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The Catholic Church, Martin Luther King Jr., and the March in St. Augustine

by Charles R. Gallagher

In 1963 and 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference selected St. Augustine, Florida, as a target city for a new round of civil rights protests. It marked the first major SCLC campaign since the Freedom Rides and Birmingham demonstrations of 1961. In St. Augustine, local chapters of the National Association of Colored People and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference labored to enlist local Roman Catholics in the cause for civil rights, hoping that a cooperative relationship might help desegregate local businesses, civil service agencies, and restaurants. As demonstrations in St. Augustine developed, however, King's brand of social protest began to test the ethics of both local church and civic leaders.

The St. Augustine case is useful since it reveals how King and the SCLC attempted not only to include but to share responsibilities for negotiation of the civil rights crisis with Catholic leaders. It also marked the first time that King protested segregation by petitioning a Catholic bishop to resign from a position of civic responsibility. In the St. Augustine case, a complex combination of theological, ethnic, and political variables combined to suppress full Catholic participation in the local civil rights movement.

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During the 1960s, St. Augustine was an “intractably racist town,” in the words of Andrew Young; and while not a major Southern metropolis, it was an attractive venue for protest because the city was about to celebrate its four hundredth anniversary.¹ Highly publicized memorial ceremonies were expected to draw international media attention. In April of 1963, President Lyndon Johnson named an eleven-member (all-white) committee of dignitaries to oversee the festivities. Among others, the Anniversary Committee included auto magnate Henry Ford II, international financier J. Peter Grace, Florida Senator George Smathers, and St. Augustine’s local Roman Catholic leader, Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley.

Hurley’s appointment illustrated a level of respect that Catholics enjoyed both in St. Augustine and throughout the state, respect that could be parlayed into civic authority. During the civil rights struggle of the early 1960s, such authority proved crucial for Catholics. Cyprian Davis, the premier historian of the African American Catholic experience, remarked that local bishops were in a primary position to align the Church with the spirit of the civil rights struggle. By duty of their office, bishops were tasked “to preach and teach and to recall the principles of the Gospel in order to create a climate where concerted action was possible.”²

King’s non-violent style of social action first appeared in St. Augustine during the summer of 1963. On 18 July, more than a month before the March on Washington where King delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, picketing and sit-ins began at St. Augustine’s downtown lunch counters. During the protests, most local Protestant clergy “steered clear of any involvement in the civil rights struggle.”³ The absence of a reputable moral voice allowed darker forces to take center stage.

Throughout the summer, local segregationists and regional Ku Klux Klansmen clashed with NAACP picketers. Klan affiliates such as “Hoss” Manucy and his Ancient City Hunting Club beat

1. Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* (New York, 1996), 289.
2. Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York, 1990), 256.
3. Michael B. Friedland, *Lift Up Your Voice Like A Trumpet: White Clergy and the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements, 1954-1973* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1998), 97.



Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley, circa 1940. *Courtesy of the Diocese of St. Augustine Catholic Center, St. Augustine, Fla.*

and harassed SCLC and NAACP members throughout the year. Once likened to a character from the popular 1960s Western television show “Rawhide,” Manucy was an aggressive segregationist. “We’re better organized than the niggers are, and the niggers know it,” he once crowed to the press. When asked about alleged ties to the Ku Klux Klan, he scoffed that while the Klan was a “won-

derful organization,” he was never a member. “Besides who ever heard of a Catholic being a Klansman anyhow?”⁴

Manucy and others incited new levels of violence as the marches proceeded. King later described St. Augustine as “the most lawless city I have ever been in.” Indeed, St. Augustine was the place where King first presaged that his own death might be a consequence of the struggle for desegregation. Andrew Young remembered St. Augustine as “the SCLC’s most violent and bloody campaign.” The dubious security situation further incensed King to the point that he considered a full-scale march on the White House to protest the lack of police protection for SCLC and NAACP demonstrators.⁵ During the initial stages of the demonstrations, however, battles were more rhetorical than physical.

In late March of 1964, Mrs. Malcolm Peabody, the 72-year-old mother of Massachusetts Governor Endicott Peabody, was arrested at a St. Augustine sit-in by Sheriff L.O. Davis. The incident amounted to no more than an exchange of philosophies at the Ponce de Leon Motor Lodge and the strong suggestion by Davis that Peabody accompany him to the St. Augustine lockup. Though lacking in drama, the notoriety generated from the booking of a Boston Brahmin prompted reporters to set up camp in St. Augustine for the summer. Not long after her arrest, Peabody appeared on NBC’s *Today* show claiming that “St. Augustine was a town festering in violence and hate.”⁶

The Peabody arrest prompted an unusual move against Archbishop Hurley. A week after his own arrest in St. Augustine, civil rights activist and Yale University chaplain William Sloane Coffin published a lengthy letter in the *New York Times* headlined “St. Augustine’s Racism.” From out of the blue, Coffin called for “Archbishop Hurley to publicly resign from the 400th Anniversary Commission,” claiming it “immoral” for Hurley “to plead the splendors of the past in order to ignore the crisis in the present.” He asked the bishop “to assert solidarity with those whose dignity

4. Clarence Jones, “Force in St. Augustine,” *Miami Herald*, 13 June 1964; Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-65* (New York, 1998), 327.

5. Stewart Burns, *To the Mountaintop: Martin Luther King Jr.’s Sacred Mission to Save America* (San Francisco, 2004), 238, 296; Michael Friedly and David Gallen, eds., *Martin Luther King, Jr.: The FBI File* (New York, 1993), 244.

6. David R. Colburn, *Racial Change and Community Crisis: St. Augustine, Florida, 1877-1980* (New York, 1985), 79.

you preach.”⁷ In Catholic clerical circles, that a lay person and a non-Catholic at that called publicly for Hurley’s resignation from the commission was the height of brazenness.

Coffin’s unprovoked and highly visible thrashing of local Catholic leadership put relations between the Roman Catholic Church and SCLC officials on shaky ground just as demonstrations were heating up. Weeks later, J. Francis Pohlhaus, lawyer for the Washington branch of the NAACP, repeated Coffin’s warning. Writing privately, he suggested that Hurley distance himself from the 400th Anniversary Committee since the festivities would “spotlight a four hundred year failure to implement the principles of democracy and Christianity.”⁸ Still chaffing at the national exposure of the Coffin letter, Hurley declined to respond.

