

LETTERS

Letters to the editor should be addressed to the editor, Courier-Journal, Richford Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. They should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced. Names and addresses should be included. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.

Voices Of Conscience

Editor:

When my son, Glenn, was arrested by the FBI in April for having refused alternate service as a conscientious objector the reactions were varied — ranging from strenuous opposition, to sympathy, to support. It would have been easier for some to understand if he had been indicted on a good old fashioned criminal charge.

But a stand of conscience seems to throw some people into utter turmoil. Here is a young man who was arrested and indicted, not for stealing or embezzling or killing or hurting, but for refusing to co-

operate further with a Selective Service System which is an instrument of the hell of Vietnam and of war in general. How amazing and disillusioning to find that many Christians (of all people!) cannot understand and respect the conscience of someone who says a loud "no" to man's inhumanity to man and who chooses his way of affirming the sanctity of human life.

He did not have to do what he is doing. He was entitled to and could have received a 4-D exemption as a seminary student, which would have put him outside the pale of the draft. He could have accepted alternate service. In either case his decision would have been applauded, or, at least, accepted. Instead, he has chosen a path of non-cooperation with the Se-

lective Service System which is in business to serve the military. It is not an easy way, and he knows that a prison sentence is a likely option. But the right of conscience will have its day in court. Whether it will be heard remains to be seen.

Although my wife and I have no desire to see our son go to prison, we respect him and support him, and are proud of him. We do not expect that everyone will agree with his action or choose it for themselves, even though many young men are doing so. But we do hope that sensitive Christians, and others concerned about the value of human life, will respect and support him in his right of conscience.

For Christians or the Church to reject or repudiate someone, who for conscience's sake, seeks to uphold and affirm human values would be to reject and repudiate that which is central to our faith and heritage. There are, to be sure, complex and difficult questions in all of this.

But it is neither complex nor difficult to see that a position against the hurt and hate and brutality of war is a logical extension of the gospel which presents a Jesus who is incarnated love and compassion, and caring, the Jesus who bore suffering redemptively but who refused to inflict suffering.

In an age when war may be the ultimate madness, when so many tacitly walk the same old roads, we have reason to be thankful for those voices of conscience that point to a new way.

Rev. Raymond J. Pontler,
Allwood Community Church,
Clifton, N.J.

Reprinted from the
Paterson (N.J.) Beacon.

Call It 'Wrong Side'

Editor:

Father Cuddy's column, "On The Right Side" should be re-banned, "On The Wrong Side" — but only for the Sept. 8 Courier issue. I'm sure I am included in the multitude of readers who usually enjoy his talents.

But Father Cuddy took some unusual liberties last week when he expressed humiliation and chagrin at the "inexcusable ignorance of Catholics about ordinary Catholic practices." (In reference to the Angelus question preferred him by a friend.)

In these extraordinary days of continuing change and turmoil within the Mother Church, many confused, stunned, and oft-bewildered Catholics may indeed lay aside, temporarily, some knowledge of "ordinary, Catholic practices."

But someday, God willing, when we see the beautiful words: holy, catholic, and apostolic in uppercase once again, these good Catholics will then retain such knowledge of "common, ordinary practices."

John P. Kukuvka
Orenda Drive
Rochester

A Note

Letters are the life-blood of this page. Make sure your letters are received by Thursday noon for publication in the following week's CourierJournal.

FR. ALBERT SHAMON

Word For Sunday



(We wish to remind our readers that this column is a commentary on the Sunday Readings. It should be read in the light of these Readings.)

For us over thirty, Amos was one of the radio stars of "Amos 'n Andy." It was only after these comedians had become history that I learned that the real Amos was a prophet of the eighth century before Christ. The Father Coughlin of his day, Amos cried out for social justice. He fulminated against the exploitation of the poor and denounced the complacency of the rich, concerned as they were with only food, drink, music and cosmetics.

Amos dealt with the rich as a class, but Christ in the Gospel focussed on an individual rich man. Both of them sided with the poor.

Lazarus is the only character in a parable to whom Christ gave a name. The word "Lazarus" means "God is my help." Just as Bunyan in Pilgrim's Progress named his hero Christian to show he was a Christian, so our Lord called the beggar in his parable "God is my help" to indicate Lazarus was a religious man. Christ wished to show it was not Lazarus' poverty that won him heaven, nor the rich man's riches that condemned him to hell. It was their moral stance.

Although no name is given to the rich man, tradition calls

him Dives, the Latin word for "rich man." Were we to anglicize the name, we would call Dives Mr. Moneybags. Apparently, Dives was a Sadducee who had no belief in an after life. For despite the fact he knew the teachings of Moses, he devoted himself to the enjoyment of luxurious pleasures. Dives was a bon vivant, a sybarite, a glutton. Luke said he "feasted splendidly every day." The key word is "every day." He used his wealth irresponsibly, because he did not believe in a judgment which he would have to answer for his conduct. How important it is — what we believe! Deeds follow creeds.

Dives wasn't all bad; in hell he was concerned about his five brothers. He did not kick Lazarus in passing by him. Yet Dives is the one man in the whole New Testament who is uncompromisingly condemned to hell. Why? Dives was callous, indifferent, unconcerned about the needs of another. To Dives, Lazarus was part of the landscape; it seemed perfectly natural that Lazarus should lie in misery while he wallowed in wealth. Dives went to hell, not for what he did, but for what he did not do. He saw a man in need and did nothing about it.

In the comic section of a Sunday newspaper of some time ago, there used to be a puzzle page. Once in a while a game was printed that pictured a scene, say, of a family on a picnic. There would be trees, clouds, automobiles, picnic table, Mom and Dad and the kids. Under the scene there would be a line that said, "Can you find the picture of the man hidden in this picnic scene? At first you could not see it. You would stare, turn the picture sideways, then upside down and stare and stare. Then suddenly, an edge of the cloud became an ear and a branch of the tree a smiling mouth, and, by golly, at an angle there he was — a man. Once you saw that face, the simple picnic scene was never quite the same, for you had discovered the man in it.

Faith tells us that there is a man hidden in every human scene, and his name is Jesus. Once we have met Jesus, the human condition can never again be the same for us. We see Him in others, especially in the Lazaruses of life, else we can never see Him at all.

COURIER-JOURNAL

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Volume 84 No. 50 September 15, 1971

Published weekly by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy—15¢; 1 year subscription in U.S.—\$4.00; Canada and South America, \$5.50; other foreign countries, \$9.50. Offices, Richford Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y., 14604. (716) 454-7050. Second class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

Courier-Journal



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