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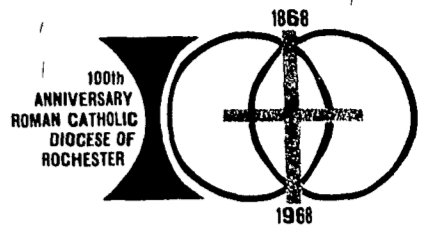
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Draft Ruling May Clear Local Priests

Washington, D.C. — (RNS) — The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that local Selective Service boards may not deprive registrants of a statutory exemption "because of various activities and conduct, and without any regard to the exemptions provided by law."

Justice William Douglas, writing the majority opinion of the Court in its 6-3 ruling, held that the Court "can find no authorization (in Selective Service laws) for reclassifying James J. Oestereich, a divinity student at Andover-Newton Seminary in Massachusetts."

Mr. Oestereich turned in his draft card as a protest to the war in Vietnam and his local board, soon thereafter informed him he had been reclassified from 4-D (divinity student) to 1-A status. He was ordered to report for induction. He appealed in lower court, lost his case but appealed again to the Supreme Court.

Justice Black said that once a person registers and qualifies for a statutory exemption, "we find no legislative authority to deprive him of that exemption because of conduct or activities unrelated to the merits of granting or continuing that exemption."

The Supreme Court decision will have repercussions on the cases of two Rochester diocesan priests, Fathers David Connor and Mark Sullivan.

According to Rochester attorney Herman Walk, who has served as A.C.L.U. counsel for the two priests, their cases "have become academic and will probably be discontinued."

The two priests, both peace activists, were originally reclassified from 4-D to 1-A because of refusing to carry their draft cards, returning the cards to their draft boards.

Father Sullivan was later reclassified 5-A (overage); but Father Connor was ordered to submit to induction. He reported to the Buffalo induction center but refused to take the required tests.

Father Connor, associate chaplain at Cornell University, said that the Court decision had been expected. He stated that he believed the Dec. 16 ruling cleared him from induction but that some court hearing might be required to correct the action of his Genesee draft board.

The Supreme Court declared that draft boards cannot operate "as free-wheeling agencies meting out their brand of justice in a vindictive manner."

Bishop to Say Midnight Mass

For the third Christmas, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen will celebrate midnight Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral, and preach the homily.

Concelebrating with him will be the Cathedral staff, Very Rev. John S. Hayes, rector, and Fathers Eugene P. Sweeney, Philip J. Billotte and Thomas Sykes.

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A Christmas Letter

Dear People of God,

When we wish one another a Merry Christmas it is not the same as wishing a Happy Birthday. It is not even the same as if we had our Birthday at the same time. It is rather like rejoicing together with a friend who saved us both from drowning at the same time. Every Christmas greeting, then, is a tribute to our Savior. "This day is born to you a Savior", for that is what the word "Jesus" means.

Until we understand this, we could always ask: Does God know anything about slums? Did He ever sleep in a hovel? Did His nostrils ever fill with the smell of manure in a stinking barn? Did He ever watch a bird fly to its home in a nest while He went homeless? Did God ever feel the callousness of Hands from trying to support a home without a father? Does God ever chill to the tramp of invading soldiers such as those who waken babies in Czechoslovakia? Was God ever driven from a filled hotel to an empty cave: Was His birth as obscure as Abraham Lincoln's?

A neighbor of the Hanks family asked the owner of a cross-road store in the back country of Kentucky: "Anything new?" "No!" said the other man from his horse and buggy. "Nancy Hanks got a young 'un, but nothing ever happens up our creek". Was His birth as inconspicuous as "Mary had a young one?" Does God know the ridicule others will heap upon Him as they sneer: "Can anything good come from that little town?"

The answer is: Yes! In one word, it is Bethlehem. Christmas is the Breakthrough in which God takes His own medicine. He made man free, now He accepts all the abuses of that freedom as if all robberies were thrust into His Hands, all blasphemies were painted to His lips, and all the egotisms and rationalizations of evil were turned into a rosary of thorns.

