

INTERVIEW

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were involved in drug trafficking, the supply network of the Contras was used by drug trafficking organizations, and elements of the Contras themselves knowingly received financial and material assistance from drug traffickers'; and,

"WHEREAS, during the period in which drugs were allegedly brought into the country with the connivance of U.S. government agencies, then-Vice President George Bush was appointed by President Reagan to run the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System, and a series of executive orders and 'national security decision directives' were signed by President Reagan, placing most covert intelligence operations of the U.S. government, including covert support for the Contras, under the directions of a Special Situations Group also headed by George Bush, with Oliver North functioning as one of his key lieutenants; and,

"WHEREAS, Congresswoman Maxine Waters, Senators Feinstein and Boxer, and the Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Jackson, and St. Louis, and other City Councils have called for Congressional and other investigations into the role of the C.I.A. and other agencies and individuals in these operations; and,

"WHEREAS, such investigations must go right to the highest levels of responsibility for the devastation and violence in our communities associated with drugs and guns.

"NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the 20th Annual Legislative Conference of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, assembled in Biloxi, Miss., Dec. 1-7, 1996, that the NBCSL endorses the call by the Congressional Black Caucus Chairwoman Maxine Waters, Senators Feinstein and Boxer, the Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Jackson, and St. Louis City Councils, and others, for a congressional investigation, and the appointment of an independent special prosecutor, for a complete, thorough, and independent investigation of these allegations, and for vigorous prosecution of individuals, where justified by probable cause, irrespective of their current or former official status."

Most Reverend Justin Francis Rigali, Archbishop of St. Louis

'The need to have the global view is not sufficiently understood'

Archbishop Justin Francis Rigali was born in Los Angeles, California, April 19, 1935. He was ordained a priest in Los Angeles on April 25, 1961. During the first two sessions of the Second Vatican Council he was one of the priest assistants in St. Peter's Basilica. In June 1964, he attained the Doctorate in Canon Law from the Pontifical Gregorian University.

From 1964 to 1966 he studied at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy in preparation for service to the Holy See. In November 1964, he entered the English-language Section of the Secretariat of State. For three-and-a-half years beginning September 1966, he served at the Apostolic Nunciature in Madagascar.

In February 1970, he returned to Rome and was appointed Director of the English-language Section of the Secretariat of State, becoming English-language translator for Pope Paul VI. From 1979 to 1987, he accompanied Pope John Paul II on a number of his international journeys. On June 8, 1985, he was appointed Titular Archbishop of Bolsena, and President of the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy. On Sept. 14, 1985, he was ordained a bishop by Pope John Paul II in the Cathedral of Albano.

During the years 1985-1990, he was named to positions with various Vatican



commissions. In December 1989, he was named Secretary of the Congregation for Bishops, and in January 1990, he became the Secretary of the College of Cardinals. On Jan. 25, 1994, Archbishop Rigali was appointed eighth Bishop/seventh Archbishop of St. Louis by Pope John Paul II. In June of the following year, Archbishop Rigali was appointed by Pope John Paul II to the Preparatory Council of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for America.

The following interview was conducted by Nina Ogden and William F. Wertz, Jr.,

You can pinpoint the great significance of John XXIII calling for the Vatican Council, and writing ‘Pacem in Terris,’ with a powerful appeal for peace, and the encyclical ‘Mater et Magistra,’ which insisted that the criteria for all economic activity be justice and charity. Then came the fruition of the pontificate of Paul VI and his encyclical, in 1967, ‘Populorum Progressio,’ which emphasized the global dimension of social justice: There is no way we can solve our own problems.

on Nov. 12, 1996, at the annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C.

Fidelio: A few months ago, you gave a speech in Missouri on the subject of the Catholic social teachings.

Archbishop Rigali: I approached the speech to the Missouri Catholic Conference in Jefferson City in view of my particular history. As you may know, I spent thirty years in the service of the Holy See—twenty-seven years in Rome, and three years for the Holy See on the isle of Madagascar. I had the opportunity to follow these teachings of the Church in a special way under John XXIII. I then worked for Paul VI for many years, and then John Paul II. I absorbed the passion of the Popes for the social encyclicals—for putting into the life of the Church the words of St. Paul:

The United States must be keenly aware of the need for good throughout the world. Solidarity is the balance, the most effective way to proceed. To say that big problems only belong to individuals and are not the problems of the Church, is not true. We proceed from total sympathy and compassion. The inspiration of the Church is found in the application of the social teaching ‘to love one another as I have loved you.’

“Help carry one another’s burdens, in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Gal 6:2)

This understanding of human solidarity on a global plane is inspiration for all the Church in the mandate of solidarity and love. This was articulated in a special way a little bit more than a hundred years ago by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, and then a hundred years later Pope John Paul II celebrated its anniversary with the document *Centesimus Annus*. This whole development was a coherent one, always from the same principle. They reflect an urgent mission, a pattern in the Church to proclaim dignity in action.

Fidelio: In his speeches in the last few days, Pope John Paul II has certainly emphasized this in his emphasis on debt forgiveness at the meeting of *Justicia et Pax* and at the FAO conference.

Archbishop Rigali: The Pope has a special viewpoint of this practice in the Millennium. Go back to the Jewish practice of holy years, in which the forgiveness of debt was a part, along with the freeing of the slaves. The application of this is a principal part of our tradition. And especially this anniversary, which is the greatest anniversary in the history of the world, which is itself so unique,

gives us the unique opportunity to apply this social doctrine.

