

# 7 Nuns Arrested In Antiwar Protest

Inside St. Patrick's  
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By EMANUEL PERLMUTTER

After receiving communion at the altar, 12 nuns—some wearing white sheets with the legend "One more person dead in Indochina"—lay down in the aisles of St. Patrick's Cathedral during the morning service yesterday.

Worshippers in the crowded Roman Catholic church looked on with amazement and shock as detectives hustled out seven of the nuns and a woman lay teacher who had lain down with them. Cardinal Cooke witnessed the incident.

The eight prisoners were taken to the East 51st Street station where they were charged with interfering with a religious service and served with summonses for a court

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appearance May 18. The complainant was listed as Joseph Connolly, head usher at the cathedral.

The remaining five nuns continued lying in the aisles during the brief prayer service that followed communion. Then they rose and left the church.

The communications office of the Archdiocese of New York issued a statement later, saying that no court charges would be pressed against "the sisters involved."

Personnel at the cathedral said that no nuns had ever been arrested before in that edifice.

## Others Conduct Vigil

While the 12 nuns were demonstrating inside the church, about 60 other nuns conducted an antiwar vigil outside on Fifth Avenue, to demand that the Roman Catholic Church in New York take a stand against the war in Vietnam.

Most of the nuns belonged to the Order of Sisters of Charity, which is active in education, health and social-welfare service. Members of the order do not wear nuns' garb; some live in convents and others in their own homes.

The following statement was issued by the archdiocese:

"Following a brief antiwar demonstration by seven religious sisters in St. Patrick's Cathedral at the end of the 10 o'clock mass today, Msgr. James Rigney, administrator of the cathedral, stated that

he would not press charges against the sisters involved.

"Before the mass, which began the 1972 Catholic Charities and Education Appeal, Cardinal Cooke sat in the sanctuary for the reading of a statement of his own, concerning true peace in the world — the peace of Christ—and an announcement that the churches of the archdiocese will offer special prayers during May for successful negotiations to end the war in Indochina."

## Nun Explains Action

At the East 51st Street station, Sister Judy Peluso, who had participated in the demonstration inside the cathedral but had not been arrested, said that by lying on the floor the nuns had wanted to symbolize the war dead in Indochina. She said the demonstration had been organized by the Social Action Commission of the Sisters of Charity and that some of the participants were Ursuline Sisters.

One of those arrested was Sister Patricia Harding, 30

years old, of 300 East Fifth Street.

"My desire was to put myself on the line to dramatize what is happening in Indochina," she said. "Cardinal Cooke says he is against war. If he is, he should resign as Military Vicar to the Armed Forces."

Another of those arrested was Sister Mary L. Steele, 46, who lives at Sacred Heart Convent at 457 West 51st Street. "I wanted to be a religious witness for peace," she said. "All of us did."

Others arrested were Sister Maureen Walsh, 45, of 69 Vassar Street, New Springfield, S. I.; Sister Gloria Fitzgerald, 47, of Emmaus House, 241 East 116th Street; Sister Patricia Walsh, 33, of 3726 Henry Hudson Parkway, the Bronx; Sister Mary A. Scully, 28, of St. Paul's Convent at 116th Street and Leexington Avenue; Sister Carol Vericker, 30, of 129 East 112th Street, and Eileen Shanahan, 37, of 3632 Corlear Avenue, the Bronx, a lay teacher in the Catholic school system.