Coffin’s awkward first step proved unfortunate in trying to get Catholics involved with the SCLC’s St. Augustine action. Historian David R. Colburn suggested that “more than any other church, the Catholic church had the greatest opportunity to influence the racial response of the community.” Early on, King deemed Catholic support for the civil rights struggle crucial because St. Augustine was the only Florida city—and one of the only cities in the entire South—that possessed a majority Catholic population. Andrew Young, King’s personal assistant and leader of the St. Augustine marches, recognized the potential for good that the Catholic Church could bring to bear. “In as Catholic an area as St. Augustine,” Young noted at the time, “the Church could be a big influence.”⁹

Before 1963, however, the SCLC had very little experience in dealing with Catholics. Since the early 1950s, the SCLC’s strongest link to religious organizations was the National Council of

7. William S. Coffin Jr. to the editor, *New York Times*, 9 April 1964.

8. J. Francis Pohlhaus to Joseph P. Hurley, 9 May 1963, Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley Papers, St. Augustine Anniversary file, Archives of the Diocese of St. Augustine, Jacksonville, Fla. (hereafter ADSA). Perhaps sensing that Hurley might eschew a letter from an African American organization, Pohlhaus had the letter delivered to Hurley through the good offices of Conrad Wirth, Director of the National Park Service and one of the original members of the anniversary committee.

9. Colburn, *Racial Change*, 159; NCCIJ memorandum, Jack [Sisson] to Matthew [Ahmann], 9 June 1964, National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice Papers, box 3, St. Augustine file, Archives of Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis. (hereafter MUA).

Churches.¹⁰ Since 1950, the Roman Catholic Church eschewed being regarded as a “church among churches” and refused to join the NCC until December of 1963, when it was granted observer status. Consequently, during the planning stages for St. Augustine, the SCLC was left flat-footed in approaching Catholics and began to look hastily for ways to bring them into Florida’s civil rights movement.

King assigned Young the uphill task of aligning Catholic influence behind the objectives of the SCLC. Young, in turn, commissioned the Chicago-based National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice to sound out Archbishop Hurley on civil rights. Between 1960 and 1968, the NCCIJ functioned as the national clearinghouse and public relations organization for Catholic participation in the civil rights movement. Matthew Ahmann, the council’s Executive Director, called the NCCIJ’s mission “the removal of racial discrimination in the Church and our relevant witness to the equality of all men in contemporary society.” In 1963, the NCCIJ helped to prepare and support King’s historic 1963 March on Washington.¹¹ Yet, since the NCCIJ was comprised mainly of laymen and women, it faced a tough battle in lining-up the full public support of many U.S. bishops.

The NCCIJ was not officially tied to the institutional church and could not claim sponsorship by the bishops. Certain bishops favored the NCCIJ, while others were exceedingly wary of the organization. Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York, for example, gave permission for Catholics to join the March on Washington in August of 1963, but only if the march were “carried out in a peaceful manner” and undertaken “as a last resort.” In gearing up for the march, Spellman sidestepped the NCCIJ entirely and encouraged his flock to work through his own diocesan-controlled Catholic Interracial Council of New York.¹² Try as it might, the NCCIJ could not convince any U.S. bishop to sit on its board

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10. Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge, La., 2004), 118.
 11. John T. McGreevey, “Racial Justice and the People of God: The Second Vatican Council, the Civil Rights Movement, and American Catholics,” *Religion and American Culture* 4 (summer 1994): 224; Martin Zielinski, “1963 March on Washington and Catholic Participation,” *Chicago Studies* 42 (summer 2003): 153-62.
 12. “Church to Enlist Catholics Here For Capital Civil Rights Rally,” *New York Times*, 11 August 1963.

of directors. Almost by default, the NCCIJ named Peace Corps director R. Sargent Shriver Jr. as its national chairman in 1963. Nevertheless, spotty approval from the bishops did not stop the NCCIJ and its zealous operatives from attempting to organize a grass-roots campaign in St. Augustine.

In April of 1964, NCCIJ Southern Field Director Henry Cabirac went to Florida to enlist Archbishop Hurley in the fight for civil rights by endorsing “cooperation between business, civic, and religious leaders to promote positive statements and programs for desegregation.”¹³ Cabirac intended to persuade Hurley to support the local NAACP in desegregating St. Augustine’s hotels, restaurants, and city agencies. A bi-racial committee would negotiate the demands, but the Archbishop was not receptive.

“All Catholic facilities have been quietly desegregated,” Hurley instructed an underling to report to Cabirac, emphasizing that the diocese was “extremely concerned about peaceful progress in order to present a good image for the 400th anniversary.”¹⁴ To Cabirac’s surprise, Hurley ordered priests to have nothing to do with the NCCIJ, apparently considering the organization “a trouble-making organization.” Low-level diocesan officials were instructed to tell NCCIJ workers that the diocese had a “long-range plan” for desegregation and wished to “work quietly and behind the scenes” for racial change.¹⁵

13. Memorandum, Rev. Frank M. Mouch to Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley, 8 April 1964, Civil Rights file, Hurley Papers, ADSA.

14. Report, “Visit to St. Augustine,” Henry Cabirac to Matthew Ahmann, 1 April 1964, NCCIJ Records, box 3, St. Augustine file, MUA; “Negroes Enrolled In St. Augustine,” *The Catholic Virginian* (Richmond), 4 September 1964, St. Augustine Clippings File, St. Joseph Society of the Sacred Heart Josephite Archives, Baltimore, Md. The reporting of full integration to the NCCIJ in April of 1964 was premature. In a May 1966 letter, Hurley encouraged all his priests to “make a greater effort to get colored children into our schools.” He stated plainly that priests “would probably have to personally invite [African-American children] to come to your school next year” [1967]; see Hurley, quoted in Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Circular Letter to Priests of the Diocese, 4 May 1966, ADSA.

15. Report, Jack P. Sisson to Matthew Ahmann, 6 August 1964; Henry Cabirac to Rev. Frank M. Mouch, 6 April 1964, both in NCCIJ Records, box 3, St. Augustine file, MUA; Jack P. Sisson to Joseph P. Hurley, 29 June 1964, Hurley Administration Civil Rights files, ADSA. In early July 1963, the NCCIJ was at the center of a controversy surrounding their approval of Chicago nuns in full habit who picketed a segregated Catholic women’s club. Besides smacking of Catholic disunity, some church leaders believed the sight of nuns on the picket line brought “a loss of dignity;” Austin C. Wehrwein, “Two Catholic Leaders Back Clergy On Plans to Join Rights March,” *New York Times*, 11 July 1963.

