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Swift's Guiding Letter Clashes With Catholic Views On Key Issues

By DOUGLAS D. RICHARDS

The Rt. Rev. A. Ervine Swift, Episcopal Bishop of Puerto Rico yesterday issued a pastoral letter counseling communicants on several issues raised during the current political campaign.



RT. REV. A. ERVINE SWIFT
...reads pastoral letter

It is at wide variance with the stand taken by the Roman Catholic hierarchy on released school time for religious instruction, birth control and sterilization.

Bishop Swift stressed that democracy "assumes the separation of church and state and any attempt by either side to control the other is to the ultimate detriment of both."

Packed Service

The bishop read the letter at a packed 11 a.m. service at St. John's Cathedral in Santurce. Simultaneously it was read at services in 25 other Episcopal churches throughout the Island.

There are an estimated 8,000 Episcopalians in Puerto Rico.

Bishop Swift told the congregation that Episcopalians should strive for law grounded in a Christian understanding of man, the civil order and human justice, with a "Christian's responsibility to support a legitimate government, but belonging to the party of their choice and voting in accordance with their individual Christian convictions."

"Just as one's vote is secret and sacred," he said, "so much each individual be accountable for it only to God."

At the same time he warned them to respect the convictions of others in recognition of the God-given right of Christians to disagree with each other.

Turning to the defeated measure to provide released schooltime for religious instruction. Bishop Swift said Puerto Rico's children had "little enough time in class as it is" and said that "religious educators are agreed that it is completely impractical and is not the solution"

"For their religious instruction we ourselves must make provision; we cannot, we must not expect the state to do it for us lest our basic assumption of separation be jeopardized. If such children are not getting proper religious training it is our fault, not that of the state."

He also opposed state subsidies for parochial schools stating, "to accept state aid in parochial schools is to refuse to support public education and to insist on an inter-relation between government and church that is not only harmful to the necessary independence of both but is repugnant to our very concept of democracy."

A related problem concerned, he said, the "population explosion" and need for birth-control. Citing the Lambeth Conference (See SWIFT, Page 25)