

A Job Ahead On Abortion

Emotional arguing and nonfactual writing clouded the Legislature's debate on the abortion repeal. It was as bad a show as the teary dramatics and shouting debate which marked the final vote.

But now that abortion has been blessed by the approving votes of 107 legislators what good can be done by feverish threats from pulpits to "get rid of those murderers at the next election"?

Hopeless hand-wringing over the "barbarism which will bloody our state", when women by the thousands ask for the removal of their unborn embryos, is just as futile.

The People of God — from all churches and synagogues — who firmly believe in the sanctity of life must bravely respond to two challenges which surely follow in the wake of the movement to legalize abortion: the erosion of the virtues which have traditionally protected sexuality and marriage and the continuation of the "abortion dilemma".

The national ground swell for abortion reform which in four years has moved 16 states to change their laws forbidding interruption of a pregnancy follows logically from the assertion of new sexual freedoms. It is also related to the recent attacks on the civil and religious rules against birth control.

A society which has become progressively tolerant of casual sensuality in the theater, movies and literature; a decade which has banished all the taboos on infidelity and premarital conduct; an era which has idealized freedom and liberty and reform — has come to the point where the virtue which has traditionally held society together is considered no longer vital for personal happiness and only questionably appropriate for the community.

Abortion has been legalized but the Family of God must continue to remind itself and its neighbors that changing the law of New York State has not changed the law of God. Abortion has not become morally permissible and good because a handful of legislators in Albany say: "It's up to the woman and the doctor".

But we need to repeat to ourselves, and especially to our young people, that the calm virtues of purity in company-keeping, fidelity in marriage vows, generosity in wanting a family and obedience to the Creator's designs for the use of our bodies, must be believed and lived by.

No woman ever came to the frightening abortion-dilemma without first contradicting one of those virtues.

It is easy to blame "the times" for the change of public attitudes about abortion. The sexual morass of our times which makes the ratio between married and single women seeking abortions to be about 50-50 has been helped by all of us who have lowered personal standards about modesty and chastity and self-control by any degree in recent years.

There is no easy solution for the abortion-dilemma: the situation of women confronted with an unwanted pregnancy, wondering in confusion, sometimes in shame and terror, what to do.

Medical estimates that say 1 million women submitted to illegal abortions last year admit that this number may double or triple next year as the number of states legalizing the operation continues to grow. But no one assures us that all those who agonize over the question of how to rescue themselves from bearing the child will be able to have the abortion in a clean hospital under the hands of a competent physician.

There are many pot-holes in the repeal of abortion. No provision is made in the laws for the poor woman who cannot afford good hospital treatment. No concern is offered by the state for the psychiatric wounds which precede and follow the removal of life from a womb. No impersonal legislator seems to have given any thought to the effects of this operation upon the psyche of a teenage girl facing life.

The churches have a new job ahead of them to intensify their efforts to develop a more human public opinion toward the unwed mother and for far more adequate facilities for their care and the adoption of their children. It has a challenge to inquire why delivery charges for those who may want a child are so prohibitive to many families that contraception and abortion have been the only prudent path those women could follow. It has a new duty to counsel the woman who will not accept God's creation in her.

—Fr. Richard Tormey

Letters to the Editor

She's Lost Pride In New York

Editor:

Another first for the great Empire State — the most liberal abortion law ever to be passed

Sen. LaVerne was angered by opponents who charged the advocates as being "ungodly." Should we label them "God-like"?

Sen. LaVerne seems to forget that he is holding an elected office, representing the people who put him there, among whom are many Catholics! Perhaps, now, he should begin to worry about their vote.

However, now that the abortion bill is neatly tucked away, let's get going on the euthanasia bill. After all, our hospitals are filled to capacity, hospitals are bulging with terminal patients and nursing homes have long waiting lists.

Think of the money we could

save. It would also help solve the population explosion. Our esteemed politicians could go one step further—work for the repeal of the Hippocratic oath administered to each medical graduate. It will help ease the conscience of the already over-worked physician.

I, too, am angry, Mr. Laverne — very angry, sick and I feel unclean. I am no longer proud of my state. It is truly an immoral and an ungodly one.

—Anne C. Leonard
40 Haverford Ave.
Rochester 14609

Inmates' View Of Morality

Editor:

Sen. Thomas Laverne was quoted during the discussion about the abortion law that he was voting for its repeal because he did not wish "to inflict my morality on others."

