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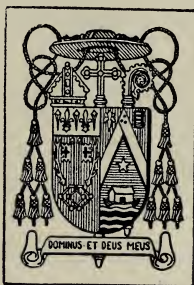
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U. S. A.

With a Directive  
on Catholic Participation  
in MORAL RE-ARMAMENT



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# PASTORAL INSTRUCTION ON FAITH

To the Faithful  
DIOCESE OF MARQUETTE  
(Michigan, U.S.A.)

## *The Purpose of This Instruction*

IT shall be the purpose of this pastoral message to present a directive about Catholic participation in Moral Re-Armament, and to examine the reasonableness and the necessity of this directive.

In recent times many questions have been directed to us by the faithful about Catholic participation in the religious movement termed Moral Re-Armament, popularly called MRA, which conducts a training center on Mackinac Island, in the Diocese of Marquette.

This is a subject of special concern to the Bishop and the priests of the diocese, since it touches the purity and integrity of the Catholic faith. Participation in a religious movement that is not under the guidance of the Church calls for a serious and prayerful consideration of the need of recognizing the Church as the sole guide on earth authorized by God to lead men to salvation.

In this letter we propose to review the teaching authority of the Church and the mission of the Church for the betterment of the world. We shall show that the promotion of moral and social virtues of necessity must be based on faith in God and revelation, and that the Church has divine authority in this field. Hence it is both dangerous and futile for Catholics to seek

guidance in matters of faith and morals from those who do not have a God-given authority.

It is our duty to bring to the attention of Catholics that MRA, whatever its good intentions, assumes the role of spiritual direction and guidance for which it does not have a divine authority.

In view of the dangers that can and do affect the purity and the integrity of the faith of Catholics who participate in this religious movement, which is not under the authority of the Church, the following directive is hereby promulgated:

*Catholics of the Diocese of Marquette and all other Catholics whenever they may be within the limits of the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Marquette may not attend the meetings of Moral Re-Armament, or participate in or promote its activities.*

## *'I Believe In . . . The Holy Catholic Church'*

The above is one of the Articles of Faith in the Apostles' Creed which we recite and accept with conviction and loyalty. It is important for us to seek to have a clear understanding of the content and practice of our Catholic faith.

In our surroundings we observe a great variety and many differences of opinion about faith. As a result, we encounter many hidden and unsuspected dangers to the integrity and purity of our faith. Now Our Lord has established His Church as the Teaching Authority in matters that pertain to faith and morals. The faithful must give heed to the voice of the Church if they expect to keep the faith.

Ordinarily Catholics accept the guidance and directives of the Church with respect to their personal sanctification in and through the sanctuary. They do not seek guidance in this field from any one who does not have a God-given authority. However, many are not fully aware of the mission of the Church outside the sanctuary, e.g., in social reconstruction and in the

making of a better world. Faith and morals enter into this field also, and in this respect the Church has a God-given authority. Yet many Catholics, unaware of this, often submit themselves in matters outside the sanctuary to the guidance of those who have no authority as to faith and morals.

Every responsible man is interested in promoting work for a better world — a world of peace, harmony, justice and brotherly love. He knows that he must begin with himself and give attention to changing himself into a better person if hopes for a better world are to be realized.

Most men realize that moral and spiritual values must be established in all in order to make a better world. And they know that there can be no basis on which to build these values except on acknowledgement of the existence of God and on acceptance of God's will. Hence, it is generally admitted by men that every person must establish and maintain personal relations with God by faith, love, prayer and the practice of good works. This is religion, which forms the basis of making better men for a better world.

All men of good will are eager to join hands with other men of good will in order to form a uniting force as a defense against evil and for the promotion of good, for a better world. This uniting force must act on a religious and moral plane. In this sense it can be called a moral re-armament, prescinding from the use of this phrase as an exclusive title by any special group of people.

Under the light of our faith we know that the Son of God became man and in His Church inaugurated an authoritative movement for a better world two thousand years ago; that He has been promoting this uniting force through the centuries, and is doing this in our day. He stands before us in His Church as the divine authority and surety for a better world. Our faith is rooted in Him and His Church exclusively.

Moral Re-Armament proclaims the changing of the world as its mission. While it does not identify itself with the doctrines and practices of any denominational faith or church, it is a religious movement. An efficient use of headlines, advertisements,



pronouncements and news releases draws the attention of the public to its training center and its program of activities.

The intent of this instruction is to warn you against the dangers to the purity and integrity of your Catholic faith that come from participation in man-made religious and moral movements and organizations which are not under the patronage and guidance of the Church. Moreover, it is hoped that a general account of the activities of the Church in her world-mission, including the work of the Lay Apostolate, will show that the Church seeks to enlist the personal service of every Catholic.

It shall be our endeavor to present instructions about the need of revelation, about the teaching authority of the Church, and about the need of faith in the building of the Kingdom of God for life eternal and for a better life here on earth.

The rule of faith is universal; it binds all the members of the Church; and it binds them in all that it contains. It is important for us to have a clear understanding of the content and practice of our Catholic faith.

## *The Teaching Authority of the Church*

OUR Lord conferred a teaching authority on all the Apostles and their successors: "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matthew 28, 18-20).

He conferred a position of primacy on Peter and his successors when He declared: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church . . . And I will give thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16, 18-19).

When Christ commissioned the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops, to teach His truths, He made them His own voice among men. He said to them: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (John 20, 22); "he who hears you, hears me"

(Luke 10, 16). He made them a living Teaching Authority in the Church.

It is the duty of the Pope and the Bishops, whom "the Holy Spirit has placed . . . to rule the Church" (Acts 20, 28), to communicate in God's name the truths that bind men, and to establish the rules which regulate Christian life.

Christ gave the authority of teaching to the Apostles and to their successors, the Bishops. Hence, the Catholic Bishop of a diocese is a true teacher of doctrine for the faithful under his charge. He is a true representative of Christ, though subordinate to the Supreme Pontiff who holds primacy in the Teaching Authority.

