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Bishops 2004

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Bishops 2004 6.6.04

0:09 Bill Flacks introduces the talk that will be given by retired Catholic Bishop of Derry, Edward Daly, and retired Anglican Bishop of Derry, James Mehaffey. The Bucknell in Northern Ireland Program invited the two men to speak in three successive years for which we have tapes (2003, 2004, 2005). Each talk began with the men giving their personal history in a short statement and then the floor was opened for student questions and their reflective answers.

0:50 Daly begins with his personal history. A fuller time code summary is given in the notes for the 2005 presentation. Bishop Daly began his work as a priest in Derry before moving away and then returning as Bishop.

4:20 Explains that June 6 (the date of this talk) is always a significant day in Derry because /it is the celebration of the patron saint of Derry, St. Columb whose name means “the dove of the church”. He is celebrated as the person who brought Christianity of Derry and then Bishop Daly gives bit of St. Columb’s history.

5:20 Mehaffey begins his personal history. Explains that the Church of Ireland is Anglican or in American terms Episcopalian. He also explains that the Diocese he was head of is a combined diocese of Derry in the UK and Raphoe in Donegal, which is part of the Republic. He came to Derry in 1980 but had never served as a priest in the diocese as Bishop Daly had.

8:15 Tape blacks out for a moment during Mehaffey’s presentation.

10:20 After Mehaffey had made some appreciative comments about Bishop Daly’s friendship, Daly comes in to make a comment about his own appreciation for Bishop James and their shared experiences, particularly giving lectures like this one.

11:00 Daly begins talking about the Inner City Trust, the history of the project, and his pride at working on that project. He gives some detail about the specific buildings that were constructed as a result of their work and it is important to know which specific nonprofit organizations exist today because the Inner City Trust built buildings for them. Daly says that from the time when the center city was just rubble and no investors were interested in rebuilding, now there is no open space left and the downtown is economically prosperous. They as an organization have moved on to other projects supporting education for children from both traditions of the city.

14:15 Bishop Mehaffey comes in to say that in future years we ought to get them to provide a tour of central Derry with an eye to giving a graphic presentation of the Inner City Trust projects. He also says that we ought to meet Paddy Doherty who was the brains and energy behind the work. Mehaffey describes Doherty as “the most dynamic man I have ever met.” The Inner City Trust can take responsibility for the renewal of the central city. It also was a symbol of hope to the people that the city could be renewed. People need trust and hope. When I first came to Derry, I’d never been here before but I was shocked at the holes in the street and overall way that the physical structure was in disrepair. Now there have been maybe 50 buildings that have been rehabilitated and the whole place is a place of optimism.

16:20 Bishop Daly reaffirms these comments, telling what a terrific and dynamic person Paddy Doherty is. The Inner City Trust is a particularly good example because it is not just a theory but it is an idea that has been realized. Paddy has a great principle...it’s always better to ask forgiveness than to ask for permission.

16:35 Five-second period without sound and where the film briefly goes black.

16:40 Bishop Daly continues.

17:05 Bishop Mehaffey continues. One other thing is that there has been a very high unemployment rate in this city and the Inner City Trust employed unemployed people, especially young people. In doing this they trained people in the building trades. The government also was very generous, putting up all of this money for training. Many people got their first job with Inner City Trust. So there not only are building but there is training and helping people. The Inner City Trust also provided retail outlets, shopping outlets, and also some accommodations---apartments.

17:55 Bishop Daly continues the talk. This may not seem important now, but it was important at the time. We were one of the few organizations at the time that gave opportunities to people coming out of prison. These were often bright young people from good family backgrounds who had been caught up in the conflict. Some of them had gotten involved in very negative and destructive and sometimes in very terrible things. They were kind of the untouchables and no one would give them a chance to get back into a normal life structure. Although it did not skew in favor of them, it did make it a point of policy to give a chance to those who seemed seriously to want to get their lives back on track.

19:20 Bishop Mehaffey speaks. I should explain something else. This side of the river is called the City Side and the far side is called the Waterside. On the Waterside in the early 1980s the churches got together and formed the Waterside Churches Trust. They weren't so much into rehabilitating buildings as in doing social outreach to people, outreach to the elderly, the housebound, helping people to find jobs---there was a jobs center---, helping people to access social security benefits. It was a real social outreach and that was done by the four church leaders. We may sound like we are singing our own praises but the Waterside project shows that this work was going on

throughout the city, although this one was a social outreach one. It's still going, but church inspired.

20:45 end; Daly asks for more questions.

20:50 Student question. In the Inner City Trust, how did it work having people from different communities working together on the ground?

