

# worldview

A JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

## THE YEAR THAT WAS 1963

Nineteen sixty-three has proved a turbulent and a humbling year. Many of the terrible events of this year have only further sundered community from community, and man from man. But other events, some equally terrible, have revealed again that underlying unity of mankind that is sometimes disputed in theory and even more frequently contravened in practice.

The deaths of two men did most to remind us sharply of the kind of world we live in and the values we hold most dear. Both Pope John XXIII and John F. Kennedy emphasized the use of reason and the necessity for peace, and the need for reason in the pursuit of peace. On this issue these two men, who were in many ways so different, were joined.

John XXIII assumed the leadership of the oldest continuing institution in the Western world as an old man widely regarded as an interim pope whose reign would fade quietly with the passage of years. Instead, with disarming ease, he flung open the doors of the Church to let sweep through the winds of change. He saw to it that between the Church and the modern world there would be a direct confrontation, and even more, an interaction. He communicated his love and affection not to Catholics only, but to all men who would listen. Before his short reign ended he had demonstrated once again that, however we are carried along by the tides of events, we are not wholly the prisoners of history.

John Kennedy fought for the Presidency of the strongest nation in the world with energy and ambition. As the leader of that nation, who had under his direction military forces of unparalleled destruction, he spoke eloquently and, on occasion, acted dramatically in pursuit of an elusive peace. "I speak of peace because of the new face of war... I speak of peace, therefore, as the necessary rational end of rational men." It is still difficult to assess with complete satisfaction the reasons for the stunning impact his death had on people around the world, but one reason surely is that he gave promise that a new generation

might, with balance and restraint, control the terrible forces now at man's disposal, that even a President burdened with such responsibilities could move with grace and elegance in the modern world.

The deaths of both of these men showed how people of different religious beliefs, political persuasions and nationalities could sincerely join in common mourning. Their deaths aroused an intensity of feeling not only because in each man an attractive personality was conjoined to a high office, but because each set forth as possible attainments high goals which most men desire—goals to which their successors are committed.

President Kennedy said that 1963 might go down in history as the year in which Negroes made their great breakthrough to equality. With so much still to accomplish that may seem an over-optimistic statement, but even more than the brutal deaths, the school-enrollments, the freedom walks, and the picketing, the determination of Negroes to attain first-class citizenship was marked by the peaceful summer march on Washington when approximately 200,000 people joined to dramatize the need for further civil rights legislation.

1963 was also the year in which all the countries of the Western alliance changed leaders, with the exception of France where the formidable de Gaulle still rules. It was a year, too, which saw the Sino-Soviet differences disrupt into the open, a year which saw the establishment of a test-ban treaty between major powers, a year that saw the peaceful breaching of the Berlin wall and the Christmas slaying of an eighteen-year-old who tried to escape to the West.

1963 was a year that saw the formulation of high goals, the installation of new leaders, and the continuation of old problems. Can we hope fervently, but not foolishly, that they will be brought into happy conjunction in 1964?

volume 7 number 1

JANUARY 1964