

JOINT PASTORAL LETTER

The Catholic Bishops of the British Caribbean

As we meet in Kingston, Jamaica, for our Biennial Conference, history making events are being unfolded in the lives of the peoples of the British Caribbean where it is our privilege to serve as pastors of souls. Since we last met, great and far-reaching changes have taken place in the political orientation of the area. New pages of history are being written. In this momentous epoch when our peoples are preparing to accept the grave responsibilities of nationhood, we implore God's blessing for our countries in this great hour of their destiny and pray that His divine law may be their guide both in the writing of their Constitutions and in their national life in the years to come. For there will be no true prosperity for our countries unless God's law and Religion be given their rightful place. Happily, the deep religious tradition found in the Caribbean gives sound reason to hope that this will be so.

National freedom inevitably calls for a greater spirit of unity within each nation which cannot be achieved without a large measure of self-sacrifice on the part of each and every individual and a greater spirit of charity among those who belong to different classes and to groups of different origins. Above all, we need leaders who will work for the common good and who will put the welfare of the whole country above personal interests or those of party, of class, or of group.

THE RIGHTS OF MAN

But national freedom will be meaningless unless the dignity of the individual be respected and the essential God-given rights of both individual and family be given their due place. We wish especially to insist upon such essential rights as that to set up a family and to be able to support it by honest work, the right of parents to give their children the education of their choice, the right to express one's opinions in accordance with one's conscience, and above all, freedom to worship God and keep His Law.

As His Holiness Pope John XXIII states in his Encyclical Letter "Mater et Magistre" dealing with Christianity and Social Progress:

"Our heart is filled with profound sadness when we observe as it were, with our own eyes a wretched spectacle indeed - great masses of workers who, in not a few nations, and even in whole continents, receive too small a return from their labour. Hence, they and their families must live in conditions completely out of accord with human dignity. This can be traced, for example, to the fact that in

these regions, modern industrial techniques either have only recently been introduced or have made less than satisfactory progress.

It happens in some of these nations that, as compared with the extreme need of the majority, the wealth and conspicuous consumption of a few stand out, and are in open and bold contrast with the lot of the needy...Wherefore, we judge it to be our duty to reaffirm once again that just as remuneration for work cannot be left entirely to unregulated competition, neither may it be decided arbitrarily at the will of the more powerful. Rather, in this matter, the norms of justice and equity should be strictly observed. This requires that workers receive a wage sufficient to lead a life worthy of man and to fulfill family responsibilities properly.

But in determining what constitutes an appropriate wage, the following must necessarily be taken into account: first of all, the contribution of individuals to the economic effort; the economic state of the enterprises within which they work; the requirements of each community, especially as regards overall employment; finally, what concerns the common good of all peoples, namely of the various States associated among themselves, but differing in character and extent."

POVERTY AND WANT

Our chances of survival in the various units or nations of the West Indies will be brighter if we close our ranks to slay the dragon of poverty and dire want. By the Great Commandment, love of God is inseparably associated with love of one's neighbour. The closest co-operation is called for to end the subnormal living conditions of too many of our people. No one may possess abundance as exclusively his own in the face of our social conditions. What is superfluous belongs in justice to the needy and the poor. Justice, not charity alone, is demanded. If we in the West Indies fail the poor, we shall have failed our most critical test, and compromised the future. To this purpose let us unite our prayers and pool our sacrifices. No segment of our people may be forgotten. Let us strive to prove our concern for those who are in need. This is the crying necessity of the hour. Under God we must not fail.

But even where social justice prevails, there will always remain the need for supplementary social works motivated by charity. Through our schools, our hospitals and other charitable undertakings, the Catholic Church has made an immense contribution to the well-being of our countries. She will continue to do what in her lies to provide such works. She claims the right to do so. She cannot consent to be excluded.

STATE INTERVENTION

This is but to reaffirm the basic principle which underlies the right relationship between private initiative and State intervention as stated by Pius XI and reiterated by His Holiness John XXIII: "It is a fundamental principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable, that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry. So, too, it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and a disturbance of right order, to transfer to a larger and higher organisation, functions which can be performed and provided for by lesser and subordinate bodies. Inasmuch as every social activity should, by its very nature, prove a help to members of the body social, it should never destroy or absorb them."