21:20 Bishop Daly responds. It worked very well, although we never succeeded in getting as many people from the Unionist/Protestant community as we wanted. Some of the leaders would have come from that background or that community. The board itself is roughly half and half. But it was harder to get an even split among the workers. At the beginning there was a lot of work to do and we employed 700-800 people and we might have had 10-15% Protestants. The percentage breakdown in the community was about 70-30%. Later on when things calmed down there was less to do and we employed fewer. I think the Waterside Trust was more successful and they had of a mixed group of workers. We're not directors on that organization although we are both directors of the Inner City Trust. We were directors of the Waterside Trust but we've resigned because the work has changed. At the time we were involved with it was around 50-50.

23:00 Bishop Mehaffey begins talking. I would endorse that. Very well balanced over there. In the past, and I think this is changing, people on the Waterside talked about how difficult it was coming over the bridge to the City Side. The River was meant to keep us together but it was a division in the minds of some people. I think the two bridges should link people. It depends on how you look at it. Some people thought that the River in a sense divided the town. The far side, the Waterside, was pretty much 50-50 Catholic and Protestant, where over here there are a very small number of

Protestants living on the City-Side. So in the mind of some people, they'd say the City-Side is Nationalist...not entirely but primarily. The Waterside was more evenly divided left/right.... more 50-50.

24:10

This

was one of the most terrible things that happen through the period we call the Troubles. I was working in Belfast from 1966-1980 and I saw the beginnings of the Troubles before they happened. One of the most horrific things that happened is that people up and moved away from their houses, leaving their houses, and moving to another area entirely. That happened in a big way in Belfast. I have vivid memories, as things got bad in the late 1960s of seeing the cars, the vans, and the lorries with mattresses and prams strapped to the top of the roof going from north and west Belfast to east and south Belfast. Likewise you'd see people going north and west. This was a kind of religious migration. It was very sad. I worked close to a large, post-War housing estate own, if you will, by the Prods, by the Housing Exec. People who lived there did not own their apartments but they rented. So I saw over a period of a few weeks that all of the Catholics left and moved North and West once the Troubles started.

25:45

Now that was a very upsetting thing, and it happened in many towns in Northern Ireland and it happened here. A lot of people moved from the City Side to the Water Side. But nearly every time when people left public housing---and that kind of housing is very common---they left because they felt threatened and the perception that they were isolated made them move. So you would find more and more segregation...Protestant Estate, Catholic Estate. I hate talking like that but it was true in my time. This was possible significantly because there were these huge public housing estates so that people did not own their homes. They could just pick up and leave and this allowed the neighborhoods to change dramatically and quickly.

27:00 Audience question: Could you talk about how it was different in the pulpit while the Troubles were going on and how much support did you have from among clergy in trying to promote peace?

27:25 Bishop Daly responds. I can only speak about myself; I was Bishop for twenty years and I was a priest here before the Troubles began and during the 1970s, which was a particularly gloomy, time here in Derry. I can truthfully say I never have had criticism from a priest in my own Diocese for things I have said. I certainly had criticism from priests in other dioceses. But I received great support from priests in this Diocese, particularly during times of great stress like when the hunger strikes were going on. We had five hunger strikers from this diocese who died and this was possibly one of the most testing times that one could go through but I had nothing but affirmation and support although I took a position opposed to the hunger strikes and I played a role in resolving the first hunger strikes in 1980. The British government let us down ultimately but we thought we had a resolution. I think we had but Margaret Thatcher changed her mind at the last minute, which led to the big hunger strike, which actually devastated this part of the world in 1980-81.

29:00 The people...it depends what issue you are speaking of. Certainly there would have been criticism from among laypeople if some people thought you were too pro-British while others thought you were too pro-Republican. People have a lot of trouble once they see a headline reading what the rest of the piece is about. They latch onto the high profile point but do not read through to understand the context. I have had criticism for being too Republican and I've had criticism for being too British, sympathetic to Unionists. You just realize that you have to be clear about your own thoughts. I've always tried to be as Christian in my philosophy as I could. However, I never could accept that a military intervention or solution was morally justified by ANYONE in society.

31:20 I remember in the Bogside that I administered last rites to two British soldiers...more than two actually...and two policemen...on one occasion several IRA. But when you see that and you see what a high velocity bullet can do to a head...to a human head...the destruction that can wreak to a head, then your little theories and philosophies go out the window very much. The media have changed somewhat because they report and you see the blood and guts and you see brains scattered on the pavement like tapioca. For the first time, perhaps, you see this in the media. At that time the public did not see this and might not have understood how repellant the use of violence is. I think only recently people have become aware of just how awful it is. To see someone blown up by a bomb and to see bits of bodies scattered all over the place with people picking them up in little plastic bags. It's just awful!

