

Lay's Voice Stressed By College Student

The Rochester Association of Catholic Laymen, seeking new members, presents here the second in a three-part series to publicize its goals. Readers interested in learning more about the association may direct inquiries to R.A.C.L., 360 San Gabriel Drive, Rochester, 14610.

Contributing to the present turmoil in the Catholic Church is the voice of the layman. This voice must be expected to play a major role in the future of the Church if religion is to retain its meaning and relevance as a modern society becomes more secularized.

There can be no doubt that the lay voice constitutes one of the most important elements of today's Church.

When it is recalled that the Fathers of the Church in Vatican II defined the Church as the "People of God", it must be realized that the lay voice may not be regarded as merely an accidental element of the Church. It is the responsibility of the educated layman to voice his opinions on matters of concern to the entire Church.

Pope Pius XII defined this as a duty, and the "Constitution on the Church" from Vatican II states:

"An individual layman, by reason of the knowledge, competence, or outstanding ability which he may enjoy, is permitted and sometimes even obliged to express his opinion on things which concern the good of the Church."

It is not surprising that some bishops have become suspicious and discouraged, for all too often the only voice heard from the layman has been that of dissent. Of course the voice of dissent is often necessary for sometimes the layman's conscience requires him to speak out against something which he considers to be wrong.

But the voice of assent and support is equally necessary, if not more so, in that it informs our leaders when they have found yet another way to guide modern man toward a good and meaningful Christian life.

The lay voice may sometimes be

in error but it may also reflect, on occasion, the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the responsibility of the hierarchy to listen and to consider in what ways the Holy Spirit may be speaking through the voice of the layman. If either the hierarchy or laymen fail in their responsibility, the Church may face chaos.

Finally there exists the question of how the lay voice is to be raised. Actions may speak louder than words and the actions of Christians as individuals constitute an important manifestation of the lay voice.

When Catholic laymen band together to consider the problems of the Church in today's world, the results may be a more important and valid expression of the lay voice. But ultimately, the most meaningful expression of the voice of the layman will be heard during the contacts between pastors and their parishioners.

Another passage from the "Constitution on the Church" should make pastors and laymen alike aware of their responsibilities in this all-important area.

"A great many benefits are to be hoped for from this familiar dialogue between the laity and their pastors: in the laity, a strengthened sense of personal responsibility, a renewed enthusiasm, a more ready application of their talents to the projects of their pastors. The latter, for their part, aided by the experience of the laity, can more clearly and more equitably come to decisions regarding spiritual and temporal matters. In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each one of its members, can more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world."

—(Miss) Monica Sullivan Senior, Nazareth College

NOW HEAR THIS ... The Real Horror of Abortion

By Father Richard Torney

Abortion is birth control achieved by destroying an unborn child.

It is based on the principle that a human being can be killed if his existence is inconvenient or uncomfortable to others, or if those others arbitrarily deem a person unfit to live, because he is labeled dangerous or of no value to them. Where have we heard that line before?

Less than 30 years ago Nazi extermination of the Jews bloodied the pages of German history and sickened the world. No one should ever forget Dachau and Buchenwald. The furnace and deathhouses which destroyed human life so brutally existed because Nazi law presumed to define the Jewish people as inferior, unfit for society, unwanted and uncomfortable to have around.

The tragedy all Jews speak of as the Holocaust was mass murder—an inhuman destruction of six million people because the Nazi government was determined to purge Europe of the unwanted. The abortion issue today is similar: "Let us kill off babies we fear and don't want."

New York State legislators are presently being confronted with an active campaign for the passage of laws which will give more control of one human being over another. Asking for liberalization of the present law which says a "therapeutic abortion" is legal only in order to save the mother's life, those favoring change are now pleading for the right to kill an unborn child who will be a burden to have around.

They would attack the defenseless baby who is unwanted for these reasons: because he might be defective, because his conception through rape or incest brings shame to the mother and her family, or because his presence in her womb is already pointing toward the woman's mental breakdown.