The Bishop chooses and deputizes priests to help him in the proper fulfillment of the office of teaching and preaching the Catholic faith in his diocese.

## *The Bishop and the Faithful*

ONE of the primary duties of a Bishop in his diocese is to safeguard the purity of faith and morals, and to prevent abuses which endanger the purity of faith and morals. The priests of the diocese are the helpers of the Bishop in this field. It is to the credit of loyal Catholics that they give heed to the teachings and instructions of their Bishop and their priests. Their faith leads the way for them.

In matters pertaining to administration and external discipline, one may find variations between one diocese and another. However, it is hard to understand how Catholics can justify themselves in feeling free not to pay heed to instructions which deal with doctrine and faith issued by the Bishop of a diocese in which they are visiting or only in temporary residence, on the plea that similar instructions were not issued in their home diocese. As a matter of fact, let it be known that Canon 14 of the Law of the Church expressly states that Catholics, even sojourners from elsewhere, are held to the regulations established by the Bishop of the place when the public order guarding doctrine and faith is at question.

## *Divine Revelation*

GENERALLY speaking, in the natural order, a revelation from God is morally necessary for mankind in relation to a knowledge of God and His law.

In the supernatural order, divine revelation is absolutely necessary in relation to the supernatural destiny of man.

By faith we accept the truths made manifest or revealed to us by God as recorded in Holy Scripture or the Bible, and as contained in Divine Tradition. Our Lord nowhere told His Apostles to write; He told them to teach whatsoever He had commanded them. Hence, there are truths revealed by Christ which the Apostles passed on under His command, which are not necessarily contained in Holy Scripture. These truths are contained in what is called Divine Tradition, and must be accepted as revealed truths.

The sum of all revealed truths as contained in Holy Scripture and in Divine Tradition is called the Deposit of Faith.

The Church makes clear, with God's own authority, the practical meaning of the Deposit of Faith in the daily affairs and problems of men.

## *Religious and Moral Truths of the Natural Order*

IT is a common experience for all of us to observe and to admire many examples of high ideals and virtuous practices in the lives of many people who are guided by mere humanitarianism or follow what is called a natural religion.

The Church acknowledges and upholds the natural law inscribed in man's heart. At the same time she reminds her children about the obstacles that impede the correct use of man's natural abilities; she also reminds them about the necessity of a divine revelation even with respect to religious truths which can be known by man's natural abilities.



Faith has to do with the knowledge of God and of His will with respect to man's personal relations with God and with neighbor. People can fall into error and can become confused if they place too much reliance on human reason as a means of understanding and applying the things of God. Similar confusion can result if they follow exclusively the interpretations of persons who teach religious truths without authority from God.

On August 12, 1950, Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical letter about some false opinions which threaten to undermine the foundations of Christian Doctrine. In this letter (*Humani Generis*) the Holy Father refers to the disagreements and errors which exist among men about moral and religious matters because they do not rely on the authority of divine revelation. He writes:

“For though, absolutely speaking, human reason by its own natural force and light can arrive at a true and certain knowledge of the one personal God, Who by His Providence watches over and governs the world, and also of the natural law, which the Creator has written in our hearts, still there are not a few obstacles to prevent reason from making efficient and fruitful use of its natural ability.

“The truths that have to do with God and the relations between God and men, completely surpass the sensible order and demand self-surrender and self-abnegation in order to be put into practice and to influence practical life. Now the human intellect, in gaining the knowledge of such truths is hampered both by the activity of the senses and the imagination, and by evil passions arising from original sin. Hence men easily persuade themselves in such matters that what they do not wish to believe is false or at least doubtful. It is for this reason that divine revelation must be considered morally necessary so that those religious and moral truths which are not of their nature beyond the reach of reason in the present condition of the human race, may be known by all men readily with a firm certainty and with freedom from all error.”

Hence, in the discussion and application of religious and moral truths that are comprised in the natural order, a Catholic

gives heed to the proposition declared by the Vatican Council: "It is due to divine revelation that in the present condition of the human race those truths about God which are not of themselves beyond the grasp of human reason can (now) be known by all men readily, with firm certitude, and with no admixture of error."

Christ gave the duty of teaching divine revelation to the Pope and the Bishops. Hence, the Church is the only safe guide even with respect to natural religious truths.

## *Membership in the Church*

OUR Lord left the work of teaching and explaining the Deposit of Faith to the Teaching Authority of the Church, not to private persons. He commanded the Apostles to teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever He Himself had commanded. He commanded all to be incorporated by Baptism into the Church and to remain united to Him and to His Vicar through whom He governs the Church on earth.

Knowing the Church to have been divinely established by Christ, we know that we cannot be saved if we do not adhere to the governance of the Church.

Our Lord decreed the Church to be the means of salvation without which no one can enter the kingdom of eternal glory. However, in His infinite mercy He "has willed that the effects, necessary for one to be saved, of those helps to salvation which are directed towards man's final end . . . by divine institution, can also be obtained in certain circumstances when those helps are used only in desire and longing . . . Therefore, that one may obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be incorporated into the Church actually as a member, but it is necessary that at least he be united to her by desire and longing" (The Holy Office, August 8, 1949).

However, it must not be thought that just any kind of desire of entering the Church suffices for salvation. Together with this desire by which a person is related to the Church, there must be a perfect charity and a supernatural faith.

We know that no one can be sure of his salvation. However,

under our faith, there can be a basis for a solid hope if we use all the means which God wills us to use. Those who are related to the Church in desire and longing can obtain the effects of those helps to salvation which are directed towards man's final end. However, they are in a condition "in which they cannot be sure of their salvation" since "they still remain deprived of those many heavenly gifts and helps which can only be enjoyed in the Catholic Church" (Pius XII, *On the Mystical Body of Christ*, 1943). Moreover, the desire and longing of being united to the Church can be dissolved quite readily when a person withdraws himself from the sincere intention and will of studying the claims of the Church.

By the words quoted from the encyclical "On The Mystical Body of Christ," the Holy Father reproves those who falsely assert that men can be saved with equal certainty in every religion, which is to say, "one religion is as good as another."

