

Blacks vs. Bishops

The black Catholic population of this country is approximately 780,000. Last July, after about two years of discussion, a National Office for Black Catholics was opened in Washington with a staff of four and an interim budget of \$46,000 supplied by the U.S. Catholic Bishops.

Purpose of the Office was to "revitalize the Church in the nation's black community" and be liaison to organize the black clergy and laity and transmit their hopes to the attention of the American hierarchy.

Last month black leaders announced their plans for full operation and expansion of the Office and asked the Bishops for \$659,000 for the first year of a 3-year budget of \$2.9 million.

The Bishops in the midst of paring expenditures across the board due to a \$2 million deficit run up during the current fiscal year, replied that they couldn't afford to give NOBC more than \$150,000 this year and could not promise any further budgetary provisions.

With this the NOBC leaders issued a blistering statement that the Bishops' reason for the rejection of their demand was "clearly specious, weak and typical of white racist attitudes." They said the Bishops' decision was "an overwhelming insult to black Catholics everywhere." Further, they wouldn't accept "one penny" unless they could have all they asked for, their committee said.

The disappointment of the black Catholics is as understandable as the economy the Bishops say they are forced to employ. But the harsh rhetoric and the petulant dismissal of partial help will win scant sympathy for the black leaders. Unfortunately, since the NOBC has not revealed the costly details of their "Plan of Action" and the Bishops aren't saying why they decided to fund only a stand-by operation, the biting word "tokenism" hangs in the air.

One wonders sadly whether irritating techniques and personality clashes have again ruptured a hopeful, intelligent and needed advance in social action.

Ever since the Black Clergy Caucus arose three years ago and announced its intentions to lead all U.S. black Catholics to "control their own destiny" in the Church, the hierarchy has seemed defensive. But when the Caucus repeatedly called the U.S. Church "racist" and publicly demanded near-impossible national and diocesan actions to clarify the black image, the Bishops noticeably stiffened. Seed money might be voted to help the black group get started, but the Bishops now seem set against paying for the entire enterprise. They won't be pushed by fuss and clamor.

Criticism of the Bishops' refusal to approve full funding of the blacks' national office is as shallow as the expectation that the proposal had to be accepted simply because it came from black people. This has been a flaw in black relations with the public in many communities.

There may be more background to the Bishops' decision than shortage of money; but shortage of patience and shortage of understanding of the need can be repaired diplomatically. The responsible black leaders have too vital an opportunity to lead their race to long-desired respectability in the Church to let the present frustration defeat them.

—Father Richard Tormey

The Needy

The Courier-Journal's annual appeal for the needy at Christmas begins in this issue. By reading the cases cited one can see that even on this day of days the depression of destitution is rampant.

The cases chosen by the various agencies are real and sadly are typical of many, many others. Those who wish to help financially on individual cases are of course invited to do so.

But it is also to be remembered that each agency has cited one can see that even on this day of days the demand for other similar problem cases. So contributions of a general nature also are needed by each of the agencies.

Regardless of which method you choose be assured your gift will be used to brighten some unfortunate's Christmas and hopefully extend warmth throughout the coming year.

As most of those engaged in social agencies will agree, the fact that you care is as important as the very material help your gift will represent.

Courier-Journal

Letters to the Editor

It's God's Rule On Abortion

Editor:

Granted that we are in a battle to repair our society, what should be the fundamental indicators of our chances of success. Let us consider one very, very important indicator: our regard for human life AND our treatment of God's prerogatives with respect to it. Let us not miss the point. If God is, He is relevant, and His will must be given the benefit of the doubt when it is a matter of life already conceived.

Our legislators, even though some are Catholic, the A.M.A. spokesmen, even though they are knowledgeable, are positively not the means chosen by Christ to convey the Father's message and to ensure His "will be done on earth. . ." This fact cannot be brushed aside unless we deny God's existence and relevance, or deny His chosen instrument for instruction, the Church, or deny His primacy over all life, once conceived.

If we in New York State continue to indicate against God on this matter of innocent human life, then we should not expect to appear humble before

Him while requesting His aid in overcoming other grave problems that threaten our own peace and security. And without His help the problems will not be overcome; rather we will be overcome. Pride is the most ancient and persistent sin. Invariably it blinds the community to the chance for a really better life.

Let us look at the issue from another angle. We recall the story of Jesus driving out the evil spirit that had possessed a man. Some who had witnessed the cleansing challenged Jesus, implying His complicity with the devil. Our Lord simply cited the truth that Satan is not so foolish as to let his kingdom divide against itself. If Satan is thus wise, how much wiser is the Holy Spirit! Would He inspire some to work against, while others to work for preservation of human life? Nonsense.

