

Call to Duty

A recent Church document studied the issue of liberalized abortion which is troubling people across the nation.

It takes an objective look at the controversial idea and its report is divided into three parts — theological, legal and medical aspects.

The report states simply, "All three aspects are agreed on the point that nontherapeutic abortion is wrong."

In discussing the problem theologically, the document makes four points — life is a gift from God; human beings are created for eternal life; human life is created for fulfillment; life and death belong to the province of God.

Talking about the legality of liberalized abortion the document declares, "We see in it yet one more example of the growing disposition of an increasingly secular society to resolve moral dilemmas upon pragmatic considerations of public policy rather than upon transcendent religious imperatives."

Stating that laws should be consistent with Scriptural injunctions on this point, the report says, "We accept, as Christian citizens, the duty to make every legitimate effort to persuade our countrymen, Christian and non-Christian alike, to this position."

An editorial in the same publication which ran the document says, "Opposition to liberalized abortion legislation has been most vigorous from the Roman Catholic sector. That church has stood forth as a vocal champion of the sacredness and value of human life of all and at all stages."

In case you thought the document in question was done by the Catholic Church you are wrong. It is the work of the Lutheran Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

The publication it appeared in (Feb. 7, 1971) and which praised the Catholic position is the Lutheran Witness Reporter of St. Louis, Mo. —Carmen J. Viglucci

A Sister's Trial

The word "conspiracy" didn't fit the slim, personable young woman who visited Rochester last week. She had come to raise funds for the defense of herself and friends indicted for conspiring in anti-war activity. Neither did her title of Sister, because she wore a smart red suit with skirt-edge above her knees, smoked cigarettes and talked about the possibility of a long jail sentence.

But Sister Elizabeth McAlister, 31-year-old member of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, art-history instructor at Marymount College in Tarrytown, stands accused in federal court of plotting to destroy heating tunnels under government offices and to kidnap presidential adviser Henry A. Kissinger. The Justice Department claims it will prove that she conspired with Father Philip Berrigan and other anti-war militants to bring the violence they deplore in Vietnam into the heart of Washington itself.

"We are neither conspirators nor bombers nor kidnapers," she says strongly. "Our anguish for the victims of the brutal war has led us to non-violent resistance but unlike our accuser, the government of the United States, we have not advocated or engaged in violence against human beings."

Sister Elizabeth's complaints about improper judicial procedures used in securing the Harrisburg indictment may read like a red-herring diversion. But free speech is endangered for all Americans if this constitutional right suffers political suppression through wiretapping, secret informers and unfounded charges. The indicted group claims that their cause has been grossly dishonored by the pre-indictment accusations of J. Edgar Hoover, by the excessive bail demanded, by the deliberate restrictions on the defendants to keep them apart and frustrate their defense efforts.

"Even in my most courageous moments I fear the trial which is coming," Sister Elizabeth admits. "But it would be most disappointing if the indictments cannot be honestly faced." She knows that the defense will be directed as much at the nation as at the jury in the Harrisburg courtroom.

burg courtroom. So she will welcome the opportunity to speak. "We have never lied about our action; we have nothing to hide. We only wonder: does justice exist for those who like us oppose the policy of war?"

—Father Richard Tormey

Letters to the Editor

Don't Forget People in War

Editor:

Anthony Lewis, in a recent editorial in the "New York Times," concluded with an observation by Jean Paul Sartre. "Evil," says Sartre, "is a product of man's ability to make abstract that which is concrete."

The people of war-ravaged Indochina must not be forgotten. Our news media will not let us forget them, it seems, because events of the war are in the news every day. But perhaps this every-day news has wrought a subtle change in our awareness of the people who suffer, every day, the bombing and napalming, the defoliation and poisoning, the deportation and resettlement, the crippling and the death.

It is easy to overlook the

recent report by the American Association for the Advancement of Science that in addition to the destruction of crops that provide food for 800,000 South Vietnamese, the residual poisons left from defoliation in rice paddies and food stuffs will cause birth defects, ecological destruction, and death for years to come.

We as a Christian community, a Catholic parish, are deeply disturbed with the continued insensitivity to the destruction of lives of all people in this war. We cry for relief for the long suffering Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians. We can insulate ourselves with our words and our abstractions, but the reality never leaves the Vietnamese, who have lived with war for more than a quarter of a century. We call on all churches to be with our brothers, to know their suffering, and to see the reality of this war in its continuation and expansion throughout all of Indochina. We call on all men

to find in their hearts the compassion and the anguish to take action against this war. We must find a way to bring an end to the killing, and not just an end to the killing of Americans.