Those who hold to the Catholic faith, accept without reservation the principle: "Submission to the Catholic Church and to the Sovereign Pontiff is required as necessary for salvation." Children of the Church who have heard the clear voice of Mother Church heed her voice and obey. They do not question the mandate of the Church which forbids them to have an active participation in the ritual and religious exercises of non-Catholic churches or groups. This mandate is not to be interpreted as intolerance and domination, but as a firm stand for the truth.

## *Revelation and the Supernatural Order*

ACCORDING to the Catholic faith we are called to live in a supernatural order. St. Paul expresses our position as follows: "God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days has spoken to us by his Son" (Hebrews I, 1-2). The binding force of the primitive and the Mosaic revelations was removed by the fact that Christ perfected these revelations and gave them a final form in our present Holy Scripture and Divine Tradition.

Divine revelation is absolutely necessary with respect to the

supernatural order. The teaching and interpretation of this revelation is in the hands of the Church. We pray that we may always hold fast to our faith in the supernatural and that we may find a safe anchorage in our profession, "I believe in the . . . Holy Catholic Church."

## *Personal Sanctification*

### The Mission of the Church in the Sanctuary

#### NOTE WELL

*(The term "change" is used often in this instruction as an accommodation to the use of the term by MRA. However, we wish to make it clear that in our use of the term we refer to that interior renewal which comes to the soul by sanctifying grace through the merits of Christ which gives us a sharing in divine life.*

*As a result of the consequences of original sin, the labor of living up to the standards of morality is a lifetime labor with the help of the grace of God. The change from sin to the acceptance and practice of virtue does not bring us abruptly to a stage of perfection. We must work and pray all through life to live as well as we can.*

*It is also to be noted that deficiencies and errors are to be found in religious terms used by MRA. Thus, no reference is made to the primary element of prayer, selfless adoration of God. However, we do not propose to enter upon a detailed theological analysis of these differences in terminology).*

**M**ANY proclamations and eloquent appeals are being made to all men to help to bring about a change for a better world by changing themselves first. A personal change in each person is the key to better men and better nations.

In its apostolate, Moral Re-Armament proclaims that the secret of remaking men lies in the definite information that can come from the mind of God to the mind of men. It is maintained that this information comes from the experience of the dynamic which is almost forgotten, that is, the Holy Spirit, who gives the guided answer.

We do not desire to enter into any controversy about this matter. We desire to explain simply that Our Lord has revealed this secret of remaking men and has been pursuing this mission



through the Holy Spirit in His Church through the centuries. That is why we profess the article of faith that comes to us from the Apostles, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church."

The heart of the message of Christ through His Church has been and is today a renewal of life, a new life, a new birth. In the first days of Christianity St. Paul gave great emphasis to this mission and expressed it strikingly when he wrote to the Ephesians about God's will and good pleasure "to re-establish all things in Christ, both those in the heavens and those on earth" (Ephesians I, 10).

From earliest instructions in Christian Doctrine we learned that man was endowed with the supernatural gift of sanctifying grace at creation and that he lost this gift through original sin. We are heirs to the sad consequences of original sin but by the merits of the Redemption of Christ, sanctifying grace confers on our souls a new life, that is, a sharing in the life of God Himself. This new life comes to us through a rebirth when we receive Baptism. We also receive grace to overcome the sad consequences of original sin.

Sanctifying grace changes us to the roots of our being; we become new creatures. This change is supernatural.

When we hear references to the Holy Spirit as giving guided answers about how to change and how to think and live, we recall the promise which Our Lord made about the Advocate, the Comforter, the Spirit Who would come to teach us all the truth. We recall the familiar answer which we learned in the Catechism, "The Holy Ghost dwells in the Church as the source of its life and sanctifies souls through the gift of grace."

We are familiar with the ministry and the teaching of the Church through the priest in the sanctuary, at the altar, in the pulpit and in the confessional, about the sharing of God's life which entails love of God and neighbor. Hence, in season and out of season instructions and admonitions are given to us about original sin and grace, about the commandments of God and actual sin, about the Eight Beatitudes, about virtue, and about the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.



We know that "actual grace is necessary for all who have attained to the use of reason, because without it we can not long resist the power of temptation nor perform other actions which merit a reward in heaven." We believe that the principal ways of obtaining grace are prayer and the sacraments, especially Mass and Holy Communion. Hence, there is constant endeavor on our part to be faithful in the practice of our religion at the sanctuary of our parish church.

All of us can derive much comfort and inspiration by reviewing the truths of our faith as presented in a simple Catechism. We can gain a great measure of comfort and inspiration by reading some of the excellent books that are available. We should endeavor to learn more about our membership in the Church. The Church is an organism — a living institution; it is the Mystical Body of Christ. He is the Head; the Holy Ghost is the soul; we are members. We are members of a family. By belonging to Christ, we belong to one another. We can not share life with Christ if we do not share life with one another.

In a word, the constant and unchanging theme of our faith is a call to walk in a newness of life in Christ. It is a call to give honest attention to a change of self according to the mind of Christ.

## *The Sanctification and Salvation of All Men*

### The Mission of the Church Outside the Sanctuary

THE mission of the Church, "to re-establish all things in Christ, both those in the heavens and those on earth" (Ephesians I, 10), is most strikingly illustrated in the work of the Church outside the sanctuary.

No one can be unaware of the lack of regard for spiritual and moral values in the economic, social and political field. A spirit of secularism with respect to world problems is prevalent. We are painfully aware of the evils and suffering that are visited on man-

kind by war and persecution, hunger and privation, dissensions and hatreds, conflicts between labor and management, corruption in private and public life, the break-up of homes, the lack of regard for the sacredness of the marriage bond, and by a disregard of justice, charity and true brotherhood among men. It is plain that everyone should work for a "remaking of the world."

The mission of the Church is not aimed at a temporal goal; it transcends mere earthly goals, however noble and desirable. However, the task of "remaking the world" has always been the theme of our Supreme Pontiffs in the past. This has never been emphasized more clearly than in our own day.