Taking the diocese at its word about working behind the scenes, Andrew Young then told the NCCIJ that he “would very much like to see if we could encourage the Church to play a mediation role” between the local NAACP chapter and city authorities—an overture which, in hindsight, bespeaks a monumental missed opportunity for the promotion of racial justice on the part of the local Catholic church. The Archbishop resisted constructively cooperating with the NCCIJ, and movement leadership remained bewildered about “how to get to Hurley.” Indeed, resistance of Catholic leaders seemed pervasive in the small seaside town. One NCCIJ worker wrote in exasperation that he “felt completely stymied in trying to get a lead on even one ‘man of good will’ either in the Catholic community or otherwise.”¹⁶

As their frustration mounted, NCCIJ workers began to suspect that Archbishop Hurley was unfriendly to their interests. In fact, during his time as bishop, Hurley exhibited many traits common to Jim Crow America. As a young priest presiding at Mass in 1929, he referred to the altar-servers, who happened to be people of color, as “eight little pickaninies” who “smelled to high heaven.” In 1945, he gave his thoughts on African American involvement in the labor movement in a “Confidential Questionnaire on Communism” supplied by Father John F. Cronin of the Catholic University of America, who acted at the behest of Federal Bureau of Investigation director J. Edgar Hoover. Hurley’s answers showed a penchant for stereotyping. He offered comments on the labor situation, noting that “Communist leaders among the Negroes in the South are careful not to cause any outbursts of racial feeling. They seem to follow the line of indoctrinating their charges while still insisting that they continue to act as good Southern Darkies.”¹⁷

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16. Jack Sisson to Matthew Ahmann [telegram], 9 June 1964; Jack Sisson, undated personal notes, NCCIJ Records, box 3; memorandum, Jack Sisson to Matt [Matthew Ahmann], 6 August 1964, NCCIJ Records, box 3, all in St. Augustine file, MUA. It is apparent that King desired a religious leader to play the role of mediator in St. Augustine. After all approaches to Hurley failed, King petitioned Boston University theologian Harold L. DeWolf to act as arbitrator.
 17. Joseph P. Hurley to “Bud” Walsh, 1929; Joseph P. Hurley to John F. Cronin, Confidential Questionnaire on Communism, both in Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley Papers, box 110, file C, ADSA. Hurley also identified Florida senator Claude Pepper and Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings as communist sympathizers. Hurley’s response to Cronin is published in

By the early 1960s, Hurley's position on African American civil rights continued to be anchored in the Jim Crow, "good Southern Darkie" stereotype. When King, Young, and the SCLC descended on St. Augustine to force action in the summer of 1964, they challenged Hurley's preconceptions.

As Hurley resisted the SCLC's overtures, violence escalated. Thirty consecutive days of sit-ins, swim-ins, prayer-ins, and evening marches made national television news. On 9 June, Andrew Young was kicked, beaten, and whacked bloody with a blackjack while TV cameras rolled. The next day, after Klansmen attacked a group of SCLC workers preparing for a sit-in, King cabled Washington insisting that the "reign of terror cannot be stopped short of intervention by the Federal Government."¹⁸ On 11 June, King was arrested in St. Augustine.

While federal officials dawdled about how to respond to the SCLC's plea, King decided to sideline the NCCIJ and personally appeal to Archbishop Hurley. Apparently under the impression that the Archbishop would respond to a personal overture from a fellow Christian leader, King wrote a lengthy telegram on the day of his arrest asking Hurley to use his leadership and high standing in the community to work for change. Specifically, King wrote that "with hatred and violence reigning in America's oldest city," the Archbishop should "use [his] good will and influence as a member of the Anniversary Commission to unite the forces of reason and humanity within the city to bring about a just solution to the racial crisis." If that were not possible, the civil rights leader recommended that Hurley "resign from the Anniversary Commission as a moral protest against the evils of segregation." King told Hurley that he was "praying for his cooperation" and concluded his letter with a fraternal "faithfully yours."¹⁹ Hurley made no reply.

While the Archbishop remained silent, the SCLC forged ahead with the demonstrations. Executive director Wyatt Tee Walker drew-up a "Battle Plan" for St. Augustine that called for even larger demonstrations, this time featuring Catholic clergy

Steven M. Avella and Elizabeth McKeown, eds., *Public Voices: Catholics in the American Context* (Maryknoll, N.Y., 1999), 237.

18. "Dr. King Requests U.S. Aid in Florida," *New York Times*, 25 June 1964.

19. Martin Luther King Jr. to Joseph P. Hurley [telegram], 11 June 1964, Civil Rights file, ADSA.

and lay leaders.²⁰ Executive Director Ahmann reported that Andrew Young was “most anxious” to get Catholic clergy to come to St. Augustine to demonstrate, promising “clerical, interfaith demonstrations any time we can get the priests in.” But Young, who required all Catholic priests to wear their Roman collars while demonstrating, knew little about Catholic procedure.²¹

“Getting priests in” was much more difficult than simply unloading them from buses. During the early 1960s, internal church law, or canon law, required that priests arriving from other dioceses “present themselves at the Curia” to apprise the local bishop of their activities. This law was almost always kept as a courtesy to the bishop, especially when extra-diocesan priests intended to act as so-called “public persons.” Complicating the call for priestly and religious activism, a separate church law banned priests from “partaking in, or helping in any manner, disturbances of public order.”²² In addition, if “danger to life” emerged within the context of public events, such demonstrations were considered “immoral”—a chilling assessment given that by late 1963 one murder already was associated with the St. Augustine protest. With so many competing principles, one canonist simply stated that in case of “internal troubles” within a state or diocese, “direction for political action rests, first and above all, with the hierarchy.”²³

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20. Memorandum, “Suggested approach and chronology for St. Augustine,” Wyatt Tee Walker to Martin Luther King, Jr., Martin Luther King Papers, Series 1, King Library and Archives, Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta, Georgia (hereafter KCA); memorandum, Matthew Ahmann to Jack Sisson, 17 June 1964, NCCIJ Records, St. Augustine file, box 3, MUA. Matthew Ahmann indicated that Catholic influence in St. Augustine suffered greatly because there were no Catholics included in the spring protests with Mrs. Peabody.
21. Field report, Matthew Ahmann to John P. Sisson, 17 June 1964, St. Augustine file, box 3, NCCIJ Records, MUA; report, “Florida Spring Project, Demonstrations in St. Augustine Florida,” 21 March 1963, “Blacks: Civil Rights” box, SCLC file 1, St. Augustine Historical Society Archives, St. Augustine, Florida. According to Walker’s schedule, King was to be arrested jointly with other clergymen, but since Hurley banned his priests from the protests, only Rev. Ralph Abernathy and Rev. Robert England of Boston University joined King.
22. Stanislaus Woywod, ed., *Practical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* (New York, 1945), 59, 575; Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, *Canon Law* (Westminster, Md., 1934), 119.
23. During the “Easter push” of 1963, a white “night-rider” was murdered by shots fired from the house of the local NAACP leader, Dr. Richard Hayling; Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 317. On the evening of 29 October 1963, two