32:35 That's the place I was coming from as a Bishop and I just could not accept how people could justify doing that to other human beings over the issue of a border! I took a lot of hostility and you may get a gang ringing you up telling you they're going to do it. I remember someone would call me up from time to time after I said something saying, "You're going to be shot! We're going to deal with you. You've said too much."

33:30 One time I got the bright idea saying to one of these guys, "Could you tell me when?" and the guy was taken aback. "What do you want to know that for?" "Oh, I just want to put my affairs in order and so forth." So the guy banged down the phone and I was very proud of myself. Two minutes later the phone rang again and he said, "It will be next Wednesday, sir." So I just got so I don't worry too much about that sort of thing. On two occasions my life WAS in danger but thank God nothing ever happened.

34:10 Bishop Mehaffey begins. You listen to Bishop Edward, and the two of us just cannot escape unscathed from experiences like that

because we've both been involved at that level. It's terrible to have had to bury 35 of my parishioners now. Most of them were part-time police, part-time members of the Ulster Defense Force. I can still visualize it today, a woman standing there with her little children. She's a widow and they are orphans because her husband was killed. And I visited their homes and came to work with quite a few of the children who were orphaned afterwards. So that's the terrible dark side. You have to resist or otherwise you become depressed and turn inside yourself. We've had to get on with our lives. It's not that we don't care. We have memories of horrible things but you just have to keep living your life. When you see these things, unless you're defending the extremists, you have no choice but to look at both sides and to say that's wrong and that's wrong. When you take the middle of the road neither one of them like it and so you get negative reactions.

34:30 I have to say...I don't think I've ever said this in public before...my wife has taken a lot of abuse because she often would answer the phone and some of these very brave men would light into her and she would say, "Well, the Bishop is not in." And they'd say that man is a Lundy...Lundy is a word for traitor...and they'd use bad language over the phone but she's stood by me all of these years. So there's a human side to all of this.

37:05 So the clergy have stood by each other and I think the churches have been a stabilizing influence. It could have blown apart and become a much worse situation many times over, probably. The churches were not perfect...they could have done a lot more (we all could) (there's a gap in the tape at 37:34 to 37:38) but the churches mostly served as glue that held things together and most of the clergy were not extremists in either Bishop Edward's diocese or mine and most of the clergy spoke moderation. I think when they come to write the history of this thing, they will say that it was reasonable minded

people who held the whole thing together.

38:30 Question...were you restricted in what you could share?

38:35 Bishop Daly says, we cannot share anything said in confessional...that's absolute. But in a hypothetical situation where someone did come in and just stated that he was involved in one of these organizations and that he'd been involved in murder, I'd certainly take a very firm line on that and tell him that this was incompatible with his life as a Christian and that it is completely diametrically opposed to the teaching of our church and that the conflict he was involved with was not morally justifiable and that there could be no grounds for that. I could not give that person absolution unless he or she was willing to reject that line of life and leave it behind and repent for it. That would be my position in a pastorally capacity. I regret to say that some of my brethren would take a different position...a very small number of them. Even if you have a very small number of people doing that, it still strikes at the church and damages the institution. You see this with the child abuse cases, where a few small number of people have caused a very bad reflection on everyone.

40:45 The media likes to highlight these peculiar characters so you get some rebel character and he is in all of the headlines and they ignore the moderate people. But this confuses people and makes it hard for them to make a moral judgment. It fogs the issue very much. But categorically I can speak for myself and for most of my brethren in the Catholic Church that this is the position we would have taken.

41:15 We've had problems with people in the south of Ireland who are not familiar with the situation who are not meeting it day by day, like a lot of Irish Americans who are saying romantic stuff about the famine and all that and they see everything through a green mist. But they haven't seen the blood and guts and they have not seen the

PORNOGRAPHIC nature of violence. They don't see how demeaning of humanity it is. People who are not close to it just do not see how awful it is or how much damage stupid statements to the press can do. I don't think you can justify them theologically or justify them morally. That would be my position and the position of most of my brethren. And I don't think people involved in that activity are too bothered by confession. Most of them would have cut themselves off from the church.

43:00 Organizations on both sides USE the churches and exploit the churches as far as they could to promote their own particular views. We are always trying to show that we are not being exploited for political purposes. The police did that too; the army did that. The British government are MASTERS at that; they've been doing it for centuries all over the world. They still do it and you never know quite where they're coming from. Without being paranoid you have to be aware that this sort of thing was going on.