Let us consider one of the instructions on the Church by the present Pontiff, Pope Pius XII. This instruction was given in the form of an Allocution to the Assembly of Cardinals on February 20, 1946. In brief outline we present some main points:

The Church embraces and sanctifies all that is really human. The part that she has to play in the salvation of human society and in the establishment of a lasting internal and external peace can be manifold and varied. Her influence extends to the foundation, structure and activity of human society, and is supranational in character.

The work of the Church is effected in the depths of each man's heart and extends throughout life in all of man's activities. Man, as formed and educated by the Church, becomes the beginning and the end of human society, and also the principle of its equilibrium.

The Church can and does provide healing medicine for the many wounds of mankind. "Since she is ever bent intently over man, watching his every heart beat, she knows all his rich qualities, is alive to his aspirations with that clear-sighted intuition and penetrating appreciation which can come only from the supernatural illumination of Christ's teaching and the supernatural warmth of His divine charity."

The Holy Father declares most emphatically that the Church cannot confine herself to the sanctuary. "The Church cannot cut herself off, inert in the privacy of her churches, and thus desert her divinely providential mission of forming the complete man,

and thereby collaborating without rest in the construction of the solid foundations of society. This mission is for her essential . . . (to) build the powerful structure of human intercourse.”

The labors and endeavors of the Church for World Peace in our day are a matter of record, beginning with St. Pius X at the outbreak of the First World War and in various situations that arose since that time, including the Second World War.

The fruits and benefits of world-wide relief for the suffering and afflicted people of the world under the inspiration of the Holy Father are well known. We ourselves participate in annual contributions to the Bishops' Relief Services and we receive information about the vast network of relief which covers the world, regardless of creed, color and nationality.

With a sense of rightful pride we recall the truly historic pronouncements made by Leo XIII in 1891, and repeated by Pius XI, about a just and equitable distribution of the goods of this earth and about relations between labor and management, in keeping with the problems which arise in a new industrial world.

On these occasions authoritative statements were made that no satisfactory solution will be found to these problems unless religion and the Church are called upon to aid. Economic and moral matters enter into the building of a social order. It is an error to say that economics in no way enters into the moral field. From the individual and social nature of things, the will of God and morals must be the foundation of any just economic order.

Hence, the Church claims the right and duty to pronounce upon social and economic matters. “Certainly the ‘Church was not given the commission to guide men to an only fleeting and perishable happiness but to that which is eternal. Indeed the Church holds that it is unlawful for her to mix without cause in these temporal concerns’; however, she can in no wise renounce the duty God entrusted to her to interpose her authority, not of course in matters of technique for which she is neither suitably equipped nor endowed by office, but in all things that are connected with the moral law” (Pope Pius XI, *On Reconstructing the Social Order*, 1931).

In the United States the Bishops of the country organized a

voluntary association in 1919, called the National Catholic Welfare Conference, popularly known as N.C.W.C. At the annual meetings of this Conference deliberations are held about the pastoral cares of the Church in the country for the development and improvement of spiritual life, about education and the spiritual formation of lay leaders, about the missionary needs of the universal Church and relief work among the needy, and about racial equality and social reconstruction. The problem of International Peace holds a place of prominence.

The listing of eight departments and some thirty committees of this Conference, which operate throughout the year from a central office, indicates the wide field of the activities of the Church in the United States outside the sanctuary for the betterment of society.

The Annual Statements issued by the Bishops cover a wide variety of subjects and are widely publicized. They serve as ample evidence of the constant concern of the Bishops about those forces and ideas that have an effect on our society.

When we come upon the wide publicity that is given to training centers not under the patronage of the Church, in which task forces are being prepared and mobilized for moral and ideological action, let us not forget the large number of seminaries, monasteries, convents and educational institutions which are training centers for the mission of the Church in the world.

It is the purpose of N.C.W.C. to offer a program of action for the good of all men in such fashion as to reach into every parish in every diocese. Hence, one of the Departments is that of Lay Organizations.

## *The Lay Apostolate*

THE world-mission of the Church outside the sanctuary is illustrated by the insistent call made by the Holy Father to lay people of all ranks. The Lay Apostolate can be truly called the theme of the teaching Church in this twentieth century, the age of great advances in technology, in scientific and mechanical progress.



The Church realizes that she needs the cooperation and help of lay people more than ever in the accomplishment of her mission. Let it be emphasized at the outset that the program of Catholic Action by lay apostles is based on the personal spiritual life of each individual. In other words, every person as an individual must look to himself first before he can contribute anything to organized action.

On the occasion of the first World Congress of the Lay Apostolate in 1951, the Holy Father said: "If there is a power in the world capable . . . of disposing souls to a sincere reconciliation and to a fraternal union among people, it is certainly the Catholic Church. You can rejoice in this with pride. It is up to you to make your contribution with all your strength."

Pope Pius XII addressed these words to two thousand chosen delegates from eighty nations of the world. The supranational character of the Church in action is illustrated by the National and International Congresses of lay people that take place in all the Continents of the world.

The story of the work of the lay apostolate in the United States is a story of great development and expansion under the Department of Lay Organizations of the National Catholic Welfare Conference and in the form of a wide variety of many other organizations under the guidance of Bishops in their own dioceses. Some are local, others are national.

We have a Catholic Press which reaches millions of readers in the form of weekly newspapers, and weekly and monthly periodicals. The main theme of numerous stories and articles is that of peace, justice and equity, social betterment, and racial equality.

One of the most inspiring programs for the lay apostolate is to be found in Lay Retreats which are expanding increasingly and are received with great favor by lay people. Thus we have hundreds of training centers attended by thousands of lay apostles who prepare themselves for the remaking of the world by a deepening of their spiritual life.

In every diocese, large and small, beginning with the regular Sunday and daily schedules of the parishes and expanded



through novenas, missions and retreats, a varied program of Catholic Action is offered to every Catholic, to suit his means, talents and willingness to work for the betterment of the world.

