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THE ROLE OF THE CHURCHES III

*The Most Rev. Vincent S. Waters**

Many other of my brother Bishops, who are noted theologians, philosophers, and canonists, would have been a much better choice to present the moral side of this question, and I know that the real reason why I was chosen is because I am a Southerner, a missionary Bishop, who has had to overcome some of the same prejudice in himself, and has had to solve, to the best of his ability, some of these problems among some of his flock in the South.

What is the general theological principle on this particular problem of interracial justice? I want to make a few concise statements here for a moment, just to give a platform for our thinking. In speaking of general principles with regard to discussion of the moral aspects of the interracial question, these fundamental facts should be kept in mind, and positively expressed:

1. All men, since they have been created by the same God, are sons of the same Eternal Father; hence enjoy the same fundamental human dignity and rights.
2. All Christians have been redeemed by Jesus Christ, and enjoy the same supernatural dignity and rights as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church.
3. The Constitution and Bill of Rights of our country guarantees the same human and civil rights to all its citizens.

These fundamental rights of all men can be grouped under five headings:

The first, *the right to physical integrity*. By this right is meant the right to full physical life; hence the right not to be unfairly impeded in the legitimate search for food, clothing, shelter, marriage, a home, decent working conditions, wages, medical and hospital care, and recreation.

Second, *the right to moral integrity*. By this is meant the right to know God and His Holy Will, and all that such knowledge implies; hence the right to religious and moral education, the right to worship God and to receive the Sacraments, the right to share with others the opportunities for advancing in the spiritual life.

Third, *the right to intellectual integrity*. By this is meant the right to intellectual training in accord with one's capacities, and the concrete opportunities offered by the State or the Church institutions.

Fourth, *the right to social integrity*. By this is meant the right to live in peace as a fully accepted and respected member of the community, to associate in harmony with one's neighbors, to make friends with those who find friendship acceptable, and to give and receive from all without hindrance or humiliation the common signs of courtesy which human dignity demands.

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Lastly, *the right to economic integrity*. By this is meant the right to purchase or sell goods and services usually rendered to the general public, without discrimination.

In the light of the above principles, supported as they are by authoritative Catholic teaching, there can be no doubt that the practice of race segregation in this country all too often has violated the fundamental rights of the Negro. To that extent, at least, it is unjust, and hence morally wrong and sinful. Racial segregation might be defined as the separation of one race from another in the ordinary affairs of community living, on the sole basis of difference of race. It is achieved either by specific laws or by concerted moral pressure on the part of the perpetrators. This type of racial segregation is based fundamentally on race itself, and tends to produce a permanent division among men. It is a moral evil because it violates the law of God, since it implicitly denies the unity of the human family and the equal rights of all men.

Racial segregation also brings about moral evil by its necessary consequences. Measures are enforced against the segregated race to prevent political, economic, social, educational and religious opportunity. Hence segregation based wholly on race is immoral and therefore may not be approved by a Catholic. The principles are clear. Negroes have the same basic rights as white men; they have the right to free access to our churches, schools, hospitals, religious programs, and religious societies on an equal basis with white persons. They should be guaranteed the same basic civil rights, and be able to vote and to hold public office, they should be able to eat in restaurants serving the public, use public hotels, trains, streetcars, and busses without discrimination. In some parts of the country, even in spite of the Supreme Court decision, there remain specific laws and concerted moral pressure to keep the segregated pattern.

To what extent may a Catholic yield to such pressure and tolerate, even temporarily, such an unjust social pattern or law? First of all, he may not approve of the pattern or law which he knows to be unjust. He may not formally cooperate in any violation of Negroes' rights. In addition to our positive disapproval of the pattern of race segregation, even in circumstances which seem to demand temporary toleration due to circumstances over which we have no control, reputable theologians counsel the following attitudes:

Teachers should take every possible opportunity to propound and defend the Negroes' essential rights to physical, moral and intellectual development into a complete man, with equal rights in every respect. Supernatural rights as children of God, and natural rights as American citizens, with just participation in the common good which the American civil society produces, by the joint effort of all its citizens, should be properly explained as the right of all human beings and citizens regardless of color. The practical objective of such teachers and Christians should be to make meaningful the admittedly God-given and constitutionally-guaranteed rights to equal and now common facilities and opportunities for the good life on a natural and a supernatural plane.

If by positive effort our teachers can do away with some of the differences in cultural, educational and economic inequality which now exist between

the Negro and the white population due to racial segregation and to the other factors, we shall make the Negro more acceptable and shall be laying a solid foundation for his acceptance on an equal footing in every level of our national life.

The responsibility of the Catholic Church in the United States, is "to teach all people all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The Church's teaching on racial justice has been reinforced by the teaching value of the decision of the Supreme Court.

