest, and if there is any hope of getting some funds in the future, we'll work with others on that. But in the meantime, let's try to resolve whatever problems we have, especially financial problems, within the present framework, because I think it would be disastrous, really, to do anything else.

Q. Would you see this as a mixed blessing, really? Would you say that there are dangers connected with Federal aid?

A. There can certainly be dangers, and I think that we would have to, you know, guard against these dangers; in other words, I would be totally opposed to any kind of aid that would force us to do things that we are not in agreement with because of our Catholic position. I feel personally, on the basis of all that I have read, and on the basis of my involvement, that it would be constitutional to make this aid available without any strings. I think a good case can be built up for that. But there is always the danger, when there is money, that there could be strings, or that strings might develop later on. And I think, not only in reference to our schools but in reference to any of our other institutions, that we have to guard against that.

Q. Some people have mentioned the possibility that a special meeting of the NCCB might be called to deal with the question of abortion. Apparently there is some feeling that within the regular framework of the meetings, there had not been adequate time to discuss the problem in all its ramifications. Would you favor a move of that kind?

A. Well, I am totally opposed to abortion. I would be willing to go along with anything that would bring us a step closer to getting rid of this evil. Now, I personally have only heard indirectly, just as you were mentioning it to me now, that there has been some talk about this. Certainly no one has gotten in touch with me officially, so I know nothing about it, other than just hearing it from a person like yourself. But if there is a need to do this, then I would certainly be willing to do it — not only willing but anxious to do it. One of the difficulties is that some of the things that we may do at the national level can be publicized, but then there are other things which we can't publicize, especially when we are talking about strategy and all the rest. . . . I know that abortion is on the agenda of the executive session (at the upcoming Bishops' meeting); but now whether we'll have time to do all that needs to be done, I won't know until I get there.

Q. There has been considerable concern expressed among right-



Archbishop Bernardin

life people in Washington as to what the Bishops' Conference is doing. There have been endless complaints about whether the government liaison office of the USCC is helping or is in the way — controversy about whether to support the Bartlett Amendment and so forth. I would like to know through what channels the Bishops act in the dioceses are advised of political strategies — questions like, should we get behind the discharge petition or shouldn't we. How is this managed? How are these decisions made? How are they communicated? And are you satisfied that in this policy-making and policy-dissemination process, that the Bishops are getting a broad enough selection of opinion?

A. That's a very complicated question. As far as the de facto situation is concerned, it's something like this. Within the Conference we do have this Office of Government Liaison, and we also have the Office of General Counsel, and they are very much involved in this. In addition, several years ago, we established what we call a committee for law and public policy — we used to call it the "blue ribbon committee of attorneys" — they're supposed to give advice to us not only on this

issue but on a number of public issues facing the Church. In addition to that, the Bishops have set up this separate corporation that's headed up by Bob Lynch. The reason for setting it up separately is because of tax laws and all the rest; but it's certainly an arm of the Bishops in the sense that we subsidize it; we are asked to send in a certain amount of money for it. And while on the books it's clearly separate, there is constant liaison between Bob Lynch's office and the officers of the Conference. He reports to us. Now, most of the decisions that have been made, have been made at meetings of the Administrative Committee. I guess one reason for that is that meetings are more private than the general meetings. Now, admittedly, not as many Bishops are involved — there are about thirty-eight or forty but it is a much more manageable number body, and you are not meeting any under any pressure, and I think that most of the decisions have been made within that context.

And then, periodically, we are informed — like at this closed (executive) session of the Conference, we will be given a great deal of information, and there may be some decisions that will be presented to us in that context. At other times, we are informed by letter as to what is going on. In addition to that, there is a liaison between these national offices within the Conference or affiliated with the Conference and the State Catholic conferences. For instance, here in Ohio we meet quarterly, and the abortion issue is always on our agenda. We discuss not only the situation as it exists in Ohio. For example, recently the State of Ohio passed legislation which was about as restrictive as it could be under the existing court decisions.