43:45 I think the most important thing is to be a bold person. You need to work out your own position and move that position unless you're persuaded that some other position is better. I think you have to hold firm on that particular line. At least when you do that you are at peace with your own conscience, particularly in the wake of a bloody conflict like this where more than 3,000 people were killed and far more were maimed and lives were disrupted. For your own peace of mind you have to be clear in your own conscience.

44:35 Bishop Mehaffey says (hard to hear), "Following on from that one my dictums throughout the Trouble years is that you have to be nonviolent." There's a misunderstanding running from the top right down to the bottom that politics justifies what happens to the other side and then this justifies return violence. I used to think that if only leaders of both camps would say that our politics must be nonviolent that would help a lot but that was not said. From the beginning to the

end, thoroughly nonviolent politics but that was not said.

45:40 I'll give you a personal reference. We had two friends in Belfast, both Catholics, and they had been arrested and they were shot in a restaurant. One of them had a large family. They actually got the wife and the children and tried to arrest them too (this doesn't quite make sense and it's hard to hear clearly). And I still remember people saying to me from the Protestant/Unionist side, "I'm sure they're harboring bombs and they're ammunition is still there. That was a reason! And Loyalists were trying to stop them from blowing things up so they shot the two bombers, I'm sure with police support.

46:25 Now I happen to know that the owner of the restaurant was a very devout Presbyterian from Belfast. The first sign of a gun or a bullet, she'd be out the back door. She was running the restaurant and struggling to keep violence out of her place. But this happened to both sides.

47:30 He talks about how politicians did not help although he spotted out John Hume, the politician from Derry, who he thought was always consistent as a democrat and a socialist and as someone committed to nonviolence. But other politicians were not the same and he finds that very disappointing. He says that we as Bishops were consistent and we were obliged to be consistent. When there would be a bomb we would speak out and say it was wrong! And we had to do that.

48:20 Daly agrees and goes on to tell about a conference in this very building that he organized in 1977. He says one of the speakers he had was Dom Heldrick Marra from Brazil, a wonderful character. He was involved in Rhodesia and they threatened to deport him because at that time he was promoting the rights of Black people there and also to rebels in Sri Lanka. The theme of the conference was alternatives to violence. The question was how to protest...how

to highlight injustices nonviolently but effectively. Then in 1992 Bishop James and I were involved in another conference at the Guild Hall called Beyond Hate and I think that event was important in setting the framework for what subsequently developed as the Good Friday Agreement. We had people from South Africa from Mandela's party and also Afrikaners. We also had people who were Israelis and people from Palestinian groups. We got them all together...we got Unionists and we got Republicans and IRA. But the key people here were the Beirut hostages. We had Terry Waite here who was the Reuters correspondent to Beirut who was held hostage for more than 100 days. Having all of these people here talking about their various experience of violence and how they had worked to forgive people who had engaged in terrible violence against them seemed to shame some of our local people so they talked to each other more seriously. We don't have a perfect system yet but I think we're on the way there. It was a wonderful conference. I think we as church people get locked up in condemning things but I think we have to be more positive and look for other ways forward.

52:20 Student question. Have people become less involved in church life and instead become more involved in community movement work related to the Troubles? The student focuses on the experience of the civil rights movement and seems especially focused on the involvement of young people in church.

52:45 Bishop Daly responds. He says there are three different situations involved. The Northern Irish Civil Rights Movement, he says, was a very popular movement and it involved people from all parts of Northern Irish society, people who were young, people who were old, people who were poor, and people who were middle class and also significant numbers of people from the Protestant community AT THE BEGINNING. But gradually, and early on, it was a great tragedy that they dropped away from it. But young people were very

involved at that time. Then the conflict started and riots started. My experience is Derry and I've worked here for 42 years. I was involved in the Civil Rights Movement, I was involved in the Battle of the Bogside, I was involved in Bloody Sunday and young people were involved. But then there was a period in the 70s, and I think even if you listened to the music of the 1970s, there was a period of rebelliousness and here that was accentuated by the conflict. Young people, I think, gravitate towards the most expressive things, and often to the most extreme of things, and quite a lot of young people got sucked into horrible social movements and were just alienated from any symbol of authority like church, like police, like government. Anything that could be perceived as a symbol of authority, it was a period of rebellion and they were just against it if it was there. This is the way you go, we're not going that way. We went through a period of that and the church would have suffered as well as everyone else. But we tried to stay with them and some of them tried to stay with us, but I think there was a gulch. (sound and picture go black 55:15-55:20.) That's quite different from before that where young people were very much involved in the church. But generally speaking I've always had very good relations with young people, especially in theater and music and cultural activities like theatrical activities at The Junction. In terms of practice, children are very active...up to 70% of them...until about the age of 15 and then there is a gradual dropping off until the mid-twenties when it starts going up again. In Derry City at the present about 66% go to church at least once a week. 17 year old to 25 year olds are obviously missing. I meet a lot of them working in the Hospice, I meet a lot of young people there and they come there just as strongly as they did in the 1960s. As a Bishop you sort of get shifted off to one side so you don't get the same contact with young people as you'd have working in a parish.