Suppose a murderer was sentenced to death after a just trial. The judge then steps down and says: "I will accept the death penalty out of love for you." This is why God came to this earth on Christmas — "to be made sin", that we might become guiltless.

It is almost impossible for us to imagine the humiliation of God becoming man. Would any of us be willing even to leave his body and put his mind in the body of a dog, subjecting himself to all the limitations of that canine organism, barking instead of speaking, and being forced to associate with other dogs knowing that he had a mind that was infinitely above that of a beast?

Well, the emptying of God in becoming man was still more, for He Who was rich became poor, He Who has created the world becomes a creature; the Judge is judged, the Owner is dispossessed; Innocence is condemned.

The most moving passage Paul ever wrote was about this:

"Let Christ Jesus be your example as to what your attitude should be. For He, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to His prerogatives as God's equal, but stripped Himself of all privilege by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born as mortal man. And, having become man, He humbled Himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying, and the death He died was the death of a common criminal. That is why God has now lifted Him so high, and has given Him the name beyond all names, so that at the name of Jesus 'every knee shall bow,' whether in Heaven or earth or under the earth. And that is why, in the end, 'every tongue shall confess' that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Another example: A delinquent boy was sent to his room as punishment. He amused himself by trying to teach his dog a new trick. The dog failed to understand, so the boy kicked the dog in the teeth and made its mouth bleed. The dog put up his paws trying to learn the trick, and when kicked again limped to the boy, stuck out its blood-stained tongue, licking the boy's hand. Blinded with tears, the boy ran sobbing to his mother: "I have done an awful thing". Restrictions never made him cry, beating never broke him, but suffering love did.

This is Christmas — Divine Love that becomes homeless on His own earth that our lonely hearts may find homes! Part of the mystery of Christmas is trying to discover why God should love us. After all, there is little that is loveable in any of us. He loves us because He puts His love in us and makes us Divinely loveable.

We therefore must put some of His love for us in others, particularly in those who seemingly are not worth loving, and they will become loveable too. In this way, Bethlehem will not be something that happened centuries ago in a stable, but something happening right now to you and me. It is said that Christians do not normally grasp God as Embodied Love! I know one man who was finally brought to his conviction and the first thing he said afterwards was: "I see now that my wife is a gift from God; my children are a gift from God; my home is a gift from God."

You too, my good people, are a precious gift of God to me. I shall try not to be just a tinsel gift to you.

You would not be reading these lines if you did not have the love of Our Lord in your heart. Nor would I be writing them if I did not strive to love Him with all my heart. May we offer love to one another for His sake, saying:

"I know that Christ has given me birth
To brother all the souls on earth."

MERRY CHRISTMAS!



Don't Forget the Unfortunate!

Last week the Courier-Journal inaugurated a pre-Christmas appeal to bring sympathy and generosity to needy families in our diocese.

Noting that poverty and loneliness and misfortune blight many thousands of lives in our affluent area, we printed 20 true stories of unhappiness asking our readers to choose one and to send a gift of money for them through the agency caring for these families.

Today we print 20 more stories of heartbreak and need. Their identity has been disguised but we have verified the situations described.

Any gift you send can be directed personally to the family through the organization listed under each case. Because our 40 neediest are symbols of hundreds of others in this diocese, perhaps you would choose to let the agency spread your gift to several similar unfortunates.

These families and individuals receive their most essential wants from public or Catholic

Gifts for the needy described here should be sent directly to the organization printed under each case. Write or call that organization describing the story; offer your gift for a particular case or charity work in general. PLEASE DO NOT SEND MONEY TO THE COURIER JOURNAL.

organizations. But Christmas money put into the agency's hand for them would offer that "little extra" which would prove sympathy and generate encouragement and brighten hope again.

Will you please look over these stories and move at once to help one of them? Do it right now — Christmas is so close — and you may forget over the weekend.

21. Carl is a T.B. patient recently discharged from a sanitarium. Because he is separated from his wife, he is home caring completely for his three young children. A fire has just forced them to move; in addition Carl was robbed of \$80. His health

(Continued on Page 2A)