The felons of the Elmira Re-

formatory agree 100 per cent with the senator's position and wish that he and other like minded senators and assemblymen will now exert all of the influence at their command to remove from the crime category in the laws of the state those crimes which the inmates believe are on the books because present and past lawmakers have succeeded in inflicting their morality on others.

They would like the following crimes to receive the same generous treatment which the legislature has now given to abortion, namely, rape, arson, murder, assault, forgery, larceny, robbery, extortion, possession and sale of dangerous drugs, sodomy, all forms of homosexuality, child molesting, mugging, and loitering.

In fine, they would like to do exactly what they want to do, unrestricted by laws which they feel are the result of legislators' inflicting their morality on others.

—Father James P. Collins
Catholic chaplain
Elmira Reformatory

'Pastors Must Speak Out'

Editor:

When the Church finally spoke, few listened.

I hope that before we within the Church wash our hands of responsibility for the abortion law we will at last take a good look at the Church and its relation to the modern world.

Pastors and assistants are still the local leaders within our church. It is to them we look for guidance and moral leadership. And yet in our locality our clergy have consistently failed to demonstrate jointly and effectively the Church's concern for the problems, moral and social, of the people.

There has been no joint statement on the need (not necessarily the location) for decent housing for the poor.

Our pastors issued no joint statement on the welfare grants.

Why have our pastors remained silent on housing for the elderly, additional nursing home facilities, a group home for youth, a day care center for the low and middle-income groups, well-child medical services for those on Medicaid, and racial discrimination?

Is it any wonder that no one listens to the Church when they finally try to exert their leadership? The Church has been dissociated too long from the concerns of its people.

The Church has spoken against the deprivation of life to the newly conceived — shouldn't we also speak up against that which deprives a full life to the living?

—Mrs. James J. Williams
75 Hamilton Ave.
Auburn, N.Y.

The Word for Sunday

Revelation Our Guide

By Father Albert Shamon



"I am the true vine," said Christ in Sunday's Gospel. What provoked this discourse on the vine and the branches was not "the fruit of the vine" at the Last Supper; nor vines on the way to Gethsemane — for Gethsemane was a garden, not a vineyard.

The vine was the national emblem of Israel as the eagle is of the United States and the shamrock is of Ireland. The vine was the heraldic device on Israel's shield. Thus in the Temple a golden vine was displayed over the porch of the sanctuary.

On the eve of His death Christ was telling His apostles that Israel was about to lose her honored and ancient place as life-giving vine to the world, that she was being superseded by the new Israel — Himself! "I am the true vine" — the resurrection and the life.

Now He who said He was the vine also said, "I am the way, the truth, the life." He was saying in effect, the way to life is truth. Hence in the prayer over the gifts, Sunday's Liturgy teaches us to pray, "grant that our conduct may be guided by your revealed truth." Only then can we live the life worth living.

Perhaps one of the most startling perversions of the times is the teaching that conscience acts fully in its own right, that a person is following conscience when he does what he wants to do, that conscience makes everything all right.

"This teaching," Frank Sheed pointed out, "is based on the erroneous belief that conscience is the voice of God. In fact it is our own voice. Conscience is having a carnival at present; it has been given a totally new role."

Conscience is not "doing our own thing," following your own heart, a feeling — feeling of euphoria or well-being, like the drunk who falls comfortably asleep in the snow and freezes to death. Conscience is reason passing judgment on the morality of a particular action. Judgment demands education, guidance. The guide, as the

prayer over the gifts of Sunday's Mass tells us, must be "revealed truth" — else it cannot be a Christian conscience. The lawmakers in Albany who recently voted for the iniquitous Abortion Bill said they were following their conscience. But what was guiding their conscience? Hitler undoubtedly was following his conscience too.

Conscience must be aligned with the external, objective norms of God's revealed truth. The most dangerous phenomenon in the modern world is, according to Pius XII's celebrated dictum of October 27, 1946, the loss of a sense of sin. And this loss is due to the rejection of an objective norm of reality — of guidelines, outside ourselves, which must guide conscience if conscience is to be an authentic guide.

That "revealed truth" is kept inviolate in the Catholic Church for the simple reason that Christ arranged it that way. In fact He so arranged it that without His successors, Peter through Paul VI, we can do nothing. "A man who does not live in me is like a withered, rejected branch, picked up to be thrown into the fire and burnt."

Unless the voice of conscience echoes the voice of Jesus speaking through the successors of Peter, there can be no spiritual vitality, no sainthood, no Christian morality, anymore than "a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine."

COURIER-JOURNAL

NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

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