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Church Action for World Development

Monsignor Marvin Bordelon

(The following is a summary of a proposal for collaboration with the National Council of Churches. The author is the former moderator of the NFCPG, and now Secretary of the Division of World Justice and Peace.)

Proposal. That Roman Catholic Church in the U.S.A., and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. jointly inaugurate a five-year program designed to promote international action to assist the development of peoples, and that in so doing they seek the cooperation of churches outside their membership, of the Jewish community, and of other agencies dedicated to this basic objective.

THE SITUATION. Two-thirds of the human race lives in great poverty while we are rich. Dreadful, de-humanizing conditions haunt the lives of countless millions of persons in the less developed nations. Their deprivation and exploitation is no less acute today than in April, 1967, when Pope Paul VI said these are "situations whose injustice cries to heaven." In fact the chasm between rich nations

and poor nations is widening, with serious adverse consequences for justice and peace.

RESPONSE. At the level of the Holy See new initiatives, of the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, have emerged. This proposal is made in order to help U.S. Christian citizens come to fuller understanding of the human conditions around the globe and become more responsive to the needs of exploited and impoverished peoples.

Further, recent studies indicate that the predominant attitude of U.S. churchgoers is excessively provincial and even ultranationalistic. It is therefore essential that the Church exercise its unique teaching mandate to arouse the citizenry to its responsibility as stewards of God's material blessings.

The Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace and the World Council of Churches have inaugurated a major joint program for development.

PROGRAM. The following objectives are envisioned in the U.S. proposal for joint Church action:

1. To deepen our people's knowledge and awaken their response by engaging in research and education, both theological and technical, in development questions.

2. To promote enlightened action on aid and trade programs by approaches to the laity, government agencies, private groups and others for more study and consideration of these issues.

3. By intensive use of mass communication media to highlight the development of less developed countries and thereby contribute to popular education concerning the problem.

4. To promote financial support for multilateral socio-economic development projects.

ORGANIZATION. The program is designed to operate through a Board of Directors (not incorporated), responsible to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and to the General Board of the National Council of Churches, and composed of twelve Roman Catholics and twelve National Council representatives. The Board of Directors may, under periodic authorization of the sponsoring agencies, engage staff and distribute money.

The Board of Directors will develop the program in successive stages. Estimated cost for the first two years is \$814,000; for the next three years is \$1,956,000.

FUNCTION. The organization and staff are to provide impetus, context, and especially assistance and service to the churches at national and local levels in their own work for development. On the side of the Roman Catholic Church this activity is necessary to help implement the major directions set out by *Pacem in Terris*, *Populorum Progressio*, the *Second Vatican Council* and the Holy See's establishing the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace.

RESOURCES. The program is to be financed mainly by foundation grants and individual gifts of a substantial nature.

Why enter this joint educational and action program. . .

1. *Human Life.* "At stake are the very life of poor nations, civil peace in developing countries, and world peace itself." (*Populorum Progressio*, n.55)

2. *Morality.* "If Catholic performance does not match Catholic promise, then truly we shall have failed." (*U.S. Bishops Pastoral*, January, 1968)

3. *Ecumenism.* Christian leaders share common cause to "help mankind vanquish selfishness, pride and rivalries, to open to all the road to a more human life." (*Populorum Progressio*, n. 82)

4. *Role of Church.* "She must offer men that which she possesses as her characteristic attribute: a global vision of man and of the human race." (*Populorum Progressio*, n. 13)