

More Letters to the Editor

A Sister Serves

Editor:

It is with much interest that I have been following the discussion of the past weeks on the witness dimension of religious life with its special focus on dress. It's almost like watching a tennis game and I find myself thinking, "Well, Father Widman, your serve!" I wonder if, with love (in tennis or otherwise) and respect to both these good men, I couldn't take a turn and express what I, as a junior professed Sister of Mercy, feel about this question.

When I entered the Community five years ago, I was "inspired" by a combination of things — by the habit, by the idealism that a girl of 18 is likely to have as the multipaths of life lie open before her, and by certain Sisters who had befriended me.

I did not understand the meaning of a vocation at that time and I was not responding to a call because I didn't know the Person who does the calling and I see now that that's a pretty important part of the response. Two years after my entrance, when I became obsessed with the question "What am I doing in the Convent?" enough to think that it might be better to look at it from the outside, a series of happenings were influencing my life to bring me to a personal experience of the very attractive Person that Jesus Christ is. Now, as I anticipate a permanent commitment, a response to a real call, I realize that the cost of discipleship in these days has very little to do with external, peripheral things such as dress or title or rules.

He has showed me what it means to be loved and has sent me to do likewise in His name, be it in a black, floor-length dress, jeans and a sweatshirt, or in living color on NBC.

As long as Scripture has been quoted, may I take the title of a Scripturally-based song, "They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love" and say that if people are inspired or attracted to the Life that Jesus is by any other witness than that, then I'm in the wrong business! Amen.

Sister Theresa Peters
Dewey Avenue
Rochester

Father Nolan To Be Missed

Editor:

Speaking on behalf of the people in my Assembly district and also as an Episcopalian, I want the many friends of Father William Nolan to know that he was one of the greatest contributing forces in this area to the friendly relations which exist between the many divergent interests and views of our community. His stabilizing influence outside as well as within his church is certainly one that will be difficult to replace.

Fred Warder
Geneva

Nuns' Habits Insignificant

Editor:

It is with some interest that I have followed Rev. G. Stuart Hogan's communications on nuns' apparel, interest being focused upon that precise phrase in these attacks, counterattacks and defenses in which the writer finally manages to hang himself very neatly.

May I point out to Father
Courier-Journal

Hogan that in his last missive (1/12/72) his saying the following: "the traditional religious habit has always been . . . a source of vocations among our Catholic girls who often were inspired by the habit to join the sisterhoods before they really understood the meaning of a vocation," and ask what on earth is so wonderful about droves of young girls being so romantic about a nun's habit that they would make an immature and naive commitment to a religious order.

I would also inquire whether the rattle of rosary beads and rustle of skirts was enough to sustain their initial enthusiasm or, whether, as I suspect, the nebulous status of a "uniform" soon lost its allurements as the demands of a vocation became clear. Shall we call our young people to the religious life on something as trite as its costuming or shall we encourage, even force, them to look beyond the surface at once.

The Catholic school is in danger of collapse, not because "the sacrifice implied in the vow of obedience is becoming ever more unpopular in our religious communities," but because fewer and fewer Catholic families are choosing Catholic education. Better that we ask ourselves the "why" of that rather than blaming the demise of the systems on nuns who may well be realizing that "religious development" is neither an exclusive right nor privilege of the parochial schools. We are still spiritually needy, and the concentration, the massive financial effort of sustaining a system that ministers to an ever dwindling minority of Catholic children with dubious effectiveness will forever remain an enigma to me.

Finally, I had to laugh over Father Hogan's final scriptural climax, "By their fruits shall you know them," which he undoubtedly thought settled his case once and for all, but which, obviously, only embellishes the contentions of his opponent Father Widman. For if the "fruits" of our religious are confined to their apparel or indeed, have anything whatsoever to do with it, we may as well let fall the whole tree.

Mary E. Martin
Auburn

On the School Issue

Editor:

Do we spend our tax money on new buses or do the right thing and build much needed neighborhood schools? Do children learn on a school bus or in the classroom? What happens when you bus children into a new and strange neighborhood?

Children tend to get bolder, louder and more aggressive when they feel they can get away with a little vandalism in new surroundings. There are no neighbors about that know them nor of them. So the kids get reckless. Young saplings are snapped, windows are smashed and there is a lot of mauling and pushing. Old folks get upset trying to dodge the young, hard-running blades.

There is no reason for not having more neighborhood schools.

I favor the proposed year-round school program. In this way even the congested areas can be handled in comfort.

It is not wise for the very young to stray from home. They shall have ample opportunity to travel when they are prepared for it mentally. Let's keep the young closer to home. Why take them from familiar surroundings and plant them in strange territory?

Frank T. Trezciak
1043 St. Paul St.

A Plea For Fairness

Editor:

I am the wife of an inmate in the Attica Correctional Facility and up until this time I have remained silent, but I can no longer do so.

I have read numerous articles and heard many stories on what is happening in Attica and the majority of these people wouldn't know a prison if they saw one.

It was brought to my attention last week that a reporter had written an article about the Thanksgiving dinner of the inmates. He said that the inmates had baloney sandwiches on Thanksgiving Day and this is very true, but he neglected to say that for the main meal they had a chicken dinner with all the trimmings. After the publication of this article, a group of students took up a collection to send food packages for "the poor inmates who only have baloney sandwiches for Holiday dinners". It was a very charitable thing for these students to do but the measures which inspired them were not totally correct.