## *A Call to the Lay Apostolate*

IT is hoped that every reader of this instruction has gained an increased appreciation of the mission of the Church in the life of every individual and in the life of the world. The Church opens up a wide field of action for everyone. It is not necessary for any Catholic to seek opportunities for action within any religious movement that is not under the guidance of the Church. The Church appeals to all of her children to become members of her own task forces for the betterment of the world.

In a recent editorial in the semi-official newspaper of the Vatican (*L'Osservatore Romano*, December 9, 1957) on Moral Re-Armament, the writer, addressing those Catholics who wish to devote their energies to the remaking of the world, exhorts them as follows:

“Let not those Catholics who feel inspired in this manner by zeal and charity render their activity sterile in non-Catholic movements. Rather, let them devote themselves with enthusiasm and perseverance to some of the various forms of the apostolate indicated by the Sovereign Pontiff in his discourse of last October 5 to members of the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate.

“In this way they will be engaged fruitfully in the work which is proper to a lay Catholic, called by the Holy Father ‘a consecration of the world,’ that makes its contribution to the building up and perfecting of the Mystical Body of Christ.”

*(We urge readers to study the complete editorial as reprinted on page 30 of the Appendix).*

We observe great zeal, devotion and dedication on the part of members of MRA in the pursuit of their ideals. Catholics might well emulate this example of complete dedication in their participation in the mission of the church. At the same time, let us direct fervent prayers to the Holy Spirit that He may grant light, guidance and direction to all true followers of MRA so

that they will find the completion and perfecting of their ideals "in the supernatural illumination of Christ's teaching and the supernatural warmth of His divine charity" within the fold of the Catholic Church.

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## Moral Re-Armament

### *History of Moral Re-Armament*

WE shall use the popular appellation, MRA, in our references to this movement. It consists of a group of people from various walks of life and from countries all over the world. MRA appears to seek especially leaders from every profession and rank for the purpose of training them to become an ideological force for the betterment of the world.

The leader of MRA is Dr. Frank N. D. Buchman, an American, who was born in 1878. He began his career as a Lutheran minister, and in his early years became known as a man of prestige from the manner in which he sought to bring about a revival of Christianity. This movement came to be known at first as Buchmanism, but later, in 1927, its followers acquired the name — "The Oxford Group." This name is not to be confused with the Oxford Movement in England in Cardinal Newman's time. The group announced itself as a Christian revolution working toward a new social order under the dictatorship of the Spirit of God.

In 1938, when Europe was filled with fear and apprehension, when nations were preparing for the defense of their freedoms and were occupied with re-armament, Dr. Buchman gave the title of Moral Re-Armament to the Oxford Group. He appealed for a world-wide mobilization of the moral and spiritual forces of the world under chosen and trained leadership.

It is maintained that MRA is not an organization but an organism. People are not officially enrolled into membership. However, it appears that full-time workers, constituting task forces,

are numbered in the hundreds. Added to these is a large body of apostles and supporters who work for MRA without disrupting the normal course of their daily work in life.

There are two main training centers for MRA in the world, one at Caux in Switzerland (in the Catholic Diocese of Lausanne and Fribourg) and the other on Mackinac Island in the United States (in the Catholic Diocese of Marquette, Michigan). World Assemblies are held in these places at appointed times during the year. It is also reported that training courses are conducted in these centers throughout the year for chosen and selected leaders.

## *Description of MRA*

Various definitions and descriptions of MRA are given, but it is claimed that it cannot be discovered through its literature. Its own leaders do not undertake to define it except to say that it is a force for moral action whose aim is to make a new world of harmony by the moral change of people. They deny that it is a religion.

MRA describes its mission as that of promoting an ideology. Holding that ideas run the world, it places great emphasis on the war of ideas in which the moral factor in men must prevail if we wish to have a better world. Task forces are to be trained in a superior ideology for the purpose of winning the battle over that inferior materialistic ideology which is the cause of confusion in the world.

## *MRA Is a Religious Movement*

The leaders claim that MRA is not a religion but a superior ideology. They assert that the religious and denominational aspects of Protestant Revivalism have been abandoned and that there is room for men of all religious denominations and beliefs in the movement. Yet, we encounter repeated references to God, to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit even in their most recent announcements and publications.

In a statement by their leader, which is declared to be the

heart of this ideology, sin is recognized as the fundamental problem, and Jesus Christ as the solution. Emphasis is placed on morals plus the saving power of Jesus Christ, and on faith in the Holy Spirit Who will give the guided answer and will tell every person what to do as a direct call from God. "The battle is between Christ and anti-Christ. Choose ye this day whom ye serve."

The followers of this ideology are called upon to obey the Holy Spirit Whose action is ideological; from this obedience all followers acquire a conviction that definite information comes to them from God.

According to information at hand, training centers are conducted after the fashion of our retreat houses. The purpose of these training courses is the forming of God-guided personalities under the power and light of the Holy Spirit. The training includes prayer, or the quiet hour, sharing and guidance. Through a sort of mutual spiritual self-revelation and direction, practical programs for action are established. As a result of prayer and other elements of special training, there follows the acceptance and practice of the fundamental truths, the four absolutes — honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, — individuals change, and become a part of a force for the betterment of the world.

It is maintained that people can share in all of the activities of a training center without needing to explain their religious beliefs; nor do people need to worry how to reconcile any of their religious beliefs with MRA.

There is no doubt that exception will be taken to the statement that MRA is a religious movement. The allegation that it is not a sect or a religious denomination does not alter the fact that MRA acknowledges God as the source of moral life, proclaims absolute dependence on God, and the need of prayer. Most assuredly, that phase of MRA in which we find references to faith, revelation, the Holy Spirit and prayer, represents a religious current, or words have lost all meaning. MRA operates on a religious plane.

The fact that MRA teaches no doctrine about the nature of God or God's action in man does not prevent it from being a religious movement. As a school of action, MRA must necessarily



be a school of doctrine in deed and application. Certainly, it would be difficult to say that MRA is non-religious or that it is a movement merely of the natural order directed to a natural end. The religious and biblical terms used contradict this position. Words should not be changed in meaning to suit our convenience.

