

May 7, 1976

The Most Reverend Humberto Tonna
Presidente
Conferencia Episcopal de Uruguay
Calle Gallinal 532
Florida, Uruguay

Your Excellency:

In our evangelical concern for the protection of human rights and the safeguarding of human dignity everywhere, the Bishops of the United States have repeatedly addressed ourselves to those situations which seem most flagrantly and seriously to violate the fundamental principles of human freedom and dignity today. We have spoken most strongly and most often about situations within our own country, but we have also addressed questions of human rights in other countries, especially when agencies or institutions of our country appear to be involved.

We have also sought, in the spirit of ecclesial solidarity, to join our voices to those of our brother bishops in other countries as they have spoken out on such fundamental questions.

Concretely, in the case of Uruguay, world attention has been drawn repeatedly and frequently, especially over the past two years, to numerous allegations of human rights violations. Because of the gravity of the charges and the high esteem we have for many who have brought the information to our attention, we have thought it appropriate to address the Uruguayan situation in a direct and formal manner. We have chosen, however, to focus on the quite specific questions of denial of freedom of the press (and, implicitly, freedom of religion) represented by the closings of Vispera and Perspectivas de Dialogo.

Copies of the correspondence in this matter from the General Secretary of the United States Catholic Conference, Bishop James S. Rausch, to both the Uruguayan Ambassador to Washington and President Bordaberry were sent by Bishop Rausch to Bishop Herbe Seijas, Secretary of the Uruguayan Episcopal Conference on March 5, 1976. As there has still been no response to these letters from either Ambassador Perez Caldas or President Bordaberry, Bishop Rausch plans to make his correspondence public in the near future. This will probably coincide with the publication of the next issue of LADOC,

page 2 ...The Most Rev. Humberto Tonna

the Latin American Documentation publication of our Justice and Peace Office, which will contain an article from Perspectivas de Dialogo, "Otro Viernes Santo de Verdad."

The purpose of this letter is to inform Your Excellency of the course of action proposed in this letter and to invite your comments. If we do not hear from you we will proceed in the manner described.

Asking your prayers and promising ours for the common ministry we share, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Most Rev. Joseph L. Bernardin
President