Most pro-abortionists admit that their ultimate goal is not change but elimination of all restrictions. "Abortion on demand" is their slogan. Pleading for a woman's right to decide on what happens within her own body, they use emotional arguments that do nothing to help.

They cite statistics about death from illegal operations and list the inner tortures to the spirit of women who simply will not go through another unwanted pregnancy. They

weep over deformed babies and bemoan the hardships of the poor who cannot afford either the psychiatrist or the doctor.

But the shocker in their philosophy is that what they really want is the individual woman's freedom, and ultimately the State's, to decide who is fit to be born. They want qualitative control of our population exactly like the Nazis, but not with such venom and hateful intent.

They do not scorn nor even acknowledge the sacredness of the unborn baby or the potentiality of the snuffed-out life. They simply disregard it.

Their zeal to win unrestricted killing-rights over a child in the womb reflects lust to improve the quality of American life: whatever is imperfect, troublesome, unwanted and expensive to maintain, should be eliminated. The Nazis aren't wearing brown shirts and boots today, but they are still among us.

It frightens me that the extreme pro-abortionists pleading the mother's right to be happy contradict the rights of the father, the doctor (a guide for ethical correctness and a judge of medical necessity) and the child. But our whole society is soon going to be the victim of drives for the control of life.

Many of those who are staunch supporters of abortion are also leaders in the campaigns for involuntary contraception for welfare clients, sterilization of the mentally deficient, euthanasia of the incurable. They will not pause when they win liberalization of the abortion laws.

The world's unremitting population growth, the mounting costs of welfare, the increased selfishness and materialism of all peoples, are reasons why the "mistakes," the "unwanted," the "imperfect" and the "useless" will be considered fair targets for all who like the Nazis are determined to create a super-society.

COMMENTARY

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ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Encourage the Good, in Writing

By Father Paul J. Cuddy



One Sunday afternoon a spunky, house-riding lady in Clyde said: "Well, I went to Mass in Syracuse this morning. It is wonderful to have the Mass on the TV."

The Courier Journal's television writer Pat Costa has been looking into the possibility of a TV Mass through a Rochester station. She recently wrote: "The station executive . . . set a minimum of about 1,000 viewers for such a program. . . . Write to us at the Courier . . . Your interest expressed in writing may help to get the venture off the ground." (CJ, Feb. 21).

In 1945 Maryknoll Father, Keller began the Christopher movement. The slogan used was: "Better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."

The movement, which is just applied Christianity, caught the imaginations of millions as if it were some new teaching. A good result was the decision of many good men and women to enter communications: TV, radio, press, publishing, etc. with the expressed intention of presenting the good, the true and the beautiful, all reflections of Divinity.

This brings me to an apology about Merv Griffin.

On Jan. 19 I turned on the TV and got half of the show. It was the first time I ever saw it, since I have not been much of a TV viewer. I was

so wroth at a mocking skit on the priesthood and on the Sacrament of Penance executed by an actor, that I wrote the Show people expressing my feelings. The letter was published in this weekly column. That particular article brought more response from readers than any this past year.

With the published letter I sent a more personal letter saying: "I doubt that Merv Griffin or the sponsors want to hurt anyone . . . But I do think you want to know what are the reactions of many of your viewers. My sincere wishes are for your good, and for your success. You are in a position to do so much good. May you use it."

On Feb. 20, Merv Griffin replied in a candid, instructive and hurt letter.

"In your personal letter you quote a letter from a reader who is obviously a convert. It is a commendable letter. The times we live in are certainly easier for the convert than for Catholics like myself who are practicing our religion.

"Ten years ago, the Church was absolutely above criticism or the jibes of the comedian's jokes. Now, my generation of Catholics is faced daily with seeing everything we were taught and held sacred collapse around us. Religion, the presidency, etc. even our personal heroes have become fair game for the writer, the protester and the comedian. None of

this, of course, excused the performance of the comedian.

"Shows like mine — the talk-entertainment format — are unheeded, and are certainly a reflection of the times . . . The guests who do an act are never viewed prior to their performance. When you do a show like mine 5 days a week . . . someone is bound to slip through with 'tasteless' material. This was one of those times.