## *Errors of MRA About Religion*

Our claim that MRA is a religious movement might appear to be at odds with the allegation that MRA cultivates indifferentism as to religion. Indifferentism is defined as that error which claims that one religion is as good as another.

In one form indifferentism is illustrated by the assertion that a person must adopt some religion, but it matters little which one. In another form indifferentism is expressed by maintaining that religion is not absolutely necessary for a moral life; it may be adopted, provided that it helps. But it does not matter.

While some spokesmen for MRA have been known to say that there is room for people of no religion in the movement, it does not appear that there is basis to say that MRA would lend support to such a form of indifferentism.

However, it appears to be quite clear that MRA cultivates a discreet and prudent atmosphere for the first form of indifferentism, viz. that a person must adopt some religion, whether private or organized in form, but it matters little which one.

It also appears that MRA is open to the allegation that it supports syncretism. This error consists in uniting conflicting religious beliefs so as to reduce them to a common denominator acceptable to all.

By urging men to aspire to a level above things that divide, to leave the ground of dogma and to come to an agreement about a common way of moral life, Moral Re-Armament, perhaps unintentionally, assumes an aspect of superiority and leads to a vague, formless, new religion, — a super-religion. All churches seek to promote a moral and spiritual awakening among men,



and by that token they would take on the aspect of a subsidiary part of the organism called MRA.

It is said that no one in the movement can claim authority, yet the idea of MRA is spread by very material and corporeal men and institutions. At assemblies and training centers everything seems to happen spontaneously, yet every detail is regulated and standardized for the purpose of a tireless inculcation of the same idea. Surely, all who attend training courses must fall under the spiritual guidance of some one or some group in authority.

The errors recited above may not be considered as errors by many people of varied religious persuasions. We do not question their good faith in this matter. At the same time, we are confident that they will appreciate the position of the Catholic who declares that he cannot accept these erroneous opinions and must safeguard the purity and the integrity of his faith by not exposing himself to the dangers of indifferentism and syncretism.

## *Attempts to Reconcile Catholic Participation in MRA*

From the earliest years of the movement, even before it became known as MRA (1938), concern about Catholic participation became the subject of discussion among Catholic authorities. Catholics were warned about participation, and in some instances Bishops in Europe issued instructions to their faithful forbidding formal cooperation. The problem received more attention after the name Moral Re-Armament had been adopted and it was learned that even Catholic priests and religious participated in the assemblies at Caux in Switzerland.

In 1955 news releases appeared in Catholic papers about a three-point admonition that had been issued by the Holy Office concerning Catholic participation in MRA. Some of the Catholics identified with the movement, claiming that the norms issued by the Holy Office were merely directives, undertook to establish certain safeguards so that Catholics could participate with-

out scruples. They undertook to accomplish this task with a group of theologians representing the Bishop of Lausanne and Fribourg in Switzerland, in whose jurisdiction the training center of Caux is located.

This operation was known as the "Gentlemen's Agreement" and consisted of a declaration of eight points as a condition for Catholic participation. It was considered by the Bishop as "a condition 'sine qua non' for the future presence of Catholics at Caux, on condition also, surely, that the Holy See allows it."

These decisions, taken in October, 1956, were considered of utmost importance. They amounted to a commitment on the part of MRA not to infringe on the mission of the Church.

In 1957, as a result of criticism voiced against MRA leaders for having made this agreement, reports were published that it had been abrogated or revoked. However, trustworthy sources inform us that no person connected with MRA was in a position to make any such agreement on behalf of the movement; *that MRA is not an organization but an organism and, as such, it cannot operate by way of human directive.* In a word, it was claimed that no such commitment could have been made, and that what had not existed could not have been abrogated.

The points under discussion show what the theologians considered to be a source of the concern of Church authorities about the purity and integrity of the faith of those Catholics who participate in MRA. It was felt that the so-called agreement would dispel the misgivings of those who were misinformed about MRA and would open the way for collaboration with the movement in its good work. These efforts ended in failure.

It is well to note some of the points formulated in the so-called "Gentlemen's Agreement":

MRA is to avoid the use of Christian terms in its vocabulary;  
it is not to substitute itself for the Church by giving religious instructions;

the goal of a Christian transcends all temporal ends, no matter how noble is the goal of remaking the world;

the hours of quiet and sharing have a relative value and do not give a sure indication of God's will;

Catholics should not be subjected to the spiritual guidance of non-Catholics.

It is quite significant to weigh the assertion that *MRA is an organism and, as such, it cannot operate by way of human directive*. This supports the constantly repeated claim that MRA is a community guided by the Holy Spirit, in a word, that it is a religious entity.

Another argument for reconciling Catholic participation in MRA is used by those who refer to the appeals of our Supreme Pontiffs to all men of good will, even those who are not Christians, to join hands for common action in the moral and social field for the good of mankind. However, the claim that Catholics participate in a non-confessional movement when they participate in MRA is not justified on the basis of what has been set forth in this instruction.

Moreover, the appeals of our Supreme Pontiffs to Catholics to collaborate and to cooperate with groups not of the Catholic faith "cannot be understood as a change in the position of the Holy See in guarding the deposit of faith and in dealing with erroneous doctrines." Collaboration and cooperation of Catholics with other religious groups is to be established through authorized committees which will engage in *joint conference*, but in *independent action*.

## *Adverse Decisions of Church Authorities About Catholic Participation in MRA*

In the earlier years of the movement, when it was called the Oxford Group, Bishops in Germany and Ireland banned all manner of Catholic participation in it because it was considered a heretical sect.

In later years, when the movement came to be called Moral Re-Armament, Bishops in England, Germany and Italy warned Catholics and forbade them to participate in the movement. The reasons for these pronouncements were: the danger of indifference and syncretism; and of not living the full life of the

Church and of remaining outside the direction and guidance of the Church.