Q. Do you feel that such State legislation does any good?

A. Yes, I think so, and it is the opinion of the people who advise us that it does good. Obviously, it is not what we want. But we feel that lives are saved because of this — not as many as we would like. It's a very delicate situation that we are put in, because we're almost put in the position of supporting a law which authorizes abortion under certain circumstances or certain conditions. But that is not the reason we push this. We feel it would be almost irresponsible not to do anything about it. . . . so, it does create something of a PR problem, but generally when we've explained it, people understand that if you can't get everything, then you try to get something, because we're dealing here with

human life. We're trying to save certain lives.

Now, this is how it works. Exactly where we stand now in terms of coming closer to some kind of constitutional amendment, I'm going to be anxious to hear what kind of report they give us next week. Now, there has been a big hassle between the Conference, on the one hand, and many other groups, on the other hand, concerning a matter such as the Hogan Amendment. The Conference has been, you know, severely criticized for not pushing that. I guess you've heard the reasons why. It's not that the Conference has said it will never support the Hogan Amendment; it's more a question of thinking it was premature to do so, that there were certain disadvantages if we went with that particular amendment at this particular time. Now, you know, the day may come, when — I'm told — the Conference will decide to go with it, but they were not ready to go with it at this time.

Q. Were you ever told that a common opinion among congressmen was that strong support by the Catholic Church would have netted the required number of signatures on the discharge petition? And were you told that as soon as that number of signatures got close, Edwards would have backed down and held the hearings? In other words, that the amendment would not actually have come to the floor under the discharge petition route?

A. This was the basic problem that was explained to us: that if that thing were discharged, then there would be no chance for hearings or anything else, and there was a great deal of concern about that. I don't recall being told what you just said.

Q. Are you aware of a problem of theological dissent on the issue of abortion? Do you think it will become a serious problem? Do you think the Bishops should make any statement on this?

A. I am obviously aware that there is a certain dissent, and also I am concerned about the adverse effect that this could have on the thinking of many people and the adverse effect that this could have on countering the efforts to get a constitutional amendment. Certainly, as Bishops I think we have an obligation to speak out on this if it becomes a more serious problem — or even if it doesn't become a more serious problem, I think we have to keep stating what our position is. I don't think that we can let this go by default.

Now, I must say here that. . . I'm not saying that there is total unanimity; but whatever dissent there might be, would be more underground than anything else. For instance, I've never been challenged by any Catholic person here on the rather strict position that we take on abortion. I'm talking about a theologian or a priest coming out against our traditional position on this — we haven't had that here yet.

Q. Has Fr. Charles Curran been in this diocese to speak?

A. Not since I've been here. Q. I suppose it's inevitable that we get into the question of textbooks — Sadlier, Benziger, and so forth. I had an interview with two officials in your Archdiocesan Education Office, and the first thing they told me was that they hadn't read them. Have you read them?

A. I have not read all of them, but may I say that they should have. That's their job. I'm going to look into that.

May I mention this to you? I would like to do a little more in the whole textbook field because of the many controversies that exist. . . . so that we can really give good advice to our pastors and to others who are involved in religious education. At the present time, the basic responsibility for deciding on a text, whether to have a particular text or not, rests with the parish. And I sort of hold the parish priest or pastor responsible for that. But our department is supposed to advise, and that advice is needed. Now, I'd like to go a step beyond that, and I'd like to do more evaluating through the department, because I feel that this is a very crucial area of concern.

Q. I have browsed in these textbooks and seen some critical reviews written by parents, and it does strike me that there is a valid issue here. One would be hard put to say that the purpose of these books was to make it clear what the Catholic Faith is. The purpose seems to be something else.

A. Well, I think that one of the difficulties that we face generally is that it frequently is not a question so much of heresy but, as you said, it's a question of not really presenting in a very clear and simple way the basic elements of our Faith. Now, I have the feeling on the basis of some discussions that I've had that perhaps this situation is improving. I think there is much more concern about the content and the clarification of content now than there might have been several years ago, but I personally believe that we still have some way to go in that. . . . I think that what is wrong with these books sometimes is that they are

not clear. I think that sometimes the concerned parents when they are looking at these books, they don't clearly see certain doctrinal elements that they expect to find. Maybe they are there, in different words, but many people don't see them. So I think sometimes a lot of difficulty could be taken care of, if there were dialogue between those who write these books and the parents, because I think that some of it is due to misunderstanding. But even allowing for that, I agree that sometimes more clarity is needed; and, of course, sometimes you run across things that aren't correct, and these things have to be corrected.