"But what about those hundreds of thousands of other minutes you did not comment on? . . . Where were you when we presented President Nixon, Senator Robert Kennedy, Bishop Sheen, the Rev. Billy Graham . . . I'm amazed that you could rate us a zero after one look at our show.

"I agree with you: I am in a position to do much good, and heaven knows I'm trying. I could use a little help from the clergy, too. I think we all should be consistent and protest any material of this anti-religious nature, be it directed against Catholic, Protestant or Jew."

Merv Griffin has a point. He deserves our sympathy that some soul-corroding things come through without his foreknowledge. His show — and others like it — are more likely to be healthy if the public lets the producers know what it resents. And his show, as well as similar shows, can do all kinds of good if we encourage the good as vigorously as we resent the bad.

CHURCH AND THE CITY

The Decentralization Issue

By Father P. David Finks

In the town of Greece one evening last week citizens jammed the auditorium of Arcadia High School and flowed over into gymnasium and classrooms. They came to express their feelings before the Town Board on a proposed program that would bus in 50 inner-city children to the Greece elementary schools. The children would fill only empty desks and the costs would be paid out of state and federal funds.

The antagonisms variously stated that evening seemed all out of proportion to the issue at hand. It would seem that the "forgotten man" of America is beginning to awaken from his suburban lethargy.

The cause of his rather explosive awakening seems to be fear of integration. But mixed into the emotional pot is an equal measure of anger over subsidies going to support the education, nutrition and habitation of the poor of the United States.

Since World War II the federal government has subsidized the suburban dweller. The excellent system of expressways and town roads were built to open up the suburbs to colonization with hardly a murmur from the taxpayers.

Ten million dwellings were being built with Federal Housing Authority funds (FHA) in open lands surrounding the American cities for middle and upper income people while a few thousand units were made available to low income families. Industry, foundations, and federal funds by the billions have gone to develop universities and provide tuition for the children of these same income groups.

Now, after riots and demonstrations have torn the cover from 35 million of our fellow citizens living in terrible want, some of our tax revenue is being reallocated to invest in our central cities and their inhabitants. Suddenly John Q. Citizen is worried about the debilitating effects that subsidies may have on the lower classes. "The shoe is on the other foot."

The Church has long taught the poor of this world to accept their hard lot with patience and Christian forbearance. We have ministered to those in want without ever wanting to change the conditions that cause this human suffering. The secular powers of government and business are now cautiously developing a war against poverty, mis-education and rotten housing. What role will the Church play in these days of social change?

The Bishops of the United States in their April 1968 meeting in St. Louis recognized all this and called for a Task Force on Urban Problems to be set up in each diocese: "to coordinate all Catholic activities and to relate them to those of others working for the common goal of one society, based on truth, justice and love."

This directive of the American Bishops was very clear: "The Gospel of Christ and the good of the nation must motivate us to encourage, support and identify with the efforts of the poor in their search for self-determination. It is chiefly through the attainment of control over one's personal and social destiny that destructive feelings of despair, frustration and helplessness can be eliminated. These efforts require the help

— free from all spirit of paternalism or condescension — not only of organizations and institutions, but of each and every believer."

The statement listed the areas of education, job opportunity, decent housing and more humane welfare legislation as priorities for action. The Bishops asked for concentrated effort by dioceses and parishes to meet the needs of the poor in these key areas. "We list these needs," they said, "with full awareness of the tremendous costs involved. It will take much time and even more sacrifice to implement programs needed to rebuild our society. But surely the richest nation in the world can afford a massive war on poverty."

We are coming close to the first anniversary of this directive and it would appear that little has been done in our diocese or in most others. A local Task Force made up of diocesan departments of Catholic Charities, Schools, Hospitals, Urban and Rural Ministries, Finance Committee and Priests' Council has yet to meet.

As the Bishops said: "We must not waste time beating our breasts or pointing an accusing finger at those whom we consider racists."

