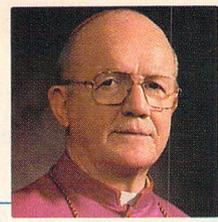




SUPREME KNIGHT
Virgil C. Dechant

MESSAGES



SUPREME CHAPLAIN
Bishop Thomas V. Daily

THE Holy See is under attack. Since April, the group that calls itself "Catholics for a Free Choice" has been trying to convince the United Nations to downgrade the Vatican's status from "permanent non-member state observer" to the more modest "non-governmental organization." The motives of Catholics for a Free Choice are clear: They want to silence the Vatican's preaching of the Gospel of Life. Over the past few years, Catholics for a Free Choice has made a name for itself in the press by challenging the Church's moral authority to speak out against abortion and artificial contraception, especially as they are promoted as tools for population control in developing countries.

You will be pleased to know that our Order, which recently was designated a nongovernmental organization associated with the United Nations, is speaking out in defense of the Vatican and its historic diplomatic status. In an April 16 letter to U.N. General Secretary Kofi Annan, I expressed the Order's concern that Catholics for a Free Choice was trying to upstage the Vatican and grab media attention in an effort that is otherwise meaningless.

As the U.S. bishops noted forcefully several years ago, Catholics for a Free Choice is not "Catholic" in any recognizable sense of the word. It represents no one and no real issues. The organization's virtually nonexistent membership seeks support for a radical pro-abortion, anti-family agenda. Its only activity, at least that which is reported on in the press, is an occasional attack on the Church, and specifically Pope John Paul II and the bishops in union with him.

In my letter to Annan, I also encouraged him to compare the valuable diplomatic work the Vatican has done throughout the U.N.'s history, and for centuries before, with the irrelevant, antagonistic activities of Catholics for a Free Choice. Furthermore, I noted that the Holy See maintains diplomatic relations with more than 168 countries of the world. Without a doubt, the Holy See's present role in the United Nations is much appreciated by the international community, while its moral and spiritual authority is well respected.

The refusal of Catholics for a Free Choice to accept the truth and the teaching of the Catholic Church on certain moral issues cannot justify its resort to meaningless and vindictive attack campaigns devoid of any historical perspective. Along with millions of truth-loving people throughout the world, the Vatican's present role in the United Nations should not be compromised. You can be certain that we will continue to monitor this effort and with vigilance and a firm determination, seek to assure that the Holy See's current status at the United Nations is not eroded by any group — "Catholic" or otherwise. ❖

HISTORY tells us that our founder, Father Michael J. McGivney, was a man of persistence and optimism. His efforts carried the Order through its infancy.

Of the men who gathered together to set off on the glorious path of Columbianism, Father McGivney was the youngest of them all. He was only 29 years old when he held those first meetings of what would become the Knights of Columbus. He was a quiet man, a holy priest, seeking justice for poor people, especially for widows and children.

Father McGivney united Catholic men to give strength to the Catholic community, to help Catholic laymen and their families both in their social life and their spiritual life. Little did he realize that through his efforts Catholics would gain greater recognition in society, if not in his lifetime than certainly in the 20th century.

For 117 years, the Knights of Columbus has been a "light to the nations," conducting charitable programs to help those in need and developing a successful insurance program for members and their loved ones.

When Father McGivney left St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn., for St. Thomas Church in Thomaston, it was said of him: "The Reverend M. J. McGivney has, by his courtesy and kindness, by the purity of his office, by the purity of his life, and by the faithful discharge of the duties pertaining to his holy office, secured the loving confidence of the people of St. Mary's, which will follow him in every future field of endeavor." Surely it can be said that by reading accounts like this, and also in Dominican Father Gabriel O'Donnell's columns on Father McGivney here each month, that our founder acted and spoke in the person of Jesus Christ. And surely, that's all Father McGivney wanted to do — walk in Christ's footsteps, stand by his side, unite himself to our Savior.

The life of the Order goes on. As we pray to our founder, let us pray for ourselves:

Lord, our God, holy is your name! Incline our hearts to your commandments and give us the wisdom of the Cross, so that free from sin, which imprisons us in our own self-centeredness, we may be open (like Father McGivney) to the gift of your Spirit, and so become worthy temples of your love.

Praise be Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and forever! ❖