The Church's practice on racial justice, throughout history and throughout the world has been confirmed by the decision of the Supreme Court. The problems of the Catholic Church on account of the decision of the Supreme Court, however, have been intensified in certain areas. The Church's problem exists principally in those areas where Catholics are in the minority; or where racial injustice has become a social pattern and has become stabilized in local law; or where Catholics, although existing in some numbers in a community, have not learned to appreciate the Church's teaching on social and racial justice. In these places a dilemma is presented to the Catholic: to be, at the same time, a believer in the teaching and practices of the Church on racial justice and the Supreme Court decision, as well as trying to conform to local social patterns or laws, hoping to preserve the needed public schools without lowering the intellectual, cultural, moral and economic level of the community.

This morning I am speaking not for the whole Catholic Church, the Holy Father and the General Councils do this. I am not speaking for all the Bishops of the United States, the National and the Provincial Councils do this. I am merely speaking as the Bishop of Raleigh on questions and policies taught and legislated on by many bishops in their own dioceses and on matters taught generally by the Church, by our Holy Fathers, and the theologians, until the bishops of this country and of the world, united with our Holy Father legislate more definitely on this matter.

The Church's job is to teach, govern, and sanctify the world spiritually. Her purpose is the eternal welfare of mankind. The State's purpose is his temporal welfare. The Church's job in this field is to teach by word and precept social justice of which interracial justice is merely one phase. On the world-wide front and throughout history she has a rather good record in teaching and practice — I will not burden you. On the national front in the United States over the years she also has a good record on this teaching by precept and example. To mention but a few: statements have been made very much to the point by the late beloved Cardinal Stritch, Cardinal Mooney, Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop Ritter, Archbishop Rummel, Archbishop O'Boyle, Archbishop Meyer, and many others, and then there was the joint statement which came out of the Bishops' Conference in Washington in 1958. The practice too has been rather good. Many bishops have taken vigorous action even before the Supreme Court decision.

I would like to outline the responsibilities of the Catholic Church in this matter in the following manner. I believe the responsibilities of the Catholic Church are to make all persons in the United States see the truth

of the Church's teaching and practice in regard to racial justice; to try to make all people in the United States appreciate our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, our Bill of Rights, as well as the true nature and value of our republic in a contradicting world; to endeavor by teaching and practice to correct local injustices caused by law and custom; and finally to bring about the gradual change in the local pattern which is unjust. The Church should interest herself in teaching the general public the real and original purpose of the public schools; how they should be preserved and promoted everywhere for the benefit of all.

The Church should help to raise, as quickly as possible and as smoothly as possible, the intellectual, cultural, economic and moral level of the groups attending integrated schools, to bring about justice and equality, and thus to overcome objection and friction.

My position on this panel is, perhaps, principally because I have had to solve some of those problems. For example, on Thursday of this week for the first time a colored priest was ordained in the State of North Carolina. He was a convert to the Church, converted while teaching in the public schools of Alabama. He was brought to the priest for instruction by one of his Catholic students. After he had studied for five years in a seminary I ordained him on Thursday morning. We prepare our own students for the priesthood, our people, and our school children for an ordination. All who were present at the ordination were prepared to follow the ceremony. The night before the relatives from Alabama came up and were on hand for a reception given him and the Bishop in our parish hall. I wanted to have that little reception as perfect as possible. Thank God, through our Interracial Group in Raleigh, it was as nice as any reception we have ever had for any priest. The cooperation of the three parishes made it an outstanding reception. After the ordination we had a banquet for all who wished to partake. The new priest spoke to the three parishes in Raleigh and to the many visitors. To see our people approaching the altar rail to receive the blessing of this young Negro priest, to see them kiss his hands that were anointed, probably did as much for race relations in North Carolina as anything in the past. I am sure that there are many things that have been done over the last ten or twelve years in North Carolina that would be interesting to you.

We must remember that this question involves Catholics, and yet it is a question of public schools. We have a number of Catholics in public schools. Perhaps, 50% of our Catholic children over the country are in public schools. We have Catholic teachers in public schools. We are necessarily interested in public schools because we pay taxes, we are members of the community, we need to be interested. The work of the public school is to educate and train an intelligent and patriotic electorate that will preserve this country in the traditions and the real nature of its democracy. This is a limited democracy, based upon Christian principles, based upon the rights of God and of human rights stemming from the natural law.

I want to make just a few practical suggestions, drawn from what we have tried to do in teaching by example in North Carolina. Our Catholic newspaper handles all items of the Negro groups simply as news items with

no racial designation. Only pictures identify whether the news is from a colored or white group, or from a mixed group. These latter are used very frequently to show the proper relationship of the races. All sodalities, confraternities, societies, are encouraged to have a bi-racial membership and to work towards this Catholic goal. If membership is on a local or neighborhood basis which happens to be of only one race, the group is encouraged to meet with other neighborhoods on a bi-racial level frequently. In the beginning certain social affairs have to be kept to the minimum; serving, sometimes, just simple refreshments to such a mixed group spells real progress and should be insisted upon. Bi-racial banquets and conventions are now possible in places in North Carolina, even in some of the best hotels. We have insisted wherever possible on such banquets. Religious services are bi-racial, at least as far as the altar boys and ushers are concerned. These bi-racial conventions in the South often provide housing problems which can usually be taken care of in private homes for the Negroes or in segregated hotels; bi-racial meetings in hotels, the first privilege that we can attain—then banquets—and finally, we hope, housing. We have not been able to house Negroes in public hotels, as yet.

