

TOOLEN RIPS KING, SAYS PRIESTS, NUNS SHOULD GO HOME

By Ted Pearson, News Correspondent

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Mobile, March 18 - Participation by Catholic priests and nuns in Alabama's racial demonstrations has been severely denounced by the archbishop of Mobile-Birmingham Diocese. In addition, Archbishop Thomas J. Toolen also charged Martin Luther King Jr. is "trying to divide our people."

The archbishop, in an address at the St. Patrick's Banquet here Wednesday night, made known his views about some aspects of the racial crisis in the state today. He said that demonstrations "are not helping things at all," and declared "a great injustice is being done to the state of Alabama."

As for the priests and nuns who have been taking part in the demonstrations at Selma and Montgomery, Toolen had this to say:

"We are living in a strange age. They asked me: 'Why do the priests and sisters come from other states and Canada to take part in these demonstrations. Certainly the sisters are out of place in these demonstrations. Their place is at home, doing God's work.' I would say that same thing is true of the priests.

"As to whether they have permission to come in, they haven't asked for it. It is customary to ask permission in such cases."

"What do they know about conditions in the South? I am afraid they are only eager beavers who feel there is a holy cause."

At one time according to Toolen, he had information there were as many as 50 nuns and 200 priests from outside Alabama in the Selma demonstrations. The archbishop said he had ordered the priests and nuns who reside at Selma not to take part in the demonstrations.

Pointing out that "some corrections in our attitude toward the Negro people" are needed, Archbishop Toolen said that "here in Mobile, where the problem has been handled sensibly, we've had no trouble. Sane and sensible Negroes realize we are trying to bring them up to the standards they should have.

"But do we need crusaders coming in from other states to tell us how to run the State of Alabama? There are certainly things that need correcting, but with the sane help of our people they will be corrected in time. The demonstrations are not helping."

Toolen voiced his respect for Dr. King as a man of religion, but he criticized the Negro leader for “taking children out of school to demonstrate on the streets.”

He also declared that King is “hurting the cause of the Negro rather than helping it.”

Speaking of the current image of the state, Toolen said “We are pilloried before the world as savages. No fault (credit?) is given to those in this state who are really trying to work out the solution. No credit is given to people for trying to solve the question.

“Let us be sensible. We know that all men, regardless of race or color, are made after the image of God. We know that all are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. All citizens are entitled to equal rights and privileges under the constitution. But these problems must be solved in a lawful way. There are crazy people on both sides. As good citizens of Alabama, we should try to control them.”