In our own day the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office has entered into the picture. The Holy Office is that congregation of the Holy Father which guards the teaching of faith and morals.

In 1955 a three-point admonition about Catholic participation in MRA, issued by the Holy Office, was widely publicized in the Catholic Press. In this instruction, wonderment was expressed over the fact that Catholics were seeking "certain moral and social objectives, however praiseworthy they may be, in the bosom of a movement which possesses neither the patrimony of doctrine or of spiritual life, nor the supernatural means of grace which the Catholic Church has." Through its Cardinal Secretary the Holy Office declared that the danger of indifferentism and of syncretism (compromise of religious principles) could no longer be ignored.

In its directives the Holy Office stated that it is not fitting for either diocesan or religious priests, much less for nuns, to participate in the meetings of Moral Re-Armament, and that it is not fitting that the faithful should accept posts of responsibility in Moral Re-Armament, and especially not fitting that they join the so-called policy team.

These directives are sufficiently clear, both as to words and the meaning expressed by the Church in these words. However, Catholic lay people who are identified with MRA have told us that there are no posts of responsibility and no policy teams in MRA. On this basis they did not feel that the directives of the Holy Office applied to them.

Without wishing to belabor the question, if there are no posts of responsibility or policy teams, we face the conclusion that every individual identified with the movement assumes responsibility and contributes to the formulation of policies. Nobody seems to be in a position to define the matter, and leaders fall back on the assertion that Moral Re-Armament, as an organism, *cannot operate by way of human directive*. Such being the case, we point out to all Catholics who participate in MRA



that they must bring themselves face to face with the Article of Faith which they profess: *I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church.*

\* \* \*

## The Bishop's Directive

THE Vatican City daily, the L'Osservatore Romano, is considered to be the semi-official organ of the Holy See. The latest authoritative Catholic opinion about MRA was voiced in this organ on December 9, 1957. The writer of the editorial does not question the intentions of the persons of sincere and good faith who are a part of the movement. However, the editorial maintains that MRA is a religious movement with a religious ideology of a nature different from that of Catholics.

Catholics are reminded in this editorial that the directives of the Holy Office on MRA remain in force for the entire world. In view of the dangers to the purity and the integrity of faith, the writer adds: "It is therefore not surprising if some authoritative members of the Catholic hierarchy have forbidden the faithful of their jurisdiction to take part in Moral Re-Armament."

In this Pastoral we have presented an instruction about the teaching authority of the Church on faith and morals. We have pointed out the dangers encountered by Catholics in MRA to the purity and integrity of their faith.

*Until Holy Mother Church should declare that no danger to the faith for Catholics is to be found in the movement, the present Pastoral Instruction concludes with the following directive: Catholics of the Diocese of Marquette and all other Catholics whenever they may be within the limits of the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Marquette may not attend the meetings of MRA, or participate in or promote its activities.*

Given at Marquette, Michigan, (U.S.A.)

August 15, 1958

✠MOST REV. THOMAS L. NOA, D.D.  
Bishop of Marquette.



## APPENDIX

**A** REPRINT of two news releases which appeared in the Catholic Press about Catholic participation in Moral Re-Armament is added herein as a part of the Pastoral Instruction on Faith.

Permission was received from the N.C.W.C. News Service for this reprint.

CATHOLIC ATTITUDE ON MRA 8/22/55/F  
MADE EMPHATICALLY CLEAR  
IN WEIGHTY VATICAN DOCUMENTS

(N.C.W.C. News Service)

The Catholic attitude toward the Moral Rearmament movement has been emphatically clarified in important Church documents recently released in various parts of the world.

The documents make it amply clear that priests and religious are forbidden to participate in Moral Rearmament meetings without special permission of the Holy See and that the Catholic laity is discouraged from taking an active part in the movement.

The documents issued by the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office — the Vatican body entrusted with safeguarding Catholic faith and morals — reinforce the condemnation of the Moral Rearmament movement made by numerous Catholic prelates dating back to 1938, when the late Cardinal Arthur Hinsley, Archbishop of Westminster, England, forbade Catholics to take an active part in the movement.

At that time the Cardinal condemned the MRA in these words:

“The movement is so tainted with indifferentism, i.e., with the error that one religion is as good as another, that no Catholic

may take any active part therein or formally cooperate therewith."

This warning was repeated in 1946 by the hierarchy of England and Wales.

Other Cautions on the movement were issued by His Eminence Josef Cardinal Frings, Archbishop of Cologne, in 1950; the late Cardinal Ildefonso Schuster, Archbishop of Milan, in 1952; His Eminence Ernest Cardinal Van Roey, Archbishop of Malines, on behalf of the Belgian hierarchy in 1952, and this year the hierarchies of the Philippines and Ceylon.

The Moral Rearmament movement, also known as the Oxford Group movement, and as Buchmanism, was launched by Dr. Frank Buchman, a Lutheran minister, in 1909 at Princeton, N.J. It professes not to be a new religion but aspires to reform the world through the propagation of what are called the "four absolutes": absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love.

To achieve their goal of "remaking the world," the MRA followers lean heavily on what they consider the "ever-present guidance" of the Holy Spirit and on "team sharing" — a kind of public confession of religious experiences and past sins.

In recent months Bishops in various parts of the world have released a definitive judgment on the movement made by the Congregation of the Holy Office, August 8, 1951.

Sent to Bishops throughout the world for their guidance, the document reads:

"The Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office has been asked whether it is fitting that the clergy and members of religious communities should take part in the reunions and meetings of Moral Rearmament.

"Their Eminences the Cardinals and the priests of this Sacred Congregation, in a plenary session on August 8, 1951, attentively examined the proposed question and decided to issue the following directives:

"1. It is not fitting for either diocesan or religious priests, and much less for nuns, to participate in the meetings of Moral Rearmament.

"2. If exceptional circumstances should make such participation opportune, the permission of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office must be requested beforehand. This permission will be granted only to learned and experienced priests.