We, the Bishops of the British Caribbean area, are deeply conscious of the role the Church has to play in promoting the political and economic advance of our peoples. We are also conscious that more and more it will be fulfilled by clergy chosen from among their own peoples. We therefore rejoice at the increase of vocations to the Priesthood and to the Religious life stimulated by the establishment of the local Seminaries and Noviceships which have been founded. In this regard we quote from the Encyclical PRINCEPS PASTORUM of His Holiness Pope John XXIII:

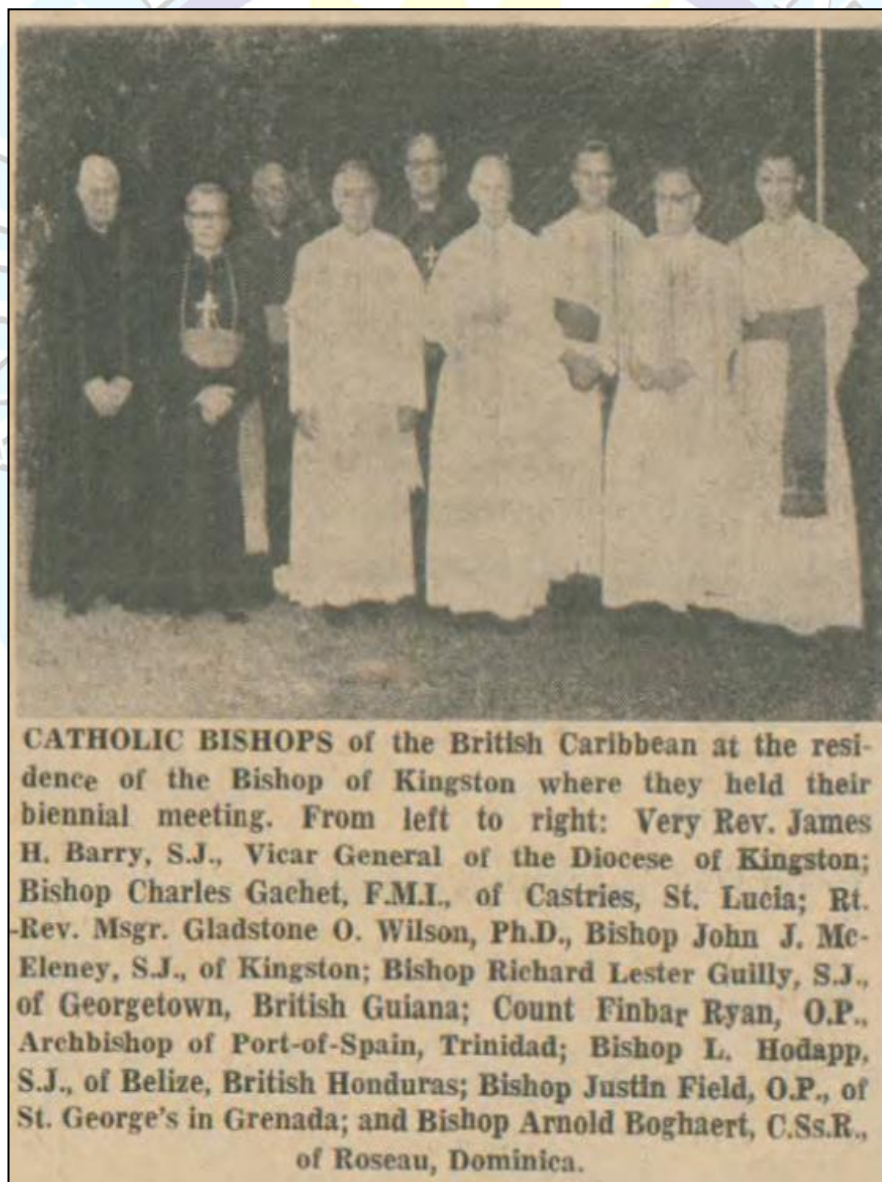
"the ultimate aim of all missionary activity - and this must never be lost sight of - is to plant the Church firmly among the peoples of other lands and to give them their own hierarchy, chosen from among their own people. It has therefore always been the considered policy of this Apostolic See - especially so in more recent times - to set up or restore the Church's hierarchy in every place where local conditions favour the establishment of episcopal Sees, and wherever possible, to entrust these Sees to bishops who are native to the area".

As children of God, we are called to build the City of God. The building we cannot leave to others. From each individual a positive contribution is essential in keeping with the new responsibilities of our peoples. On our knees before God we shall best realise the measure of service we are called upon to give.

Kingston, Jamaica, B.W.I.

at the end of their Biennial Conference – 09 February 1962.

- +Most Rev. FINBAR RYAN, OP - Archbishop of Port-of-Spain
- +Most Rev. JOHN JOSEPH McELENEY, SJ – Bishop of Kingston
- +Most Rev. RICHARD LESTER GUILLY, SJ – Bishop of Georgetown
- +Most Rev. JUSTIN FIELD OP – Bishop of St. Georges
- +Most Rev. ARNOLD BOGHAERT CSsR – Bishop of Roseau
- +Most Rev. CHARLES GACHET FMI – Bishop of Castries
- +Most Rev. ROBERT HODAPP SJ – Bishop of Belize



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