Those of us who feel with the Bishops that "the hour is late and the need is critical" must openly support Bishop Sheen and the pastors in a massive and positive response to the urban crisis in our area. Catholic church buildings, colleges, schools, and hospitals stand throughout the diocese to remind us of what our Catholic people have done in the past when we put our minds to it.

ST. PAUL AND LENT

The True Christian and Poverty

By Peter Schineller, S.J.

The author of the following article, the third in a series of seven Lenten meditations, has taught as a scholastic in New York City high schools, and currently is in second theology at Woodstock.

"Remember how generous our Lord Jesus has been. He was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich."

St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, 8, 9.

Pope John XXIII wrote that "poverty has often inconvenienced me, especially when I was unable to help my friends and relatives who were very poor." An uncommon way of viewing poverty, but typical of Pope John, who hoped that he would be praised as "born poor and died poor." In spite of the richness of the papacy, we think of him as poor because his attitude towards the rich and gifts of this world was that they were to be used to help others.

It was this attitude that the apostle Paul urged the Christians at

Corinth to form. Christ possessed the fullness of divine life, but became poor and shared our life of weakness and death. As a result, Christians become rich with riches surpassing all earthly goods.

Paul recalls the example of Christ in the Scripture verse above, to inspire the Corinthians to be generous in supporting the poorer Christian community in Jerusalem. He was about to visit Corinth and would collect money for the poor.

The one request the apostles made of Paul, as he left on his missionary journey was "that we should remember to help the poor, as indeed I was anxious to do." The collection of money was an opportunity for the Corinthians to prove their love, concern and union with the Christians in Jerusalem. In addition to material contributions, we know that several missionary companions of Paul were from Corinth.

The situation today is quite similar. Just as Paul traveled from the poorer regions of Palestine to the more wealthy cities of Corinth and

Rome, so today missionaries come from Africa, Asia and South America and ask for our generous contributions.

Paul was reasonable enough to see that this generosity should not place unnecessary burdens on our own families. In words that so easily apply to the rich nations today, in a world where the gap between rich and poor widens, Paul says that "there is no question of relieving others at a cost of hardship to yourselves. It is a question of balancing what happens to be your surplus now against their present need" (2 Cor. 8, 13-14).

The impression that Pope John XXIII made of Christians and non-Christians sums up the attitude Paul desires. Whatever talents or possessions we have, large or small, should be available for the service of others. The true Christian must be marked by this poverty, which means sharing his talents and gifts with others. For then, as Paul writes, we can share in those riches which only Christ can give.

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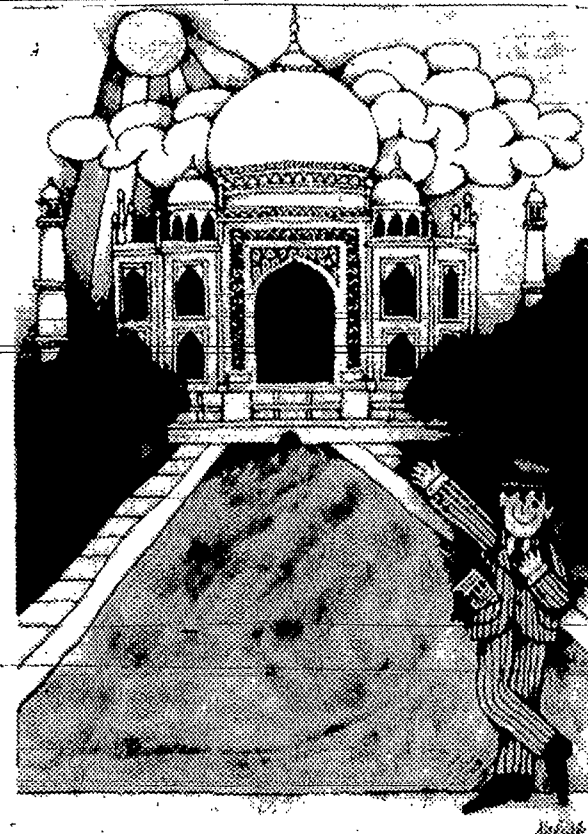
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