James Markovics and Jeffrey Whittaker
The Parish Council of the Catholic Community, The University of Rochester

This statement was signed by 121 other parishioners at services on Feb. 21, 1971.

Chain Letter Warning

Editor:

During the past few months, a chain letter titled "Do You Need an Immediate \$8,000 for your Church Project or Personal Ministry?" has been widely circulated throughout the country.

The Office of the General Counsel, U.S. Postal Service, advises that chain-letter fund-raising is a violation of Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 1302 (Lottery Law) and Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 1341 (Postal Fraud Law).

As a professional association of religious orders and institutions, all of whom raise funds to support their varied missionary, educational and social welfare activities, the National Catholic Development Conference desires to promote legitimate, ethical fund-raising.

Chain letter fund-raising is initiated by individuals who have no interest in charitable works. Those who receive such letters should dispose of them and, if possible, advise the senders of their illegality.

Francis X. Doyle Jr., Executive Director, National Catholic Development Conference

Cursillos Should Welcome All

Editor

It seems to me that if the cursillo movement is pursued to its logical end, it would set up groups of "elite" Catholics concerned only with their own welfare and salvation, defeating the beautiful principles of ecumenism which Vatican II called for.

I would like to ask these earnest cursillistas, "How can a movement that demands screening of applicants bring us all together as a community of Christians?" By the very nature of your membership requirements you are a 'select' minority which is exclusive by choice and divisive by the inevitable consequence of deciding who is, or isn't, capable of withstanding your so-called intense excitement and study routine. Surely this is not in the ecumenical spirit. Do you think it's Christian?"

Ruth Andrus
Lattimore Road
Rochester

The Word for Sunday Lenten Readings Historical

By Father Albert Shamon



One of the objectives of the Lenten catechesis is to give people an understanding of the fact that salvation is something which happens in and through history. The Readings are chosen from passages which mark the great stages of this history of salvation.

The First Sunday of Lent reminds us that Israel with whom God made His covenant was originally a nothing — a wandering Aramean, a man without a country. The Second Sunday shows us God promising a land to Abraham. The Third Sunday shows God keeping His promises. He is faithful; He keeps His end of the bargain, no matter what. His people are in Egypt in deep trouble. They cry out to Him. And He responds to them in four wonderful sentences.

"I have witnessed the affliction of my people." The eyes of God are everywhere. He sees all, even though He appears not to see. He sees especially His people. He called them "my people." To the Egyptian taskmaster they were of less value than the monuments they were slaving to build to Ramses. Yet God called them His very own, dear to Him beyond all others — "my people." Still He permitted them to be enslaved. For love seeks the perfection of the beloved, not its present comfort.

"I have heard their cry." It was a cry that had been going up to God for more than 40 years. God does not always answer prayers immediately. But He answers them. "He writes straight in crooked lines," say the Portuguese. He was answering their prayers at Mt. Horeb, miles from Egypt.

"I have come down to rescue them." He comes down not to see if they deserved help. They needed help — that was enough. What a tremendous revelation! God does not leave the salvation of His people to another. "I have come down." And Moses asked, "Who are you?" And God answered, "I am who am."

If anyone asked us who we were, we could not answer, "I am." We would have to complement the verb. We would have to say, "I am a priest," "I am a father," "I am a mother," "I am a teacher," "I am a soldier." Only God can say, "I am," without any further quali-

fication. For God alone is. The rest of us become. We are always changing from birth to death, always becoming; either better or worse. But God changes not: He just is.

"I am" is the present tense of the verb "to be." The present expresses what is always true. For instance, we say that water freezes at 32°F. "I am" says, "God always exists." And because He does, He is co-existent with all time and above it.

Because He never changes, He is faithful. He keeps His promises made to trusting Abraham, easy-going Isaac and cunning Jacob. Therefore He comes down to rescue them.

But God's coming demands a response. Israel went through the waters of the Red Sea to Mt. Sinai. There, the covenant was formalized. They became in fact God's people. But like the barren fig-tree of the Gospel, they bore no fruit. So God has entered into a new covenant with us. Thus Matthew pictures Christ as a new Moses founding a new Israel through the waters of baptism.

The covenant is still the same: Jesus blesses us, but expects us to bear fruit, in return. He says, "I am faithful — be you faithful. Bear fruit, else my Father will cut you down. The time you have is the year of grace. I have won for you that you may bear fruit."

The clock of life is wound but once.

And no man has the power to tell when the hands will stop — At late or early hour. Now is the only time you have. Use it well with a will. Put no faith in the morrow, For the clock may then be still.

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