The indicators for hope and success are weak now. Only you can strengthen them by speaking up and organizing to correct the legislated horror. At the same time, we should insist and pray that much more effort be made to discover those birth control methods that will be acceptable to the people of God as a whole. For it is clear

that abortion is being widely used as a final solution to end the unwanted life.

Bill Folger
Newberry Lane
Webster

Compares War And Abortion

Editor:

The bishops of New York State have publicly condemned abortion, invoking the principle of respect for human life and the commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Kill."

Their position might be stronger if they would publicly apply the same principle and commandment to the unjustified involvement of the U.S. in Southeast Asia where hundreds of thousands of people have been slaughtered and where atrocities repugnant beyond description, have their place.

The bishops' selective application of principles is a feeble approach to the need for strong voices on issues concerning morality. If they believe that abortion involves the principle of respect for human life, then they have an equally solid basis for condemning the slaughter in Southeast Asia.

John J. Cannon
William Drive
Mumford

The Word for Sunday

God Does a Lot With the Least

By Father Albert Shamon



Sunday's First Reading is from the prophet Micah. Perhaps all that people know of Micah is that he authored the prophecy indicating that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Micah, you see, had the misfortune of being the contemporary of the great Isaiah; and, as the rising sun scatters the stars of night, so the light of Isaiah's glory put to flight the lesser light of Micah. Yet Micah deserves something better than being relegated into Isaiah's shadow.

Isaiah was from the city of Jerusalem; Micah, from the countryside around Jerusalem. Isaiah was a great lord of the court, using Hebrew that is still considered classic; Micah was a rustic, using a homespun dialect.

When Sennacherib invaded Judah in 701 B.C., Micah, like most of the people of the countryside, fled to Jerusalem for safety. There, he had a job to do as important as Isaiah's. Isaiah had to stiffen the backbone of Hezekiah and the rulers of Jerusalem so that they would not knuckle under to Sennacherib but would put their trust completely in God. Micah had to do the same for the people who milled about the city in terrified mobs. Isaiah gave hope to Israel's leaders; Micah, to her citizenry.

It was in this context that Micah made his Messianic oracle. Assyria had come down on Jerusalem like the wolf on the fold. And Jerusalem was filled with frightened sheep. "Will we ever survive this?" was the sole thought of the panicky people. "Survive it?" roared Micah. "Why a ruler will come from the line of David whose greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth." And you can well imagine the pride this country bumpkin took in being able to say to the know-it-all city folk, "And can you guess where this ruler will come from? Not from your great city of Jerusalem, but from the country — from the tiny village of Bethlehem, considered too small by you city-folk even to be numbered

among the clans of Judah." Such a proclamation that the Davidic line would not die was fuel enough to keep the patriotism of the Jews from burning out.

After the siege was miraculously lifted, succeeding generations held Micah in such high esteem that a century later his oracle saved Jeremiah's life. And centuries still later, when wise men asked where the newborn king of the Jews was born, it was Micah's prophecy that came immediately to mind.

In the Gospel Elizabeth asked, "Who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" We ask, "What is Bethlehem that the ruler of the earth should come from it?" Bethlehem was the least of the villages of Judah. When God would grow a tree, He plants a seed. When He would build a universe, He begins with an atom. God always does big things in a little way.

In Israel, He picked the littlest province: Judea. In Judea, He picked the littlest town: Bethlehem. In Bethlehem, He picked the smallest hole: a cave. In the cave, He became the littlest human being: a Babe. To show that the important things of life are the little things of every day. All great achievements have humble beginnings. God asks only for our heart. It too is little. But God always does a lot with the least.

Viet Charge Held Invalid

Editor:

Pieter P. J. M. Schram letter to the Courier-Journal (12/9/70) charged that the government of South Vietnam violated the Geneva Accords of 1954 by refusing to hold elections.

This charge is not valid inasmuch as neither South Vietnam nor the United States ever signed the 1954 Geneva treaty.

Ironically it was the North Vietnamese regime led by the Red dictator Ho Chi Minh who signed the Geneva agreements and immediately violated it by continuing to invade the territory of South Vietnam.

The United States pledged to defend the South Vietnamese government at the time of the 1954 Geneva agreements and has continued to fulfill that pledge.

The left-wing element in our society, always confused by facts, have continuously propagated propaganda so helpful to the Communist enemy.

Robert W. Bart
Ithaca

Old Stamps Needed

Editor:

The Salvatorians are in need of canceled stamps; the proceeds of the sale of these stamps we use to help our African missions. We rely on your kindness to help us. Please send the stamps to: Brother Fabian SDS, Jordan Stamp Mart, St. Nazianz, Wis. 54232.

Thank you,
Brother Laurence, SDS.

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