Arrangements can be made for Negro speakers, choirs, artists or teachers to appear before white groups to advantage and such action helps solve this problem. Colored priests and colored sisters of high educational level are especially helpful. Each program of this nature is a blow which helps to demolish the social pattern. We insist on the bi-racial aspect in all Church-sponsored sports events. Attitudes of sportsmanship toward all problems arising out of these contests are very helpful in solving the racial problem. We insist on the American way of doing things. America favors the underdog, the downtrodden, the unjustly treated. America believes in fair play and justice. We try to use science to contradict the attitudes on race inequality—there is no difference below the skin. Science should be searching for truth; science should be interested in preserving all human life, and the great hospitals with nursing schools and medical staffs are aimed at this scientific and human ideal.

We need to create occasions for practicing the correct relationships; otherwise we could wait a thousand years and nothing would happen. These occasions should be thought out in advance and each should be a further step in the right direction. Thursday, at this ordination I was privileged to have Monsignor Gladstone Wilson preach. He is a classmate of mine from Rome. He has a doctorate in Theology, two in Philosophy, one in Canon Law, and one in Sociology. He is the Chancellor of the Diocese of Kingston, in Jamaica, British West Indies. He speaks eight languages perfectly and six imperfectly, and reads six additional languages. His sermon was more than equal to that of any white priest or monsignor, I'm sure, and helped tremendously on that occasion.

Race prejudice is usually a matter of emotion, influencing the will rather than the reason. Emotions have to be put in their proper place, under the will. Emotions like fear, anger, hatred, should not be permitted to influence reason. Emotions are God-given and can be used for good race relations;

sorrow, pity, appreciation, real love and unity can be used to great advantage to counteract the contrary emotions.

I would like to outline briefly what the Church is trying to do on the question of teaching. In the Diocese of Raleigh the greatest help towards good race relations in our Catholic schools, and certainly an example and ultimate help for the public schools, is the fact that we have a curriculum in grammar school based on the Christian social principles, taken from the encyclicals of the Holy Fathers. A child learns how to live with his neighbors in the kindergarten, in the first grade, and through every subject, he is taught Christian and Religious Social principles. In recent years that curriculum has been raised to the high school level and now in high schools it is doing the same tremendous work. I'm sure that we need all the help that education can offer. The Catholic schools in our country can do a tremendous work in this regard. The 11,000 children in the Catholic school system in North Carolina are, perhaps, a leaven to teach good race relations in public schools. North Carolina has, at least, begun to try to follow the Supreme Court decision. Not in many places, but at least a token integration. I understand that some feel the Pearsall Plan was put into effect merely as a buffer. The Mayor of Atlanta said the plan gives the people time to accept this idea and to save the public system of education. I believe that fundamentally, though many phases of it are very likely unconstitutional, it will accomplish that effect. But we have to help in that accomplishment.

We can, as Catholics, really do the best job in preparing our people to appreciate what our country means to us. There are many philosophies and much fuzzy thinking going on in the country with regard to America. We need delicately to get back to fundamentals and to keep absolutes, and with God's help, I'm sure that the Catholic Church can be a means to anchor our teaching of America on the natural law, on the real appreciation of human and God-given rights. As a Catholic, as a Christian, I'm sure you know that we must appreciate the dignity of the human person. If an artist who handles and appreciates the inanimate creatures of God — wood, stone, metal, glass — handles them like children of God; how much more the human person, composed of an immortal, spiritual soul and a human body, destined for an eternity with God.

How much appreciation should a Christian have, a member of Christ's Church? A Christian is one who believes in the Divinity of Christ; Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, equal to the Father and the Holy Ghost from all eternity, became Man and lived on earth for 33 years, the God-Man. Although Christ did not have a human personality, but a Divine one, He did have a human soul and a human body. This created nature was joined in an ineffable way to the Divine Nature which was from all eternity. No greater honor could have come to this masterpiece of creation—man—than to have God Himself join His own Nature to ours in the Person of Christ. For God to look out of human eyes, to use human hands, to have a human heart and soul, to have the eternal Godhead, the Divine Person, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, behind these and united to them in a most intimate way, is the greatest dignity of man. This is what raised all men

of all races to the apex, to the pinnacle. This is the Christ, Who is God, Who acted and spoke on earth as God, and after redeeming, after gaining grace for men, gathered these men into one body to be born, to be fed, to be guided and to be increased until the whole human race would have opportunity to contact the Divinity of Christ. That is why, in a sense, every Christian is another Christ. Every Christian is Christ's temporal extension into the world. In Baptism a Christian becomes a tabernacle of the Blessed Trinity and a member of the Mystical Body. In Baptism every Christian receives the right to be fed on the Body and Blood of the Saviour, and with this Divine pledge of salvation to enter an eternity with the Blessed Trinity.

Understandably, this tremendous privilege was intended by God for each rational creature who freely believes and becomes a member of that body, and thus, it is today and ever has been the task of the Church to work for all nations and all men.