57:15 Bishop Mehaffey starts his comment. It is interesting that the student revolt was not confined to Ireland. I still remember vivid

pictures of the student revolt in France. Paris...thousands of French students in the '60s. The student revolt was common and there's an interesting academic question. Did that just happen? What were the factors? It happened here, but what do we say about the French students?

57:55 Daly interjects, "The United States and Vietnam! Kent State."

58:00 Mehaffey....what we find in our days is that young people and university people become passionately involved in things...about the environment...about what we're doing to our world! We're destroying it they'd say...we're destroying our world. It's falling down around us and we don't take it seriously enough. I would have thought that the student revolt today is about looking after the world that was entrusted to us. That's where the passion often is. That's not to say that there's no political passion. He goes into a commentary about how political parties have appealed to young people and how political parties that otherwise are very middle class have found ways to appeal to young people so that they come in on the political thing as well. Student movements are very interesting. He goes on to talk about how when he went to his parish in East Belfast in the 1960s it was a time when theology was challenged, people were saying God is dead, and you could not talk about God in the traditional language so he wrote some alternative statements about theology when he was Bishop. It was the time of the 1960s that rebellion seemed to cut across everything. Bishop Mehaffey continues with thoughts about how people have diverse ideas about why the Troubles happened in Northern Ireland and he notes that he and Bishop Daly are just giving a personal view. As academics we must be slow to come to conclusions and we must recognize that being here for three weeks only gives us a snapshot of what life is like

just as they just get a snapshot of life in the U.S. based on the times they have come to visit for 3 weeks.

1:02:45 Bishop Daly wants to add a “corollary” in terms of youth. Conflict almost always involves poor kids from one country killing poor kids from another country. The conflict here in the city was largely between the IRA and the British army. The IRA was largely made up of kids from deprived backgrounds from this city, kids who thought they had no chance in life and no future. Something got them out of balance and they were powerful. They were big guys. People to be reckoned with. And they were fighting with young kids from exactly the same background from Liverpool and London and from Birmingham and from Manchester. And I knew the kids from here very well since I grew up with them in the 1960s. When I met the Scotties from the British Army at checkpoints, they listened to the same records, supported the same football teams. If you look at wars anywhere you see that the kids in one army have far more common than they are separate and that’s the thing that makes it so absurd to me.

1:04:35 Over the last weekend we commemorated D-Day. As I mentioned earlier I spent a lot of time in Italy, a country I go to a lot and love very much. One of the most chilling things in Italy is to go to some of the war cemeteries. He lists cemeteries from different countries and says you go down the row and you see 17 year old, 18 year old, and 20 year old. A whole generation of kids, thousands upon thousands of them killed. I think we can be very localized in our views here. I think that if you look at a microcosm of war and what you have experienced first hand, what you have suffered through and suffered through and known people who have been hurt. A war in your own community, a conflict in your own community is very humbling. It’s also very revealing. Through that when you look at

other conflicts you find that they are the same. The same things are there. It's just so sad and so needless. The time has come for us leaders and people in general to find some other way to resolve conflict. World War II was different. You had an awful dictatorship that was eliminating a whole race of people. There are a lot of other conflict that are very hard to justify. Whatever the conflict is, the people are the main casualties.

1:06:45 Coming back to the question, which is an important question, is the brutalizing impact that giving a gun to young people has. One of the things I did as Bishop is that I visited prisons a lot. I wrote a lot of letters to prisoners. Young people whom I knew. As we talked they'd open up to me and I'd ask why did you get involved? Then, how do you feel after you shoot someone? How do you feel after your bomb has blown up 3 or 4 people? That has a huge impact on the person. The first person you kill, most people will tell you, that's a problem for them. The second person, that's no problem or the third or the fourth. The first one is the only one they remember. It does have a huge brutalizing and coarsening effect and it shortens their lifespan afterwards. Hopefully the young generation coming up now will not be tainted by that kind of activity. It does frightful damage to people, their attitudes toward life, and their relationships to other people. It's something we must be aware of and try to figure out. Certainly youth are the main casualty in any conflict and also the main perpetrators.

1:09 End.