

CATHOLICS AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE

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INTEGRITY, Integration—such words indicate the needs of our age. They are needs which now affect humanity as a whole. All mankind needs to be integrated into the unity which it potentially is. Failure to achieve this integration involves the danger of destruction of large parts of humanity. St Augustine's definition of peace still holds good. It is 'the tranquillity of order'.

This problem of integration hinges on another problem of integration, the integration which involves the incarnation of the spiritual life in the material life. Disintegration is the disease of our time, the converse of that specialisation and expertise which to some extent cannot be avoided. Men tend to be divided up into those who try to solve humanity's problems on a spiritual level, who pray about them, and live a relatively secluded life, and on the other hand those men who try to work on a solely material level, who live a relatively active life, working in the social, political, economic and similar spheres. However, post-war Europe has shown us some eminent examples of leaders who have avoided this disintegration, and to whom is due the minimum equilibrium which has been achieved. The Catholic Prime Ministers of France, Germany, and Italy, achieved both a climate of opinion and a number of very concrete realities, strikingly in harmony with Christian truth. The faith and love which went into this work provided a basis for the building of something like a real peace. But without people who are themselves Christian and peace-loving the leaders can achieve little, and will eventually be rejected. *Pax Christi* (5 Rue Mabillon, Paris 6e) has been attempting, for the last few years, something of the education of the people themselves which is so badly needed.

It is only recently that organisations have begun again to grow up in the Church, combining the deepest spiritual approach with a full programme of active application. The tradition itself is as old as the Church and her apostolic mission. But it is only comparatively recently that new

conditions have brought into being organisations of the lay apostolate with these aims. *Pax Christi* must be numbered amongst these new bodies. It cannot claim to have established itself yet in the way that the *Young Christian Workers* have done. But its approach is essentially similar.

Pax Christi was begun in the Diocese of Lourdes soon after the war. A group of French soldiers came to the conclusion that they could not honestly say they loved their enemies. When the problems which were exercising their consciences came before Mgr Théas, Bishop of the Diocese, he began, with this group of men, the organisation known as *Pax Christi*. The intention was simply to put the relationship between French and Germans back on to a Christian level by means of personal contacts.

From this simple Christian basis, *Pax Christi* has grown into a movement which, working from a basis in prayer, intends to cover every problem of peace in the world, and to inspire Christians to be active in all these spheres. As a formally constituted Catholic organisation, it does not and will not take up sides on particular questions of political or economic organisation; and in regard to conscientious objection to war, Cardinal Feltin, Archbishop of Paris and President of *Pax Christi*, has emphasised in public that members of this body are free to follow their own consciences. *Pax Christi* affords the means of discussion and study, and the spiritual resources and guidance of the Church itself. It leaves the individual free to fulfil his own calling in the world in the way which seems best to him within the bounds of Christian morals and faith.

Pax Christi is now at work on many levels. But the most hopeful of these seems to be that known as *Les Routes de la Paix*. These are foot pilgrimages of young people essentially very similar to the Walsingham Cross pilgrimages in England some years back, and to the Parisian students' annual pilgrimage to Chartres.

But in *Les Routes* the nationalities are mixed, the pilgrims follow a definite agenda of prayer and study, and they follow routes which take them into the parishes and homes of the country through which they travel. These are the three powerful factors during an eight or nine days' work for

peace: in each group are members of many nations; as they go they study particular aspects of the problems of peace, in a context of their daily Mass and other offices, all led and supervised by the chaplain of the group; they meet the people of the country through which they travel, and are welcomed into their homes.

This year six groups of about sixty young people each followed routes in western Germany, all converging on Altenberg where the *Pax Christi* Congress was being held. *Pax Christi* is young yet and is only really strong in France and Germany; these two countries supplied the majority of the pilgrims. But there were many others too. I spoke with an American girl who had been studying French Literature in Paris. In her group were twelve nationalities. But it was no bad thing that the majority were French and German. The young people of these two countries above all need to meet as Christians, and discuss the problems of their two countries. That is what they were doing this year in the course of ranging over all the problems concerned with the unification of Europe. On the arrival of the groups at Altenberg they processed straight into the Cathedral; a member from each group then spoke for a few moments on the experiences of their *routes*. The American girl was one of these. And five other nations were represented amongst the other speakers.

Last year the Congress was at Assisi. (We may recall that St Francis was one of the great peace promoters of the thirteenth century; his tertiaries were forbidden to carry arms in support of their feudal superiors.) After this Congress the Pope delivered an allocution on the unification of Europe—and the other continents. The aim might seem excessively political and economic—these two primary aspects were mentioned specifically in the allocution; but as we saw in the first paragraph of this article nothing less than a realisation of the real facts about humanity, its need for unity in every sphere of life today, will any longer suffice.

