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Pastor spells out objections to military archdiocese collection

Brian Roewe | Nov. 8, 2013 NCR Today

As parishes across the country prepare this weekend to take a second collection to benefit the Archdiocese for the Military Services, at least one pastor has told his bishop he won't be participating.

Fr. Timothy Taugher of Saint Francis of Assisi Parish in Binghamton, N.Y., wrote Wednesday to Syracuse, N.Y., Bishop Robert Cunningham to tell him he will not hold the the voluntary collection at Masses this weekend.

?How are we to preach the Gospel of peace in a time of endless wars? How are we to preach the Gospel of non-violence in a country immersed in rampant militarism?? Taugher asks in his letter.

Read Taugher's letter in full below, and read *NCR*'s coverage of his and others' objections to the military archdiocese collection: "Military archdiocese collection muddies nonviolence message, detractors say [1]"

Fr. Timothy Taugher's letter to Bishop Robert Cunningham:

November 6, 2013

The Most Reverend Robert J. Cunningham
The Chancery
240 E. Onondaga Street,
Syracuse, New York 13201

Dear Bishop,

Hope this letter finds you well. My purpose in writing you is to share with you my feelings and thoughts about this weekend?s second collection for the Archdiocese Military Services. Those who have experienced the trauma of war certainly do need our assistance for their full recovery, as so many do suffer with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I have had the opportunity to both read as well as attend a workshop by Edward Tick, a Clinical Psychotherapist, who has done extensive work with veterans and PTSD. The violence of war, as Tick notes, is a major trauma to the soul that no drug can effectively heal. As so many veterans say ?War is Hell?, raises the question, ?Why as a faith community, by our silence and lack of conscience formation regarding war and the military, send our sons and daughters to hell/war??

It is very apparent why this weekend has been selected for the collection as to coincide with Veterans? Day. For us, in our Catholic faith, the day also is the feast of St. Martin of Tours. His story of conversion centuries ago is still a challenge for us today as Catholics. Two themes stand out: the encounter with Christ in the form of the poor, and the conviction that the way of Christ is the way of nonviolence. Upon his conversion, he saw his military life as totally being incompatible with the Gospel and with life in Christ. This insight prompted Martin to present himself to his military commander to request a discharge from the army. *?I am a soldier of Christ, and it is not lawful for me to fight,?* he said.

St. Martin of Tours? life and words seem to resemble very closely a talk this past summer by Pope Francis. He said,*?The true force of the Christian is the force of truth and of love, which means rejecting all violence. Faith and violence are incompatible! Faith and violence are incompatible! The Christian is not violent, but (s) he is strong. And, with what strength? That of meekness, the force of meekness, the force of love.?*

It seems as though two competing allegiances are crying for our attention. To which do we honor ? the one that upholds militarism or the one that proclaims the Gospel of Life?

The Eucharist is the celebration of Christ?s non-violent and unconditional love. It was on the night of the First Eucharist that Jesus said to put away the sword. And then the following day, the Non-violent One, did not succumb to violence, revenge or retribution but showed the power of non-violent love over hate.

These are challenging times for us as a nation and Church, as we confront issues that put the lives of so many people at risk. We have to ask ourselves as Church leaders, ?How are we to preach the Gospel of peace in a time of endless wars? How are we to preach the Gospel of non-violence in a country immersed in rampant militarism?? These questions challenge us as a Church to the spiritual and moral leadership we need to give our people and nation.

For these reasons of conscience, I will be withholding the materials related to the AMS Collection for this coming weekend. I pray that we can authentically become a Church of non-violent love, that by our witness we will help lessen war and violence in our world.

Fraternally in Christ,

Fr. Timothy J. Taugher,
Pastor
Saint Francis of Assisi Parish
Binghamton, New York 13901

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Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/collection-military-archdiocese-goes-against-church-teaching-detractors-say