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## Interview: Theodore E. McCarrick

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# 'Proclamation of liberty is our responsibility'

*The Most Reverend Theodore E. McCarrick is Archbishop of Newark, New Jersey. He was born in New York City on July 7, 1930, and ordained to the priesthood on May 31, 1958. In 1965, he was named president of Catholic University in Ponce, Puerto Rico. In the same year, he was named monsignor by Pope Paul VI. In 1977, Pope Paul VI named him an auxiliary bishop of New York. In 1981, Pope John Paul II appointed Bishop McCarrick as the First Bishop of Metuchen, New Jersey. In 1986, he was named the Fourth Archbishop of Newark, New Jersey. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) elected Archbishop McCarrick, who is multilingual, to head its Committee on Migration in 1986 and in 1992. In 1992, the NCCB also named him chairman of the Committee for Aid to the Church in Central and Eastern Europe.*

*Archbishop McCarrick was an Official Observer for the Helsinki Accords Commission that visited Poland and Romania in 1987. Under the auspices of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, he was part of the delegation to meet with Fidel Castro in 1988, to visit China in 1992, and, in the same year, along with Muslims and Croats, to search for a peace plan for former Yugoslavia. At the same time, representing the U.S. State Department, he traveled to Moscow as an observer to the Helsinki Commission. He has visited many other nations, including Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea, Lithuania, Ukraine, Romania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. He also visited Rwanda and Burundi refugees in Central Africa.*

*As of November 1996, Archbishop McCarrick was invited to serve on the Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad, by Secretary of State Warren Christopher; he was named chairman of the International Policy Committee of the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC); and, he was elected as one of 15 U.S. bishops to represent the NCCB at the Synod for the Americas to be held in 1997-98. The following interview was conducted on Nov. 13 at the annual meeting of the NCCB-USCC in Washington, D.C., by Nina Ogden for Fidelio magazine. Archbishop McCarrick granted his permission for this interview to be published in EIR.*

**Fidelio:** Your extensive experience on the Bishops Committee on Migration should certainly serve you well as incoming chairman of the Committee on International Policy.

**McCarrick:** Yes, and also my experience as chairman of the

Committee on Aid to the Church and Eastern Europe.

**Fidelio:** Dr. Jozef Miklosko, who, as you know, is the former vice prime minister of the former Czecho-Slovakia, was planning to meet with you before he led a fact-finding tour of Bosnia in April.

**McCarrick:** Yes, I wanted very much to meet with him then, but I was out of the country.

**Fidelio:** He was so taken with the bishops' statement on political responsibility that he translated it into Slovakian when he returned home, and circulated it all over Slovakia.

**McCarrick:** Oh, really? That's wonderful.

**Fidelio:** He also took a replica of the Liberty Bell with him, on which the words from Leviticus: 25 are inscribed, "Proclaim the liberty throughout the land."

**McCarrick:** What a wonderful way to get across the inspiration of the United States in connection to peace and justice throughout the world.

With that in mind, I must say that I am especially looking forward to the synod of the Americas on the Church in the New World.

**Fidelio:** The Latin American bishops have raised the question repeatedly of debt forgiveness as critical to the agenda of the synod.

**McCarrick:** They bear a terrible burden of debt in Latin America. You may not know that I was the president of Catholic University in Puerto Rico, and am especially mindful of this terrible burden debt has placed on the nations. But we shouldn't just think in terms of the nations, we must think of the individuals who bear the burden, the people whose poverty is worsened by the burden of debt. In Latin America, just as in this tragedy in Africa, these questions must be raised. It is a wonderful time to become chairman of the Committee. And the Holy Father in this time of the Jubilee has given us an extra gift for the world. His call to forgive the debts makes the spirit of the Jubilee perfectly visible.

**Fidelio:** And the approach the International Policy Committee has taken to urge President Clinton to use the framework of the Marshall Plan as the best example of positive American engagement in the world is very important.

**McCarrick:** This is the way we have to look at the reform of foreign aid. There's more to it than just what you think of as foreign aid—it must be a system of justice. The lenders are people. They must understand that recouping the debt must be based on development of the national structures.

**Fidelio:** Well, of course. The Marshall Plan was not based on recouping loans.

**McCarrick:** Exactly. The watchword is mutual benefit—good common economic sense.



Archbishop Theodore McCarrick welcomes His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, on Oct. 4, 1995.

**Fidelio:** Unlike the rotten approach to Russia, with brutal excesses of the market economy.

**McCarrick:** I was in Moscow recently as an observer in the Russian elections. I spent almost an hour with [Communist Party head Gennadi] Zyuganov. Russia needs time, not the kind of thing you described. Russia must find her way. They have tremendous potential, personal, and material resources. But they were led for 70 years by *Homo Sovieticus*. The individuals don't know how to take responsibility for themselves. You don't just end that overnight. They have to understand the challenges and, given an opportunity to change, you have to inspire optimism.

**Fidelio:** Not the policy of shock therapy.

**McCarrick:** Yes, what a name for an economic policy! Perhaps they had the shortsighted view that what seemed to work in the short term in Poland would work in Russia. Poland is smaller. Russia is so vast. But I am optimistic about Russia, if we can understand that they need time to develop and they need help.

Of course, our prayers are for the crisis in Africa. I remember arriving in Kigali in the last days of the civil war, before any ambassadors had returned except for the American ambassador. He offered me his residence. I found he was living in a hotel, in the one room still standing. I slept with one ear listening to the sounds of the animals right outside the walls, hoping that there were no huge holes in the walls for enormous snakes to crawl through. Of course, this is nothing compared to what the people there are suffering. I just remember it well. I wrote an op-ed for the European *Herald Tribune*, in which

I stressed that you have to guarantee that the world is watching and will get involved.

**Fidelio:** What about the role of the United States?

**McCarrick:** The U.S. could immediately supply logistical support which would create safe havens.

A U.S. airlift would not only supply food, water, and medicine, but protect land corridors. They are very hardy people there, although in this tragedy much less than they used to be. But they are determined to travel, and the U.S. could ensure their safety. I primarily stressed in my *Herald Tribune* article that the Hutus have to be convinced that they can come back, without being massacred.

**Fidelio:** You said in your remarks in the conference yesterday that you were part of the delegation of bishops who met with the President last year. You said that your topic was foreign aid, and because of the major cuts in foreign aid you didn't think you'd done a very good job. The executive committee will meet with the President soon. If you are to talk about foreign aid this time, what would you do better?

**McCarrick:** I would point out the implications of following mistaken trends in the last year, and make clear that America cannot be integral as a nation if it turns its back on the poor. Let's go back to your Liberty Bell. It was the ringing of that Liberty Bell that ushered in the new world. It must ring now. As you know, I was Cardinal Cook's secretary, and in my memory I can still hear him saying, as he did so often, "The proclamation of liberty is our responsibility for each other as brothers and sisters within the human family."