Canon law placed the decision for Catholic cooperation with the SCLC squarely in Hurley's court; and Hurley took church law seriously. One associate recalled that on occasion "he even tied-up provincial meetings of bishops with canonical questions." By early June 1964, Hurley was deeply upset with the violence occurring in the town square just steps away from his cathedral doors. Since he believed that the SCLC demonstrations disturbed the public order, he interpreted canon law as prohibiting him from coming out on the side of the demonstrators. Frustrated with the spiral of events, he privately told his diocesan staff to "refuse to cooperate with anybody regarding the demonstrations."²⁴

King and Young failed to take into account the radical differences between Catholic protocol and Protestant government. The congregational individualism elemental to Protestant churches allowed spontaneous participation of clergy and a streamlined decision-making process. It probably never dawned on the activist ministers that intricacies of Roman Catholic canon law might stymie Catholic participation. Young's inexperience in this regard was evidenced on June 18 when he contacted the St. Augustine chancery to arrange for a meeting between King and the Archbishop.

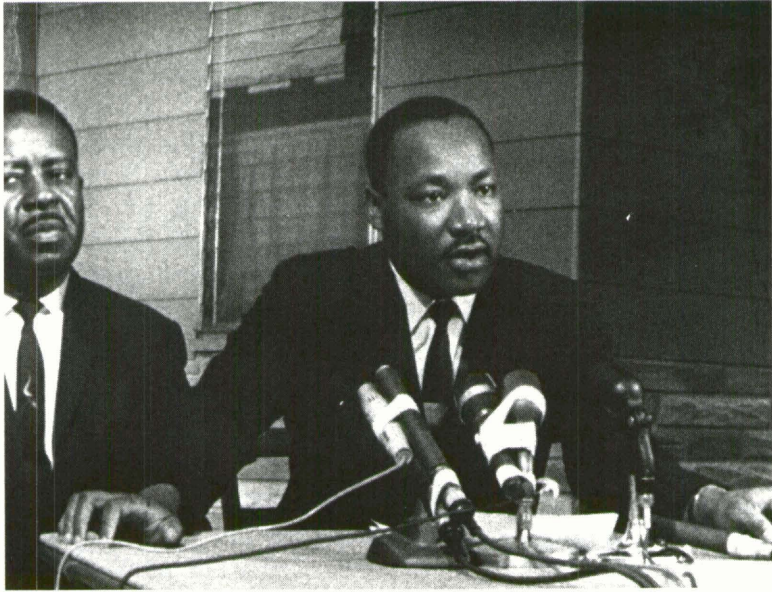
Hurley delegated a junior member of his chancery staff to meet with Young, but warned the priest to be "most cautious in his discussion" since in the past the SCLC had "lied, manipulated, and was not to be trusted."²⁵ On the surface, discussions were cordial. But in response to King's earlier telegram, Hurley ended any illusions that Young and King might have about Catholic inclusion. In a two-page reply, he contrasted local Catholic prestige with what Hurley took to be King's lawless behavior.

The archbishop stressed that his diocese had always "used its influence consistently to achieve equal justice under law." Further emphasizing his belief that public demonstrations were unseemly, Hurley noted that "Catholic efforts had been directed towards pro-

African American homes were strafed with shotgun fire, and the Harlem Gardens nightclub was the target of a grenade attack. A U.S. Army demolitions team was dispatched to St. Augustine to disarm an unexploded grenade. On the principles of *perturbationibus publici* in Roman Catholic canon law, see canons 140 and 141 in Charles Augustine, *A Commentary on the New Code of Canon Law* (St. Louis, Mo., 1919), 92-95.

24. Rev. Frank M. Mouch e-mail message to author, 17 October 2003.

25. *Ibid.*



Martin Luther King Jr., joined by Ralph Abernathy, in St. Augustine in 1964. *Courtesy of the Florida Photographic Collection, Tallahassee.*

moting peace and concord among people of different origins, and to promote good will in the community.” The common good, he argued, would not be served by submitting to King’s request for him to step down from the 400th anniversary commission. “The best interests of St. Augustine,” he fired back, “would be served by refraining from any act that would perpetuate ill will or hatred among the people.”²⁶

Hurley’s private telegram to King was never openly published or announced. The Hurley telegram could also be viewed as a dressing-down of King who, on the day he wrote his telegram, was placed under arrest—an act that Hurley certainly viewed as a violation “under the law” and of “good will in the community.” Sides seemed to be taking shape, pitting the SCLC’s direct action tactics against the Catholic impulse to allay civil unrest.

By late June of 1964, King, Young, and the NCCIJ still failed to grasp the roots of Archbishop Hurley’s unwillingness to speak out. On 18 June, the archbishop received a poignant letter from Yale

26. Joseph P. Hurley to Martin Luther King, Jr., in Rev. Irvine Nugent to Rev. John P. Burns [copy], 18 June 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. Papers, series 1, box 20, file 41, KCA.

trustee Ross Dixon that may have tipped the balance. Dixon pointedly asked Hurley to use his "influence as a private citizen to help the Negroes of St. Augustine secure their human rights." "To me," Dixon concluded, "it is more important to do this than promote tourism. Recent events make it even more important for the Church to speak out forcefully. Either as a private citizen or a spokesman for the church, I hope you will take a clear stand."²⁷

Although Hurley scratched "no answer" across the top of Dixon's letter, it was not long afterward that he issued a response to the crisis. As demonstrators filled the city, Hurley penned a letter urging Catholics to stay calm which was read from the pulpit of St. Augustine's Cathedral by its pastor at all Masses on the weekend of 25 June. The Archbishop recommended "that all Catholic people abstain from any actions which might occasion or increase disorder or strife or lawlessness in our city." The local newspaper claimed that the letter was a call for Catholics to refrain from taking part in SCLC demonstrations, but in actuality it reflected no more than what canon law allowed under the circumstances.²⁸

Lay Catholics wrote to Hurley from around the diocese and the nation decrying the Church's "do nothing—let's wait and see policy." Geraldine Stevens, an African American Catholic from St. Petersburg, wrote that she found it "embarrassing" to see Protestant and Jewish clergy struggle for civil rights in St. Augustine "with no similar move by the Catholic clergy." Echoing the sentiments of King and Young, Stevens advised Hurley that "No voice in the City of St. Augustine would command more respect than yours" and asked Hurley to "please raise your voice on behalf of our Negro people." In similar fashion, an indignant Bostonian wrote that Catholics should be "appalled at the lack of action on the part of local ministers—I wonder what they think Jesus thinks of their

27. Ross Dixon to the Most Reverend Joseph P. Hurley, 18 June 1964, Hurley papers, "Race Question" file, ADSA. Ross Dixon was a founder and trustee of Yale University's Yale in China campus. An Episcopalian at the time, he was president of Ross Dixon and Associates, an education management consulting firm in New York City.