Q. Have you ever had to write a letter to a textbook publisher — or are you aware of a Bishops' committee sending a communication to a textbook publisher — saying, "Look, we've looked through this book, and on p. 25 there is something wrong; please do something about it in the next edition?"

A. I have not personally done this. But you're also asking whether maybe some Bishops' committee has done this —

Q. Archbishop Whealon's committee, perhaps?

A. I don't know whether they have or not. Now, what I have done, through the Censor Librorum — during my two years here, I have been asked to give the imprimatur on certain books, most of them printed by the St. Anthony Press — and we have insisted that certain corrections be made. Yes, I've done that. And I remember that in one instance, it had to do with abortion. It was not that what was said was totally opposed to our position, but it was somewhat ambiguous, and I didn't give my imprimatur unless that was cleared up. . . . I've done that a number of times. But I have not written to a national publisher over which I had no — well, who didn't come to me for an imprimatur.

And if you want to ask another question, I'll ask it for you: Have I ever called in priests to correct them on what they have said or done? Yes, I have.

Q. Suppose some of the parents who are just adamantly opposed to a lot of the textbooks decided to go on their own, to set up a parent-run school or some parent-run CCD programs in various parishes. Would you feel this is divisive? Would you feel that they should be encouraged in this? Would you feel that this is an acceptable last resort?

A. Well, first of all, you know, the parents do have the right to educate and form their children. We have to keep this in mind. I would hope, however, that if a difficult situation arises in the parish it could be worked out without having to do this. In the final analysis, if a parent or group of parents decided that they wanted to go and form their own, well then obviously they have the right to do it, and I couldn't stop them. But if they wanted recognition, then I think that someone like the pastor would have to take a look at what is happening. See, my point is, if a group of parents want to do this on their own, there is no way that I can stop them — there's no way that I would try to stop them. But if they wanted to be recognized in some way by the Church, then I would have to ask someone, presumably the pastor, to sort of

supervise what was going on or at least stay in touch with it, because I would have to have some assurance that what is being done is proper.

Q. Would you say that for purposes of religious education the pastor is your representative at the parish level (rather than the religious education "professionals")?

A. Yes; right. . . . I can state categorically, as I have to a few people who have brought this up to me, that this is the role of the pastor and, if they want me to put this in writing in some special letter or edict or decree, I'll do it, because that's absolutely correct.

Q. I think the concern here is over bureaucratization and "professionalism" in the Church.

A. It simply is not true that we have an impenetrable bureaucracy. No one is more sensitive than I, to the needs, desires, the frustrations, the aspirations of our people. I try to be as accessible to them as I can. . . . I answer practically every letter that I get. I told all my staff that I want them to be very sensitive to people who come here. . . . I worry about this very much, and I pride myself on the fact that I do try to make myself accessible and that I'm not living in an ivory tower. . . .

Last night I attended an institute that we were having for priests at the seminary. This is part of our continuing education program. I was specifically asked to address myself to the question of parish councils, because we are having difficulties in some places. So I said (reading from the text of the talk), "There is a need better to define roles and competencies. The pastor has a leadership role in the parish which must be respected. He is the representative of the Archbishop, and canonically he is the one who is held accountable for the overall performance of the parish." There it is. Furthermore, I said that as far as the parish council is concerned, the pastor has veto power over anything they do. This doesn't mean he shouldn't work with them and listen to them but he has veto power — which has been denied by some people.

Q. Archbishop, do you know what frog-kissing is?

A. Frog-kissing? Am I supposed to know?

Q. Well, when I went to your religious education office I found all over the place brochures advertising a frog-kissing session. This was to be the latest theme of the "serendipity" workshop to be held all over the Country. What does this have to do with religious education?

A. I have no idea. You know, it could be innocent and good or it could be crazy. I've never heard of it.

(At the end of the interview, after many questions had been discussed, Archbishop Bernardin thought there was one more thing I should know.)

A. There's something else you may or may not know. We have the Daughters of St. Paul here (at the Chancery), and I think that they serve a very good purpose in providing an option for people who may not find the option that they're looking for elsewhere. They live here and they run their bookstore next door. When I say "an option," you know, in terms of the kinds of books that they publish and sell. They're doing a very fine job.

