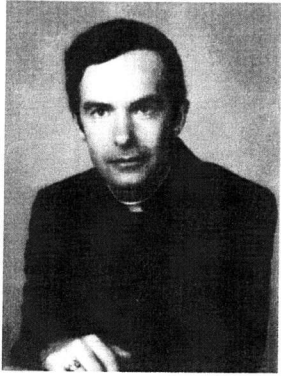


Chaplain's Corner, Hughes Camp Chaplain Richard W Rudd



Last month, we celebrated the first advent of Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), and heard, perhaps even sang, the old familiar carols proclaiming "...on earth peace, good will toward men." (Lk. 11:30, 32) Yet, history is a record of a continuation of bitter strife and an unending succession of

conflicts. Christ warned, "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division..." (Lk. 12:51) This division of which Christ spoke can be observed among ourselves within our own nation. The most graphic example is the WBTS. Christ predicted that within families there would be "...a house divided against itself..." (Mk. 3:25) and they will be divided, father against son and son against father..." (Lk. 12:53) In the 21st century, 155 years later, we are still dealing with the aftershocks of that violent seismic division between North and South along the proverbial Mason-Dixon fault line.

A century after the WTBS, the 1960's marked the dawn of a new type of division in America, along cultural rather than geographical lines. Only the issues causing the division changed. Immigration laws were radically altered. Previously, they were structured to encourage the immigration of people who shared common genealogical, cultural, and religious attributes with Americans, facilitating their integration into American society. The current admission of foreigners whose attributes are alien and even hostile to America foments revolutionary conditions within our borders. The invasion of Moslems and the resulting irreconcilable ideological clash and constant threat of terrorism is the most obvious example.

The era of the Viet Nam War and convulsive race relations created conditions conducive to the rise of a countercultural revolution propagated by an explosion of technology. All forms of the media, entertainment, and academia have contributed to the indoctrination and desensitization of each successive generation of the general population. The result has been a gradual and progressive shift from capitalism to socialism, from Christianity to

secularism.

Until the latter part of the 20th century, Judaeo-Christian beliefs formed the basis according to which American citizens lived their lives and exercised a consequential dominating influence within all facets of our society and culture. Today, the tax-exemption status of Christian facilities is being challenged, Christians' freedom of speech is threatened by censorship, prayer in schools has been eradicated, military chaplains are being impeded in the performance of their duties, legal and illegal drug abuse is increasing, and the family, the basic building block of civilization, is under attack by increased rates of divorce, homosexuality, miscegenation, and infanticide.

"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who restrains it will do so until he is out of the way." (II Thess. 2:7) "(H)e who restrains" refers to the power of the Holy Spirit working through the daily lives and inspiring the actions of ordinary Christians. When the influence of the Holy Spirit decreases, there is a proportionate increase in division among men, conflict, and the police powers and size of government necessary to maintain order, contrary to what the Founding Fathers envisioned. Prior to the WBTS, communities relied on the English common law system of citizen volunteers, watch groups, posses, and militias. Constables served well into the 20th century. Police departments and electronic surveillance have replaced that system. There is one surveillance camera for every 4.6 citizens in the US. By next year, it is estimated that 85 million cameras will be watching us. Washington, Orlando, and Detroit are testing facial recognition. Public buildings are no longer as accessible. Passengers and luggage are searched at airports. Information from drivers' licenses is being compiled in national databanks. Bigger government means more expense. Government consumption of economic output rose from 5% in 1900 to 25% in 1992. Government spending increased from \$16 per citizen in 1800 to \$4760 in 1990. The tax burden for the average family grew from \$1400 in 1900 to \$16,000 in 1992. All of this means less freedom of movement, less privacy, and less spending power for each citizen.

Christ asked, 'But Who do you say that I am?' (Matt. 16:15) At some point in our lives, each one of us must answer His question and our response will not only affect our future eternal fate, but will become public knowledge displayed in how it affects the way we live in this world today. It will be the determining factor between living in fear or with courage, in freedom or tyranny, in civilization or chaos. Reliance on more government, laws, bureaucrats, and policemen will treat only the symptoms, not the cause, of division and conflict. The antidote is found in obedience to Christ's commission, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation." (Mk. 16:15) To illustrate the effect of this, He cited Jonah and Nineveh. "For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nineveh, ...they repented at the preaching of Jonah..." (Lk. 11:30, 32) So Christ charges each Christian to be a sign to our families, neighbors, co-workers, and all fellow citizens, generating a wave of repentance from a life of division and enmity that will result in truly making America great again.

Deo Vindice

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