28. *The Catholic Standard* (Washington, D.C.) 26 June 1964; "Cathedral Cautions Catholics," "Long Hot Summer, 1964" scrapbook, 32, Civil Disorders file, SAHS. In some respects, "lawlessness" may have been an apt description of the situation. A confidential FBI source quoted King as saying that the evening of June 25 was "the worst night that they [the SCLC] had ever had," with over forty protesters beaten. King was reported to be "afraid someone will be killed;" Kenneth O'Reilly, *Black Americans: The FBI Files*, ed. David Gallen (New York, 1994), 200.

behavior toward the Negroes?" Jack Sisson of the NCCIJ was also mystified by diocesan intransigence and wired back to Chicago that even though he "was a member of the power structure—the case with Archbishop Hurley" was "hopeless at this time."²⁹

Part of the problem emerging between the diocese and the SCLC was that Catholic insistence on a "quiet" policy of racial justice and desegregation was diametrically opposed to the public and often confrontational tactics espoused by King's special projects director and "field general," Hosea Williams.³⁰ As perceived by many, the "night march" merely heightened the risks, turnout, and anger of the opposing forces. The already patent security hazards multiplied under cover of darkness, leading to the assumption on the part of whites that Williams's embrace of the night march was a deliberately incendiary maneuver.

The SCLC's decision to showcase their new "night march" technique in a town so historically tied to Roman Catholicism as St. Augustine could not have come at a worse time. Between 1955 and 1965, southern Catholics were still trying to find their way on issues of race, and many remained staunch segregationists. In 1958, the U.S. Catholic bishops issued a groundbreaking statement identifying racism as sin, "a moral evil that denies human persons their dignity as children of God." King called the declaration "admirable," but warned the bishops that such public declarations were "still too far and too few, and they move all too slowly down to the local churches in actual practice," evidencing an inexplicable "schism" between Catholic theology and Catholic social engagement at the parochial level.³¹

By 1960, the schism generated increasingly tendentious debates within the American Catholic church. Sharp divisions emerged within the Catholic civil rights movement over "direct

29. Unknown to Joseph P. Hurley, 25 June 1964, Civil Rights file; Geraldine B. Stevens to Joseph P. Hurley, 20 June 1964, Race Question file, both in ADSA; J. Leroy Conel, "Second Open Letter to the Clergymen and Mayor of St. Augustine," 25 July 1964, King Papers, series 1, box 20, file 43, KCA; NCCIJ Memorandum, Jack Sisson to Irv Schulman, 28 July 1964, NCCIJ Records, box 3, St. Augustine file, MUA.

30. Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The SCLC and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens, Ga., 1987), 182; David J. Garrow, ed., *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Civil Rights Leader, Theologian, Orator*, 3 vols. (New York, 1989), 1: 9.

31. Administrative Board, National Catholic Welfare Conference, "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience," in Avella and McKeown eds., *Public Voices*, 254; Martin Luther King Jr., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential*

action” tactics such as Freedom Rides and sit-ins. The NCCIJ endorsed the use of the sit-in as a legitimate form of Catholic action at their inaugural convention in 1960, but the initiative was bereft of episcopal support. Privately, Jesuit reformer John LaFarge endorsed the tactics, but convinced neither the U.S. bishops nor the influential Jesuit periodical *America* to voice approval. In as much as liberal Catholics like Father LaFarge and the NCCIJ were inclined to endorse direct action methods, they held little official clout with national Catholic leadership. The real power to clarify the issue was lay with the bishop’s conference in Washington, D.C. Known in 1964 as the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the organization “was perceived by the government and the public at large as the official voice of the American bishops.”³² After their 1958 letter, they neglected to take an official stand on the issue of Catholic participation in civil rights demonstrations, basically leaving it to each bishop to plan action for his diocese. Consequently, ranging from diocese to diocese, Catholics were split on the issue.³³

This policy was evident two days before Hurley issued his Cathedral letter banning Catholics from participating in the St. Augustine demonstrations. King received a remarkable letter from one of Hurley’s suffragan bishops, Paul J. Hallinan of Atlanta.³⁴ Hallinan, part of a new breed of progressive bishops, virtually endorsed King’s tactics, writing about the “complex and dan-

Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco, 1986), 479.

32. David W. Southern, *John LaFarge and the Limits of Catholic Interracialism, 1911-1963* (Baton Rouge, La., 1996), 340; Stephen J. Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the struggle for Black Priests, 1871-1960* (Baton Rouge, La., 1990), 307-9; Gerald P. Fogarty, “The Authority of the National Catholic Welfare Conference,” in *Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Thomas J. Reese (1989), online, <http://www.americamagazine.org/reese/ec/ec-3fogarty.html>.
33. Catholic episcopal support for the March on Washington was emblematic of the situation. In 1964, King praised by name the Churches of Christ of the U.S.A., the American Baptist Convention, the United Presbyterian Church, as well as the Lutheran and Methodist churches for “fully, enthusiastically,” and “officially” endorsing the march. Since the NCWC did not endorse the march officially King simply acknowledged the statements of Cardinal Spellman and the activity of Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston; Martin Luther King Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait* (New York, 1964), 135.
34. A suffragan is a bishop of equal rank within a cluster of adjacent dioceses in a geographical region or province. On Hallinan and civil rights, see Thomas J. Shelley, *Paul J. Hallinan: First Archbishop of Atlanta* (Wilmington, Del., 1989), 98-230.

gerous situations” King faced in fighting for civil rights legislation. “We have you to thank,” Hallinan wrote approvingly, “for your Christian witness, your courage, and your nobility.” Hallinan seemed convinced that emulation of King ought to be the proper Catholic response. “The nation, white and Negro, owes you a tribute, not so much of acclamation (for the Christian is not too concerned about that), but of following you in the Christian virtues that your life exemplifies.” “History will pay that tribute, even though it may be clouded today.”³⁵ For many American bishops, including Archbishop Hurley of St. Augustine, the clouded atmosphere of social turmoil obstructed a clear and uniform policy on endorsing “direct action.” Caution, circumspection, and avoidance were the watchwords for many bishops.