"3. Finally it is not fitting that the faithful should accept posts of responsibility in Moral Rearmament, and especially not fitting that they join the so-called 'policy team.'"

This three-point admonition has been repeated a number of times by the Holy Office as its advice was sought anew on the subject of Moral Rearmament.

One of the most recently published repetitions of this caution is a letter from His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Pizzardo, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, to Archbishop Giovanni Panico, Apostolic Delegate to Canada.

Cardinal Pizzardo prefaced the three-point reminder with these remarks:

"Because of the intensification throughout the world of the activities of Moral Rearmament and considering the frequent requests for instruction which have been made on the subject to the Holy See, I believe it opportune to recall to Your Excellency what had been communicated to the apostolic delegation in 1951.

"The Sacred Congregation is astonished to see Catholics and even priests seek certain moral and social objectives, however praiseworthy they may be, in the bosom of a movement which possesses neither the patrimony of doctrine or of spiritual life, nor the supernatural means of grace which the Catholic Church has.

"It is even more astonishing to see certain people have an exaggerated enthusiasm which apparently makes them believe that the methods and means developed by Moral Rearmament are more efficacious in this movement than in the Catholic Church itself.

"The danger of syncretism (compromise of religious principles) and of religious indifference, of which warnings have been given on Moral Rearmament, can no longer be ignored."

# MORAL REARMAMENT

*An editorial published in L'Osservatore Romano, Vatican City daily, Dec 9-10, 1957, released in the United States through the NCWC News Service, Jan. 24, 1958.*

Among the movements for the moral rebirth of mankind, which have arisen outside of Catholicism, the Moral Rearmament movement is one of those that have become best known.

Started some years prior to the second World War (at one time it was called "The Oxford Group"), it has developed greatly in the past ten years. Founder and head of it is the Protestant minister, Dr. Frank Buchman, as is well known. Protestants are its principal leaders. Its two centers are now in Mackinac Island, Michigan (USA), and in Caux, Switzerland.

Even within our own ranks it has been said and written that Catholics may without any concern cooperate with, or be members of, Moral Rearmament.

This matter requires serious reservations.

We do not wish to question the intentions of Dr. Buchman, or of those who are part of the movement. Nevertheless, we cannot hide some serious and justified doubts.

At times Moral Rearmament appears to want solely to carry out its action on a plane of natural honesty where — as the Rearmists think — it is possible to bring together men of different races and different religions.

It is pointed out in this respect that even outside of Moral Rearmament there are a considerable number of persons of noble spirit who are greatly concerned about the present spiritual disorder and the moral breakdown of mankind. They plan to make efforts to reawaken in the world the eternal principles of the spirit, and to neutralize the poison injected into mankind by the propagandists of materialistic atheism.

For aims such as these, under certain conditions and within certain limits, certain kinds of cooperation by Catholics are pos-



sible, but only when there is no danger of indifferentism or of religious syncretism.

Impelled by these thoughts, some Catholics believed that they could become members of Moral Rearmament at once. However, even from this point of view alone, matters are not as clear and simple as they might seem. In fact, to facilitate its propaganda in non-Christian countries, as for example the Far East and Africa, the Moral Rearmament Movement has attenuated and dimmed to a great extent even the most elementary religious principles, making these dangers even more obvious and grave.

At the same time there are other statements by the principal leaders of the Moral Rearmament Movement, and there are other facts, which show the movement to be a true and actual religious ideology of a nature different from that of Catholics.

Mention is frequently made of "God's inspiration," of Christ, of the Cross, Redemption, and the Church. Catholics would be pleased if words and ideas were not spoken or used in a sense which is ambiguous, if not erroneous.

The four absolutes (that is: honesty, disinterestedness, purity and love) cannot but meet with our approval, provided they explicitly derive their value from the only perfect absolute, who is God.

Lastly, there must be serious reservations on the practices (as intended and carried out in Moral Rearmament) of meditation (quiet time) and divine inspiration (God's guidance), the sharing with group members (team) of sentiments, and of one's own moral state (sharing).

It is therefore not surprising if some authoritative members of the Catholic hierarchy have forbidden the faithful in their jurisdictions to take part in Moral Rearmament.

Furthermore, *as the press of many countries reported in the spring of 1955*, the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office sent certain instructions on this subject to the Bishops — through the pontifical legations.

Ecclesiastics, secular as well as regular, were forbidden to take part in the congresses of the MRA movement. Where lay-

men were concerned, the instructions read: "It is not proper that lay Catholics accept leading posts in the movement."

In explaining these provisions, the letter pointed out important things which we deem useful to report, because they are also a completion of those reported above:

"Many are rightly astonished in noting a number of Catholics, and even ecclesiastics, pursuing moral and social ends, however praiseworthy they may be, in a movement that does not possess the heritage of doctrine, spiritual life and the supernatural means of grace which is proper to the Catholic Church.

"There must be pointed out, lastly, the danger of religious syncretism which many see in Moral Rearmament."

In spite of a number of attempts by private individuals at clarification and experiments in cooperation, the reservations of the hierarchy still remain effective. The regulations of the Holy Office remain in force for the entire world; those of the Bishops, for their own territory, remain in full vigor and therefore must be faithfully observed by both the clergy and the laity.

We cannot see how a Catholic could work in Moral Rearmament, particularly as a "permanent" member, without serious practical disadvantages and dangerous confusion in the doctrinal field.

Doctrinal exactness and integrity are to a Catholic a strict and unmodifiable duty, particularly when he wishes to devote his work and energies to such a serious undertaking as that of "remaking the world."

Let not those Catholics who feel inspired in this manner by zeal and charity render their activity sterile in non-Catholic movements. Rather, let them devote themselves with enthusiasm and perseverance to some of the various forms of the apostolate indicated by the Sovereign Pontiff in his discourse of last October 5 to members of the World Congress of the Lay Apostolate.

In this way they will be engaged fruitfully in the work which is proper to a lay Catholic, called by the Holy Father a "consecratio mundi" (consecration of the world), that makes its contribution to the building up and perfecting of the Mystical Body of Christ.



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