The Living Faith . . .

More Corruption

By FR. EUGENE LOVISA

Many Catholic laymen wonder why some priests teach that any form of contraception is permissible. The more knowledgeable laymen wonder why they don't teach that there are legitimate means of family planning such as the basal body temperature method of rhythm which any woman can use (not the calendar method which very few women can use and which is not too scientific) or the simpler Billings Ovulation Method, which, according to present studies, eighty-five percent of women can follow most effectively. They wonder why these priests don't teach that the efforts required to be moral can be a means of sanctification for themselves and their families. They wonder why these priests are trying to make life easier when the secular world does that very well.

Here is a possible explanation. In this lecture series the speaker was discussing contraception and he summarized his position by saying that if a Catholic tried to follow the teachings of the Church on this matter and could not, he may use some artificial means with a good conscience. He failed to tell us that the IUD is an abortifacient and that there is evidence to support the position that one of the effects of the "pill" is to cause abortion.

His justification went something like this. Catholics are not the only ones who follow Christ. Non-Catholics also belong to the Church founded by Christ. The Holy Spirit speaks through His followers. Non-Catholics (and according to him sixty-eight percent of Catholics) do not see anything wrong with contraception. "Is the Holy Spirit saying something here? From the lives of good people we hear the teachings of the Holy Spirit, though not as the primary source such as the liturgy. The Pope occupies the primary source of the teachings, but the lives of good people are not to be disregarded. . . . What is the Holy Spirit saying to us in the lives of good people? And if the faithful as a whole anointed by the Holy Spirit do not err in matters of faith. . . (Protestants belong to the People of God). . . don't we have a huge sign of something very vital to the Church?"

His argument betrayed a lack of scholarship and basic theology, a subject in which he has a doctorate. This involves the authority of the Pope and he simply dismissed this by saying, "The question of Papal infallibility is now under discussion as seen from the writings of Hans Kueng." Kueng's orthodoxy is now being investigated. He took for granted that Humanae Vitae was a mistake. "The Pope making an error is to be corrected by successors." He failed to distinguish between errors in prudential judgments and errors in faith and morals. How could he justify his opposition to the Church? He said that in the history of the Church, opposition existed before and he gave examples such as St. Catherine of Siena and St. Alphonsus — individuals who founded their orders in opposition to certain ecclesiastics. He doesn't seem to realize that these saints were in opposition to certain churchmen in disciplinary matters and were not opposed to the Church's teaching on faith and morals. Then he concluded with a statement that left us in complete amazement at his lack of knowledge. "Look at Thomas More. This man adhered to his conscience." Thomas More "adhered to his conscience" by obeying the Pope, opposing the King and was therefore beheaded by Henry VIII. And naturally coming down to our own day, he had to mention the Berrigans. He thought the Holy Spirit was speaking through them also.

In ordinary circumstances we would be inclined to dismiss the speaker without a second thought, but we can't. He teaches moral theology in a Catholic seminary. We are not generalizing and we don't know how many more there are like him. If some priests are teaching that artificial means of contraception is permissible, we must place the greater blame on their teachers.

Order for Hearing Petition for Probate (Testate) and Notice to Creditors STATE OF MINNESOTA COUNTY OF RAMSEY PROBATE COURT File No. 138222

Re Estate of LEON T. NORMAN, also known as L. T. NORMAN, Decedent

IT IS ORDERED that the petition filed hereto do admit to probate the last will of decedent and/or for summary distribution be heard on Monday, December 23, 1974, at 10 o'clock A.M. by this court in the Court House in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Any representative to appointed subject to all the duties and powers provided by statute.

IT IS ORDERED that creditors of decedent file their claims in this court within 90 days from the date hereof and that said claims be filed by the first Monday in February, 1975, at 10 o'clock A.M. by this court in the Court House in Saint Paul, Minnesota. (Seal)

WITNESS the HON. ANDREW A. GLENN, Probate Judge, this 28th day of November, 1974.

THOMAS MALONE, Clerk.

JOSEPH A. RHEINBERGER, Attorney

200 South Robert Street Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55107 Nov. 28, Dec. 3-12

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