Privately, Hurley described his caution about endorsing the St. Augustine march to young Catholic seminarian who wrote to him from an Ohio. “His Grace is not convinced,” a Hurley secretary explained, “that the Chicago Methods are best suited to solve the century-old problems of relations between the races.” To Hurley, the Chicago-based NCCIJ’s methods were no more than rabble-rousing. “We wish to avoid the spectacular, the tumultuous, highly publicized demonstrations which leave everybody in a highly emotional state,” he explained to a seminarian, “and which generate more hate and condemnation than they cure.” In marked contrast to King’s methods, “we avoid inflamed words, but we seek to abound in many acts of justice and goodwill.”³⁶ Regardless of Hurley’s wish for peace and low-key acts of justice, the times were anything but ordinary. The St. Augustine demonstrations evolved from non-violent civil disobedience to low-grade civil unrest, and this posed a thorny problem for Florida Catholics.

35. Paul J. Hallinan to Dr. and Mrs. Martin Luther King, 22 June 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. Papers, series I, box 12, folder 17, KCA. Another instance of division within the hierarchy arose when Hallinan sought audience for King with Pope Paul VI in September 1964. Hallinan wrote to the Papal Secretary of State at the Vatican that King was “a man of deep faith, great courage, and high moral caliber.” At the same time, the influential Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York worked to undermine the proposed audience at the behest of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who thought that King was “a degenerate;” Paul J. Hallinan to Amleto G. Cardinal Cicognani, 4 September 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. Papers, Series I, box 12, folder 17, KCA; David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From “Solo” to Memphis* (New York, 1981), 121.

36. Hurley, quoted in Rev. Chancellor Irvine Nugent to Steven Phelan, 5 May 1964, Civil Rights file, ADSA.

While Hurley's hands were tied by Catholic canon law on the issue of priestly participation in the demonstrations, so too were they bound by Catholic theology in terms of Catholic public support for the marches. King's insistence on the participatory Christian reconstruction of society clashed head-on with Roman Catholic church-state theory grounded in the submission to civil authorities. As the demonstrations in St. Augustine wound down, King implored city fathers to acknowledge "that segregation is evil and to take it upon themselves to rid St. Augustine of it," even if that meant overturning local laws.³⁷

For many Catholics, such a proposition was outrageous since, in theological terms, civil law was "subordinated" to divine law and derivative of divine ordinance. Law-breaking was pregnant with moral opprobrium precisely due to the mandate that civil law was to approximate divine law as closely as possible. With King's forces disrupting public order and encouraging arrest, it was difficult for conservative Catholics to consider him a proper Christian, much less a social prophet. When King exclaimed at the height of the demonstrations that he wanted all St. Augustinians to join him, "if necessary, in the St. John's County Jail," he cut to the core of Catholic church-state submission.³⁸

Hurley was baffled by King's philosophy of protest. "We consider bare legalities may be a delusion unless there is also good will in the community," he replied. "Obey the law," he wrote in his diary during the crisis of July, 1964. "Those who dislike the law should go to the courts." "I'm for the Negro," he professed, "he is a human being who has not yet been given his rights. He is looking for equality under the law. He has a right to fight for it. But his hope is in the law. He defeats himself if he violates the law."³⁹

Legalistic thinking was commonplace among early twentieth-century U.S. Catholic bishops. Yet by the end of 1965, new waves

37. Paul Good, *The Trouble I've Seen: White Journalist/Black Movement* (Washington, D.C., 1975), 100.

38. Thomas T. Love, "The Two Principles of Roman Catholic Church-State Relations," *Ethics* 76 (October 1965): 58; David R. Colburn, *Racial Change and Community Crisis: St. Augustine, Florida, 1877-1980* (New York, 1985), 95. For a treatment of King as a socio-spiritual prophet, see Richard L. Deats, *Martin Luther King, Jr., Spirit-Led Prophet: A Biography* (New York, 2000); Cornel West, *The Cornel West Reader* (New York, 1999), 357-59.

39. Joseph P. Hurley to Martin Luther King Jr. [telegram], 18 June 1964, Civil Rights file; Personal Notebook, Hurley Administration Microfilm Collection, reel 29, both in ADSA.

of theological modernization began to upend such assessments. During the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church (1962-65), an updated theology emphasizing human rights and democratic values was adopted. For Hurley, these changes were on the near horizon, but during the “long, hot summer” of 1964, he remained consigned to the old ways of thinking. King biographer Taylor Branch described Hurley as recoiling “in genuine horror” at the reforms of Vatican II.⁴⁰

Church reform was not the only movement that held horrors for Catholic bishops during the 1960s. International communism, a bogeyman of fear for many post-war Catholics, began to meld with public thinking on race issues. To Catholics, socially disruptive civil rights methods were often indistinguishable from communist-inspired tactics. Historian Michael Kazin has argued that, during the Cold War, the U.S. Catholic Church “constituted the largest and best financed—as well as most uncompromising—battalion in the anti-Communist movement.”⁴¹ Many post-World War II Catholics were convinced by Soviet moves in the predominantly Catholic countries of Eastern Europe that “Godless communism” needed to be rolled back. Catholic faith quickly merged with a new patriotic Americanism based in anti-communist fervor.

Even progressive Catholics recognized that Catholic anti-communist religious symbolism had taken its toll on the civil rights movement, particularly the public’s association of the term “agitator” with creeping communism. “Many white southerners,” the NCCIJ opined in 1961, “believe that the new militancy of Negroes is caused by Northern or outside agitators.” While the progressive NCCIJ regarded the characterization as “nonsense,” it was difficult for mainstream Catholics to view the claim as false when just three years earlier, the U.S. bishops “prayed” that conscientious Americans would eventually “seize the mantle of leadership [on race issues] from the agitator and the racist.” Hurley was convinced that in St. Augustine “massive nonviolence would precipi-

40. Personal Notebook; Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 35. This characterization differs greatly from that of another historian, who has written that Archbishop Hurley was “quick to obey” Vatican mandates on liturgical reform; Michael J. McNally, *Catholic Parish Life on Florida’s West Coast, 1860-1968* (St. Petersburg, Fla., 1996), 339.

41. Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (New York, 1995), 174; John E. Haynes, *Red Scare or Red Menace? American Communism and Anticommunism in the Cold War Era* (Chicago, 1996), 95.

tate a crisis of violence” on the part of whites. He believed that King was fomenting violence deliberately in order to generate media coverage and chart further progress for his movement.⁴²

Compounding matters for King in St. Augustine was Archbishop Hurley’s dread fear of communism. Just three years after the march in St. Augustine, fellow Catholic, writer, and conservative luminary William F. Buckley Jr. eulogized the Florida archbishop succinctly, pointing out that since “he knew its potential for evil” first-hand, Hurley ranked “among the most adamant and outspoken critics of Communism in the United States.”⁴³ But Hurley’s anti-communist notoriety was unknown to civil rights leadership, perhaps because much of his activity was carried out behind-the-scenes.

From 1950 to 1965, the U.S. bishops released a series of public documents through the NCWC known as “persecution statements.” These statements highlighted communist repression of Catholicism worldwide and encouraged prayer for Catholics behind the Iron Curtain. Unbeknownst to all but a handful of powerful bishops, Hurley ghost-wrote all the NCWC’s persecution statements in which he often referred to communists as the “enemies of Christ” and communism as the “new Barbarism.” In St. Augustine, local citizens clamored that “outside agitators” were conducting the Freedom Rides, sit-ins, and marches. These were trademark tactics of communist social disruption, methods Hurley

42. Stephen J. Wright, “The New Negro in the New South,” in *The New Negro*, ed. Matthew Ahmann (Notre Dame, Ind., 1961), 11; Hugh J. Nolan, ed., *Pastoral Letters of the American Hierarchy* (Huntington, Ind., 1971), 510. Hurley seems to have been influenced on this score by a speech delivered in Congress by Mississippi Senator John C. Stennis in April 1964, “The Civil Rights Bill—A 100 Billion \$ Blackjack,” Hurley Papers, Civil Rights/Segregation file, ADSA. Stennis failed to take a pro-civil rights stand during the 1960s; “A Tribute to Senator John C. Stennis,” John C. Stennis Institute of Government, Mississippi State University, online, http://www.sig.msstate.edu/mainpage.fwx?read=_0DN0YA16C.

43. “Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley, RIP,” *National Review* 19 (November 1967): 1251. In what amounted to a parallel career, Hurley compiled an impressive record as a Vatican diplomat from 1926 to 1950. In October 1945, he was named papal regent *ad interim* to Yugoslavia. From Belgrade he chronicled Marshall Josip Broz Tito’s brutal repression of the Catholic Church. He experienced the murder of priests and beatings of bishops by communist thugs. In 1946, Hurley was the target of a tear gas grenade attack while presiding at Mass in Ljubljana; Report of T. J. Hohenthal, U.S. Consul (Zagreb) to Secretary of State, 31 December 1946, Myron C. Taylor Papers, RG 59, box 28, file 760.050, United States National Archives, Archives II, College Park, Md.

once described in a persecution statement as “calculated confusion.”⁴⁴

By the early 1960s, Hurley concluded that even Christian leaders such as King were susceptible to co-option by the communists. “Above all,” he wrote in an open letter to Florida Catholics “we must be on guard against the wolves in sheep’s clothing, against that particular class of subversive who seeks to penetrate State and Church under the guise of either patriotism or piety.”⁴⁵ Suspicion of “subversive penetration,” particularly under the pretext of piety, reached its height exactly at the time of the St. Augustine demonstrations.

Revelations of King’s purported communist affiliations were leaked to columnist Joseph Alsop in April 1964, while on Capital Hill FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover testified to “Communist influence within the civil rights movement.” Alsop suggested that long-time rumors of King’s communist connections were “acquiring some color of truth,” and that King was “almost certainly still accepting Communist collaboration and advice.” In St. Augustine, just days before King’s arrest, the local newspaper ran an advertised series of articles entitled “Communism in the Civil Rights Movement.” Rev. Billy James Hargis, the ultraconservative Bible sensationalist and founder of the Christian Crusade, sanctioned such assertions in a series of lectures at St. Augustine concurrent with the SCLC demonstrations. Eerily echoing Archbishop Hurley, Hargis warned against “the danger of internal Communist subversion.”⁴⁶

While both the NAACP and the SCLC were aware of Hargis’s anti-communist bombast, they were completely unaware that Hurley’s thinking had begun to take similar shape. In a glaring

44. “Peter in Chains,” in Nolan, ed., *Pastoral Letters*, 472; Hurley, typewritten draft with handwritten corrections, ADSA.

45. Joseph P. Hurley to Pastors of the Diocese, *The Florida Catholic*, 28 June 1960.

46. David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York, 1986), 321-22; Joseph Alsop, “An Unhappy Secret,” *Washington Post*, 15 April 1964; “Right Wing Stirs Strife in Florida,” *New York Times*, 14 June 1964; 8 August, 1964. Hargis became preoccupied with the threat that communism posed to Christianity shortly after his ordination to ministry in the Disciples of Christ in 1943. In 1953, he garnered worldwide notoriety for a caper whereby he floated baskets of Bibles attached to hot air balloons behind the Iron Curtain. He was one of the first public figures to allege communist influence in the Civil Rights movement in *Unmasking Martin Luther King, Jr., The Deceiver* (Tulsa, Okla., 1960).

strategic misstep, the NCCIJ noticed that Hurley spent five years as a Vatican diplomat in communist Yugoslavia and concluded that he might be sympathetic to the “applied social justice” component of communism. Tragically, they decided to ground their appeal to Hurley for a meeting with King in terms of communal social justice theory.⁴⁷ The move illustrates the vast disconnect between more liberal Catholics who were in favor of civil disobedience and those of a more conservative stripe who wished to maintain the status quo.

Only a handful of progressive Catholic bishops in the South understood that integration was axiomatic for Christians, regardless of both canon law and communism. These minority bishops knew the battle would be difficult. “I remember being almost ostracized,” Atlanta Archbishop Paul Hallinan wrote in 1963, “for saying that the day would come when whites would look back and earnestly wish that they had done business with Martin Luther King.”⁴⁸ Since Hallinan and others exercised no authority over Catholics in St. Augustine, it would take the pressure of President Lyndon B. Johnson to catalyze change.

The U.S. Civil Right Act of 1964 was signed within weeks of King’s arrest in St. Augustine. “It may be that we would not have had a Civil Rights Act without St. Augustine,” Andrew Young has suggested, “if it hadn’t provided a vivid reminder of the injustices the bill was designed to address.” In late June, King departed the city with assurances from Governor Farris Bryant that a bi-racial committee would monitor integration and civil rights. “It represented a degree of progress,” King wrote shortly after saying goodbye to the Ancient City, “And I said to myself maybe St. Augustine is now coming to terms with its conscience.”⁴⁹

47. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Administrative File, Subject File: Billy James Hargis, 1962-64 (Bethesda, Md., 1997), microfilm, Series B, reel 22; Jack Sisson, undated notes, NCCIJ Records, box 3, St. Augustine file, MUA.