There has also been much comment about the "fascist pigs" that are employed there. I have heard of the cruelty, harassment and brutality that the "pigs" give the inmates; but the strange part about it is I haven't seen or heard any "fascist pigs". I have seen men that are trying to do their jobs.

Granted, the institution itself leaves much to be desired and not all the people who are employed there should be, but let's be fair. During the insurrection, the inmate was stereotyped as a killer, something not human which was also not correct. Before you speak out against a situation, please know all the facts. Must we always use the bad example to categorize people? There is good in everyone. Just open your eyes—it's there.

Name Withheld

Mayor States Tax Position

Editor:

The supremely valuable and irreplaceable contributions of the Catholic Diocese to the strength and spiritual life of this community have been rightly and proudly underscored by the Courier-Journal over the years. Recent articles, prompted by activities of the Rochester Citizens Advisory Committee on Tax Exemptions, have emphasized the precarious financial status of many Diocesan organizations.

The overriding justification for the constitutional exemption of religious institutions from real property taxation was eloquently described by William A. Lang and Father James M. Moynihan, on behalf of the Catholic Diocese, at the Committee's hearing on December 9.

To clear up any confusion or concern about my intentions with regard to the Committee, I point out that on June 8 in announcing appointment of this citizens' group, and again in my opening remarks at the December hearing, I said that "no one seriously proposes to tax religious, hospital or educational institutions when they are providing spiritual, medical or learning services. However, every effort must be made to reach those organizations which, under the guise of being religious, hospital or educational institutions, are engaged in activities far removed from those purposes and yet still obtain a tax exemption. They should shoulder their fair share of the local tax burden."

Wednesday, January 19, 1972

It was my feeling in June—and today — that the City of Rochester can benefit substantially from a careful look at the whole picture of property tax exemptions and such matters as encouraging voluntary payments in lieu of taxes and use of tax-exempt properties for public purposes (in which regard the Diocese has been most generous).

The harsh financial crises which confront both Church and City in financing essential services are increasingly difficult to resolve. Naturally, the City of Rochester feels a great responsibility for fairly distributing the tax load to relieve the regressive and unfair property tax burden. The creation of this committee is but one means the City is utilizing in its search for equity in sharing the responsibility for financing essential public services.

The two statements made on behalf of the Catholic Diocese at the December hearing perceptively grasped the dilemma facing governments in the overall financing of public services which are essential to the survival of our city as an attractive place in which to work and live. Father Moynihan referred to "the fact that real property is rapidly losing its importance as a source of revenue both on the state and local levels as new sources are tapped." Mr. Lang asked, "What about substituting a much more equitable method of public financing for the outrageous, outmoded and unjust method of property taxation?"

With these thoughtful obser-

vations I am in complete agreement. The city administration will continue to do everything it can to secure its fair share of this nation's wealth without either violating the important principal of constitutionally-exempt religious properties or eroding our people's capacity with confiscatory property taxes.

Mayor Stephen May,
Rochester City Hall

Father Atwell Criticized

Editor:

This letter concerns Father Atwell's column in the Courier Journal (1-4-72).

If Father Atwell doesn't like or doesn't agree with the esteemed Archbishop Sheen it seems to me it would have been an act of charity to withhold his opinion from the press.

It is my humble opinion that this country is on a disaster course. Father Atwell could well have admonished us to get down on our knees and pray that the terrible crimes cease in this country.

If more of us would do this then maybe Father Atwell's high hopes for 1972 and all the years after would come to pass.

Father Atwell's attack on bishops and priests in general and in particular was so very unfair and uncalled for.

M. E. Dewey
Owen Street
Rochester

Our Parish COUNCIL by Bernard Lyons

A large neighborhood theater in Chicago has gone back to showing 16 mm. "adults only" sex movies.

The X-rated films were returned after a community organization had made an agreement with the theater owner that he give family-rated movies a trial.

The community group had picketed the theater saying that they didn't want such film fare shown in their neighborhood.

They met with the owner and he agreed to change the policy if the organization could prove that the residents would support a family-style theater.

The council polled the community and reported that 2,200 residents would favor family movies.

Also, according to the poll, 700 households said they would support a "family ticket," which would enable a family of unlimited size to see films for a month for only \$10.

The theater owner then committed himself to show movies for one month that were selected from a list of films distributed throughout the community. All were rated "G," for general audiences, or "GP," for parental discretion advised.

Midway into the month, the theater owner said, "I've been advertising the family ticket for four weeks now and only 103 people have bought one. I estimated a \$2,350 loss the first

week and I came close to losing \$3,000 the second week.

"I have to either go bankrupt or go back to adult films," he complained.

Now that the theater has gone back to X-type movies, both sides in the dispute are making charges and countercharges.

A spokesman for the council said that her group "let people know" about the family film policy, but that they did not actively campaign for the theater. The theater owner complained, "The only reason I changed to adult films was because the community wouldn't support the place."

There are errors on both sides.

Public support for explicit sexual material, in films, print or other media, is dying out, though there probably will always be a small audience for pornography. Picketing and censorship, however, seem to have an "advertising" effect.

Parish and community groups should support movie series, film festivals and movie discussion clubs. They might also arrange courses in film-making and film appreciation, as well as explore new developments in TV.

Any of these positive and realistic alternatives would be more effective than trying to change the straws of sexism being grasped by some theaters.