There is a deep desire for unity amongst all people. Many men and women have tried to harness this desire. And through the ages politicians have achieved more, or less, towards this end. Many religious bodies have seen that it is

part of a fully applied Christianity to support this tendency. Catholics, however, have often been conspicuously lacking. They have tended simply to rest on the knowledge that they *are* a universal body, and that their destiny *does* involve the redemption of the whole world. But they have failed entirely to realise that the achievement of this universality and this redemption depends quite simply on the everyday acts of charity of every Christian. The unification of mankind in the Church, and its unification as a single body from certain organisational points of view, has actually to be worked for, if it is to be realised.

Peace, as we have implied throughout this article, is something more than the absence of war. But on the simple negative level it is true that war can never be outlawed until the nations of the world are prepared to abandon the idea of absolute individual sovereignty. They have to realise in their international relationships that they really are members one of another, and not so many strangers, negotiating. This is an example of the sort of detailed application which any worthwhile work for peace does in the end have to come down to.

Peace is also built on the mutual friendship of multitudes. War can never be outlawed so long as the majority of Christians look on foreigners suspiciously. A simple task here for the Catholic is to keep his home open to the foreigner, and if possible to give hospitality to such people as foreign students.

But above all the battle today is a battle of ideas. And *Pax Christi* has set itself firmly to tackle the 'apostolate of public opinion'. This may sound on the one hand dull, on the other dangerous. But the vast quantity of 'propaganda' put out by non-Christian or anti-Christian forces does have a steadily cumulative effect. It is the duty of Christians to disseminate the facts about the Christian attitude to peace, to war, and to international organisations, etc., also the facts about any given set of circumstances which are being misrepresented.

We may look again at the detailed work of *Les Routes*. Here are some of the questions and suggestions proposed by Père Bosc, the principal chaplain, for the consideration of

the pilgrims:

‘What particular form of unity in Europe do you consider would be most acceptable, and possible, and a contribution to peace?’

‘Have we a sense of collective sin? On the level of society? On the international level? Have we a sense of solidarity with our own nation? With our Government?’

‘Are there just wars?’

‘What movements in our various countries make propaganda for peace? What are their methods, their influence?’

‘What have you done on behalf of a new international order (favourable atmosphere)?’

Pax Christi produces a little periodical. In the September of this year Père Bosc described some of his impressions of this year’s *Routes de la Paix*. He began by referring to the extraordinary lack of a positive Catholic approach to peace in Europe, and quoted some words of Fr Delos at this year’s *Semaine Social* at Pau: ‘Christians will not be taken seriously in their participation in work for peace until they acquire the knowledge and the methods, the lack of which cannot be made good simply by good will.’ Père Bosc continues: ‘On *Route III*, in which I took part, but also I think on the other *Routes*, this lack of a real international culture as we have defined it [that is, a certain knowledge or acquaintance with basic facts, and a certain grasp of methods to be followed in building a peaceful order in society] was sadly felt. *Pax Christi* will be failing in its responsibilities if it does not work to provide what these young people are looking for.’

‘In proportion as we realised our need to gain knowledge and to learn the necessary methods, there grew up the need for a deeper spiritual life. This seemed to be the characteristic and principal fruit of the *Routes*. Spiritual hunger, the need to arrange in the course of the journey for times of silence for prayer and meditation, grew in proportion with our discovery, each day in our chapter, that peace required a real technique, and that it required too the courage to learn this technique. The result was that study of doctrine, and sometimes the discussions on difficult and apparently purely political problems, far from diminishing the desire for the inner life, obliged us on the contrary to add to the

time for prayer or the time put aside for a commentary on the beatitudes. It was through the express wish of the young people themselves that a discussion on practical methods was sometimes put off and replaced by a supplementary documentary on the beatitudes—‘the spiritual conditions of peace’.

Père Bosc added that the experience of the *Routes* showed that those who were the most ‘realist’, the most anxious to emphasise the temporal aspects of work for peace, those who were most concerned to insist on the duty to learn the proper methods and gain the proper knowledge necessary for this work, became influenced in the spiritual direction by the atmosphere of the *Routes*. They began to see that peace would be entirely illusory if there were not in the different countries many men who were determined to go beyond the requirements of justice alone in the relations between groups of human beings, and were determined to follow to the letter the words of our Saviour: ‘Love one another as I have loved you’—to the limit, in fact, of the sacrifice of one’s own interests.

I might quote inspiring words from many speeches at this Congress. I shall end with the few unprepared sentences spoken by the American girl I have already referred to. Standing on the steps of the choir in her turn, after a German boy had spoken, tired and dusty from the road, she ended up: ‘In our discussions we have had many disagreements; but the encounters were most fruitful. We have built up friendships based on spiritual unity and an understanding of each other’s positions. We have learned something of the culture and backgrounds of other peoples, and have discussed their differences.

‘Every morning we have said the *Our Father* in Latin. Every evening we have said the *Our Father* in our own languages. In all our differences we were at one, because Christ was with us.’

There is a good chance that one of the *Routes de la Paix* of 1954 will be in England. We must be ready to welcome it.