48. Shelley, *Paul J. Hallinan*, 332 n 22. In the South, the bishops of the Atlanta Province (excluding Archbishop Hurley) formulated their forward-thinking “Pentecost Statement” in June 1965. The statement flatly decried racial strife and condemned racial discrimination as contrary to Christian thinking and action; Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan, Bishop Vincent S. Waters, Bishop Thomas J. McDonough, Bishop Coleman F. Carroll, Bishop Ernest L. Unterkoefer, and Bishop Charles B. McLaughlin, *The Georgia Bulletin*, online, <http://www.georgiabulletin.org/local/1965/06/03/b/>.

49. Young, *An Easy Burden*, 297; Martin Luther King Jr., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson (New York, 1998), 242.

King's wish was difficult for some in St. Augustine to accept. Even in the wake of the Civil Rights Act and legalized integration, the city found it painful to move forward in good conscience. On the fourth of July, some two hundred robed Klansmen paraded through the town square, in front of St. Augustine's venerable cathedral. Six days later, a group of white segregationists picketed the integrated motels and restaurants. Hurley's disapproval of King's movement was manifested on 8 September 1965, the 400th anniversary of the first Catholic Mass offered in the United States. That morning, an integrated group of activists picketed in front of the Cathedral. "We have always treated the negroes as equals," the Archbishop wrote, still frustrated with King's non-violent direct action tactics; "What offends them is that some of them want special treatment, and some want us to treat them as niggers."⁵⁰

There was no way that King could have been aware of ethnic prejudice within the ranks of the Catholic episcopacy, in St. Augustine or elsewhere in the United States. The march in St. Augustine left him flustered about Catholic intentions. Coming on the heels of Catholic participation in the March on Washington, by the time he got to St. Augustine King was perhaps too comfortable in thinking that "the social inertia and reaction that beset so many Catholics" had been thrown off.⁵¹ St. Augustine disabused him of that notion.

In late 1964, he publicly expressed his "humiliation at the failure of organized religion to support the cause of justice." While addressing a closed-door gathering of Chicago priests and nuns in 1965, he reportedly confessed that his harsh criticisms of the "White Churches" in his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" were aimed at "priests and ministers" who "mouthed pious irrele-

50. Notebook, Hurley Administration Microfilm Collection, reel 29, ADSA. In 1965, sociologist of religion Alfred O. Hero Jr. reported that Catholics from northern industrial states who settled in north Florida for long periods of time became susceptible to considering African Americans "naturally inferior." Long-time northern settlers like Bishop Hurley were usually more conservative than their Protestant counterparts on issues of race, trade unions, and world affairs. "Some former Northerners, Catholic and otherwise, have become even more racist than most native white Southerners;" Alfred O. Hero, Jr. *The Southerner and World Affairs* (Baton Rouge, La., 1965), 457.

51. *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson, 14 vols. (Berkeley, Calif., 1997), 3: 438.

vancies while their brothers in Christ were ground into dust.”⁵² Presumably, since he singled-out priests in his remarks, King had the tumultuous Florida experience in the back of his mind when he voiced these frustrations to the audience. For King, St. Augustine represented a valiant public attempt to harmonize Catholic leadership with the Christian aims of the SCLC.

Fortunately, the sentiment of Catholic resistance evident in St. Augustine began to fade in other parts of the South. In March 1965, the SCLC reached a breakthrough vis-à-vis Roman Catholic participation in civil rights activities. The demonstrations at Selma, Alabama, in March 1965 marked what Cyprian Davis called an “outpouring of priests and religious” to march nonviolently “at the request of Martin Luther King, Jr.” The contribution of priests and nuns at Selma was “significant,” according to one historian, accounting for more than 15 percent of religious demonstrators.⁵³ This was a decided shift from St. Augustine.

In his excellent study of Catholic participation at Selma, historian Gregory N. Hite called the efforts of the NCCIJ “both effective and precedent shattering.” One of the overlooked “precedent shattering” moves of the Selma mobilization was the extent to which the SCLC and the NCCIJ effectively side-stepped local episcopal control of Catholic demonstrators. First, rather than approach the Diocese of Mobile and its bishop, Thomas Joseph Toolen, for permission to operate in the diocese, NCCIJ operatives simply flew to Selma and opened up a temporary office to coordinate matters on their own. Second, instead of trying to recruit local Catholics for the demonstrations—a tactic that Hurley’s order had undermined in St. Augustine—the NCCIJ arranged for chartered aircraft to fly in demonstrators from Northern cities. Another diversionary tactic employed by the NCCIJ at Selma was that most clerical and religious demonstrators were drafted from religious orders, college campus ministries, and seminaries—structures which were not directly linked to a bishop. Finally, there is

52. Rev. John Jones, “Priests, Sisters, and Martin Luther King,” *Community* 25 (October 1965): 5.

53. Cyprian Davis, “God of Our Weary Years: Black Catholics in American Catholic History,” in *Taking Down Our Harps: Black Catholics in the United States*, ed. Diana L. Hayes and Cyprian Davis (Maryknoll, N.Y., 1998), 39; James F. Findlay Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York, 1993), 57.

some evidence to suggest that during the Selma march, civil rights-minded priests either ignored or ran evasive maneuvers around obtaining Archbishop Toolen's permission.⁵⁴

All of this activity indicates that, after St. Augustine, Catholic activists were much more aware of the power the local bishop could bring to bear in stifling Catholic participation in civil rights marches. St. Augustine alerted Catholic lay activists as well as progressive priests and nuns that canon law, inflexible theology, and the specter of communism created a climate of extreme caution and disapproval on the part of some bishops. The experience in St. Augustine emboldened Catholics to circumvent more conservative bishops and move ahead alongside King. While the opportunity for Catholic crisis mediation was not the same in Selma as it was in St. Augustine, Selma ultimately signaled "that the Catholic church was prepared to take its place among mainstream denominations as an equal partner in the struggle for social justice." For both progressive Catholics and Martin Luther King Jr., the elements of this transformation were shaped in St. Augustine.

54. Gregory Nelson Hite, "The Hottest Places in Hell: The Catholic Church and Civil Rights in Selma, Alabama, 1937-1965" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2002), 280-89.