Fidelio: In your speech in Missouri you talked about a pluralism of options in applying the Church’s social teaching, and made the point that while there can be a pluralism of options, there can never be a pluralism of principles.

Archbishop Rigali: Pope Paul VI addressed this in *Octogesima Adveniens*, observing the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, in 1971. He confirmed the universal dimension of the Church’s social teaching. He makes very clear that there will always be different people of good will who will apply the teachings in a certain diversity of situations. But, we are not talking about a free-for-all. There is no pluralism in the teaching of the sacredness of human life.

Fidelio: Is the knowledge of the social encyclicals especially lacking in the U.S.?

Archbishop Rigali: When I gave this speech in Jefferson City, one man asked, “Why is this the best kept secret in the Church?” This truth, when presented, has the power to make an enormous impact, typical of the Word of God. The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World of Vatican II, called *Gaudium et Spes*, says “we are witnesses of the birth of a new humanism, in which man is defined first of all by his responsibility toward his brothers and sisters and toward history.” Certainly, we must teach the social encyclicals and they are known, thanks be to God, but insufficiently as far as our goal must be. We have never done enough to obtain our end.

Fidelio: The Bishops conference just voted to put the economic policy of the Church into a ten-point framework. It will help shape the national debate on economics through an education drive down to the local parish level.

Archbishop Rigali: At this meeting, during the presentations made by the chairman of the committee, the hope was expressed that this statement would go into the dioceses and parishes, and even be organized in such a way as to be

printed on holy cards. But these are only the basic principles. It would be very much in order to go back to see where they come from. Always go back to the teachings—to the encyclicals, Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*.

Fidelio: We just reviewed the book by Msgr. Higgins on *Organized Labor and the Church*. It was interesting to see how much the labor movement in this country was influenced by the social encyclicals. However, by the late 1960's, interest in the encyclicals declined significantly. Today, we are seeing a revitalized labor movement under the leadership of John Sweeney, who has pointed to the formative impact of the encyclicals on his thinking.

Archbishop Rigali: It starts with *Rerum Novarum*. Forty years later, in *Quadragesimo Anno*, the splendid teachings of Pope Pius XI emphasized that relations between capital and labor be, always, according to the strictest justice and Christian charity. Then you had the war years, and the post-war years.

You can pinpoint the great significance of John XXIII calling for the Council, and writing *Pacem in Terris*, with a powerful appeal for peace, and the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, which insisted that the criteria for all economic activity be justice and charity. Then came the fruition of the pontificate of Paul VI and his encyclical, in 1967, *Populorum Progressio*, which emphasized the global dimension of social justice. There is no way we can solve our own problems. The need to have this global view is not sufficiently understood in the United States. This is very clearly the teaching of the Church. *Populorum Progressio* was followed by the 1971 synod emphasizing social justice.

John Paul II has, of course, hundreds of writings on the Church's social teaching. On the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* he issued his own encyclical on work, *Laborem Exercens*, and later *Solicitudo Rei Socialis*, on solidarity, where he identified that the principal obstacle to be overcome in the way to authentic liberation is sin, and the structure of sin. On the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, he

issued *Centesimus Annus*, which explains clearly that the Church's social teaching itself is a valid instrument of evangelization.

The call by the Pope for development and debt forgiveness in Africa, applied these teachings of the Church, which are not just theories. I was very privileged to be in Rome in these years.

Fidelio: The Final Appeal in *Populorum Progressio* calls upon the laymen, without

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waiting passively for orders and directives, to take the initiative freely, and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of their communities and nations.

Archbishop Rigali: The role of the laity is a very important theme ringing through the social encyclicals. There is no doubt about it in the Second Vatican Council. Pius XII emphasized this, as did Cardinal Spellman in the U.S. The laity are the Church—not in an exclusive sense, not any more than the Bishops or priests or religious, but with them.

Vatican II called upon the laity to enter fully into the mystery of the Church, into the life of the Church. This

is apparent in *Lumen Gentium*, where the principle emerges that the laity from their baptism are a great part of the Church. Their call is crucial, and is reiterated at every turn, as one of the profoundest convictions of Vatican II.

The work of social justice, for example, belongs to the laity, who can fulfill it so well, if they will always be mindful of the teachings of the Church and the unity of the Church in context with the hierarchy—not in the context of individualism, but as one body, one Church, one community in Jesus Christ.

Fidelio: Some neo-conservatives today overemphasize the principle of subsidiarity, to the exclusion of the principle of solidarity—to the point that they actively undermine the role and the responsibility of government to “promote the General Welfare.” These same neo-conservatives, who slander *Populorum Progressio* as “Euro-socialist,” also overlook John Paul II's calls for debt forgiveness and for reform of international financial institutions as necessary for the development of peoples.

Archbishop Rigali: Certainly solidarity is required. We cannot wash our hands, at any level, of human problems. If you think about the quote from *Populorum Progressio* you referred to—people of good will may see things differently, but they can be reconciled if they always hold out for the principle. The United States must be keenly aware of the need for good throughout the world. Solidarity is the balance, the most effective way to proceed. To say that big problems only belong to individuals and are not the problems of the Church, is not true. We proceed from total sympathy and compassion. The inspiration of the Church is found in the application of the social teaching “to love one another as I have loved you.”

This is our challenge at this moment—to apply the apostolic teachings of the Church—to apply St. Paul's lessons to the Galatians, “Help carry one another's burdens, in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Fidelio: Thank you, Archbishop Rigali.
Archbishop Rigali: Thank you.