FR TONY BARTLETT from Hayes, Middlesex, carries the cross at the head of the demonstration outside the NATO HQ a Northwood, Middlesex.

Liturgy outside London Nato base

by Christopher Ralls

A GROUP of London-based Catholics held a demonstration and reconciliation service outside a Nato base last week, to protest about the nuclear arms race.

Twenty-nine Catholics, from a group called Catholic Peace Action, demonstrated outside the main gate of Northwood Military Base and Nato headquarters, Middlesex. They were led by Mr Dan Martin, full-time worker for the Southwark diocese Justice and Peace Commission, and Fr Tony Bartlett, a Claretian priest from Hayes, Middlesex.

They handed leaflets to staff working at the base, calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons and criticising especially the planned siting of Cruise missiles in Britain.

"We believe that global crucifixion is being made ready at such places as Northwood," said the leaflet.

They were also critical of Catholic bishops for "phrases like 'we are concerned, disturbed' or 'anxious about the nuclear deterrent'.

"Such weak statements are ineffectual and, at worst, can be interpreted as complicity with the nuclear war preparations of the state," said the leaflet.

The group held a service of prayer and a liturgy of the Passion and death of Jesus as a sign of repentance for nuclear weapons and reliance on "military protection."

They had intended to celebra Mass, but the area bishop, Bish Gerald Mahon, objected to what he sa as the appropriation of the Mass for particular purpose.

This week Bishop Mahon said I queried the criticisms of the bishop especially after the Novemb statement of the Bishops' Conferenc

Mr Martin said that as the bishop conference statement still accept the principle of deterrence, it still car into the category Catholic Pea Action was criticising.

He said the group are planni further public demonstrations agair the bomb. "We think change will ta place when small groups of Catholi get together to take action," he said.