

In the Heartland With Bishop Pates

REMEMBERING BILL KRAUSE

In the course of my ministry as Bishop of Des Moines, I had the fortunate opportunity to come to know Bill Krause as a friend and advisor.

Bill's organizing ability and entrepreneurial spirit are legendary in his founding of Kum & Go convenience stores. In addition, along with his wife, Nan, he was most generous in sharing their wealth. Among gifts to Catholic organizations were those to Dowling Catholic High School, Holy Family Inner-city Catholic School and parish and diocesan drives. Support to students especially the poor and underprivileged was basically to open doors of opportunity for them.

In my relationship with Bill, two characteristics were prominent: he held people accountable and he had a strong Catholic faith.

Bill was always personally interested in the activities and projects of the diocese. He would ask pointed questions and encourage ongoing action and movement. He believed in support but with expectations of accountability – how is everything really going to come out?

Bill Krause was also a man of evident personal faith. Before his death during a prolonged illness, I had the privilege of anointing him. He received the Sacrament with great openness and a realization that he was now being drawn into a new phase of life. I am confident that he entered eternal life with his characteristic gusto and determination.

THE INSIDIOUS DRUG TRADE

I was privileged recently to conduct a solidarity visit to Colombia and Peru in my current role as Chairman of the International Justice and Peace Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

One issue which surfaced during our visit was the production of coca and the insidious chain of negative effects that follow in its wake. The first is on the site of crop development where, from the start, corruption, violence, commerce outside the rule of law create disruption in these local communities. Such destructive activity follows the trail of manufacturing these drugs and then shipping them to the United States and Europe. We know that 77 Mexican individuals have been killed in drug trafficking.

The Columbian and Peruvian governments in concert with the United States have been addressing this problem at its source. In Colombia they spray the fields where the crops are killed. It is claimed that production has declined by 50% and at the same time consumption of cocaine in the United States has declined by 50%. In Peru, the approach is to introduce alternative crops where coca is grown along with infrastructure facilitating shipping of the produce to market. This method seems to best serve the long-term benefit of the farmers.

Meanwhile, on this side of the problem in the United States we know the enormous suffering and personal tragedy that are associated with drug consumption. Drug trade and usage are the cause for a high percentage of population in our jails and have wreaked havoc with families and individuals. It serves the best interests of all for us to contribute strong efforts especially to interdict their initial usage.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The United States Senate has passed an immigration reform bill that now goes before the House of Representatives.

There are several considerations. One certainly is the preservation of the rule of law which is at the heart of whom we are as Americans. We come from many different countries, cultures and traditions. What makes us blend together and work as one country is the rule of law.

At the same time, given our own immigrant background and our deep Christian conviction, "For I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35) we need to recognize those actually among us and resolve the issue with compassion and realism. This hankers back to the words of Emma Lazarus on the Statue of Liberty opened over the Fourth of July after restoration:

"Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

The U.S. Senate was able to fashion a resolution, though not perfect, which tries to balance all considerations. I join my fellow members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in urging the House of Representatives to follow suit in effecting legislation that respects the best traditions of our country.