

Other Letters to the Editor

CEDAR Must Be Maintained

Editor:

There is a decision facing Cayuga County pastors which will have grave significance in the quality of religious education (CCD) in Cayuga County.

You have probably read in *Mary Ann Ginnery's* article in a recent *Courier-Journal* of the danger facing CEDAR and the possible cut back to one coordinator due to funding problems. The services provided by CEDAR are vital to quality CCD programs and have proved this during its two years in existence.

Speaking for our own parish, Weedsport has utilized CEDAR coordinators to prepare teachers, parents and children for First Communion and Confirmation. Sister Ellen and Miss Schmucker set up CCD programs, trained teachers, aided in lesson evaluation and the solution of specific problems and supplied ideas and speakers for a new type of high school program, the Teen Seminar. CCD teachers are aware of the practical and inspirational value of the CEDAR office in the religious education of our youth. With additional staff and increased funds, the program could be extended to adult groups.

Perhaps it is time for the Catholics of Cayuga County to start questioning priorities. What can possibly be more important than giving our young people a good Christian education and a sound set of values? We have an invaluable tool for helping us do this job — CEDAR.

Speak to your pastor and urge the expansion rather than the curtailment of this vital program. Instead of saying "We can't have this because we can't afford it," how about "We can't afford not to have this, so we'll find the money some way."

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Church Urged: Fight Smoking

Editor:

As leader of GASP (GROUP AGAINST SMOKERS' POLLUTION), I wish to comment on a situation that is becoming more and more exasperating. And that is the smoking that has invaded our churches.

What have we become that we have silently allowed the smokers to satisfy their addictions in our last sanctuary? Are we going to wait until ash trays are passed out during church services? Many church members can not attend any church gatherings because they become choked up on tobacco smoke.

It is time for the church to take a stand on this important issue, and prohibit smoking throughout all church buildings. Non-smokers who are interested in eliminating this problem call 328-4778.

Mrs. Julia Pendino
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Fr. Hohman Rebutted

Editor:

The Rochester Chapter of Catholics United for the Faith (CUF) wishes to take exception to Father Hohman's reply to the question concerning "the backing up of the Holy Father" and his encyclical, "Humanae Vitae."

(*Courier-Journal* 2-4-73) We certainly can understand his sympathy and personal feelings for those who in dignity of con-

science cannot accept it. However, we feel that he has not fully explained the problem of conscience and authority in this matter.

If we equate the value of the teachings of an encyclical on faith and morals with one's own conclusions, then nothing can stop a person from applying this same procedure to any moral question. Abortion, divorce, pornography, euthanasia, racial prejudice, social justice, etc., are the whole gamut of the Christian moral order, aside from what is explicitly revealed and declared to be so by an "ex cathedra" pronouncement will become a matter for one's own personal judgment. The end of this reasoning is clearly situation or so-called personal ethics.

This would all be very well if moral truth were just a matter of "private study" or "private interpretation" of the Word of God. But this is not so in the Catholic context of morality. We believe that Christ meant what He said when He promised Peter, "I will entrust to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatsoever you shall declare unlawful upon earth shall be held unlawful in Heaven" (Matt. 16, 19).

So if Christ gave this function of prohibiting and permitting to Peter, then there is no loss of dignity in appearing before Christ and saying that one simply obeyed Peter in the conduct of his life. Neither would it be an abdication of his personal moral responsibility of judging for himself if one were to permit his conscience to be guided by the teaching office of the Holy Father. Any sensible person should have the humility to accept the fact that he can err. If he is a Catholic, mental honesty demands that he stand ready to revise his conclusions in the presence of the extrinsic evidence of the Holy Father's decision. This is not a question of pitting his intelligence against that of the Holy Father. It is only a matter of accepting some facts:

a) that the Holy Father acted with all prudence in the quest for the right decision;

b) that he has the right to prohibit given to him by Christ;

c) that he has the assistance of the Holy Spirit on important decisions like the one of "Humanae Vitae";

d) the Second Vatican Council also assisted by the Holy Spirit declared that the teaching authority of the Holy Father must be adhered to even when not speaking "ex cathedra" (Vat. II "The Church", No. 25).

We are not asking Father Hohman to tell his readers that he agrees with the Pope in this matter if in conscience he does not but we do feel he has a duty as defined in Vatican II's "Decree on the Media of Social Communication" (Par. 14) that his column should be written "with the clear purpose of forming, supporting and advancing public opinion in accord with natural law and Catholic teachings and precepts."

Anthony Acciari, chairman
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Abortion: Plea For Reason

Editor:

The Board of the Rochester Association of Catholic Laymen shares my concern with what we consider to be an un-Christian stance taken by the institutional Church, and some Catholic groups over the issue of abortion.

I refer especially to the strident accusations of murder spoken from the pulpit, and the frequently used tactics of certain groups employing "jurid" details of some abortions to arouse among their audience a deep sense of horror and revulsion. We are appalled at this approach because it fosters a strong sense of contempt and (in the negative sense), righteous indignation among would-be Christians

towards persons who are too often caught in a complex and agonizing situation. This attitude tends to reduce a real and terrible choice to a one-dimensional act of horrendous selfishness and vicious bad faith. It makes absolute the right to life of the unborn.

To be sure, there are those of the opposite extreme who are equally simplistic in their insistence that the rights of those who would abort are absolute. They, too, are wrong in my opinion. However, let us be honest and recognize the large number of men and women of established good will who are involved in promoting the liberalized abortion movement.

Let Catholics, therefore, both individually and officially, drop the habit of judging the hearts of others. Looking on abortion with regret when it occurs, let the practice be approached in a spirit of charity towards those involved in a crisis pregnancy. This means:

- Reassertion of the teaching role of the Church in conscience formation. This should stress responsible interpersonal relationships, which should be reinforced through the lived example of Catholics with each other. This should take special note of the high degree of self-deception which constantly threatens us whenever our own pleasure or self-gratification are involved. And, very importantly, following a call to self-control, there must be straightforward awareness of the appropriate time for the exercise of birth control.

- Viewing every act of abortion with regret, but steadfastly refusing to judge anyone, resources ought to be mobilized to aid those whose crisis pregnancies cannot be endured alone. Credit should be given to those agencies already hard at work in this area — such as Birthright and the various agencies equipped to counsel and channel adoption and foster home procedures.

But more is needed. Christians must express genuine love and understanding in the true spirit of Christian sacrifice, i.e. active service. The record in the area of education has shown phenomenal results where the will to work is present (or was this success the result of a desire more for "private" than "Christian" education?) Is the will to act as a community effete in the area of human service?

And finally, for those who see the liberalized law as a threat to defenseless citizens, then lobby as citizens. Put as much pressure for repeal as is within the power of citizens of a free society. But, as Catholics, look beyond the law.

In short, let the public outcry made by Catholics, as individuals, and as an institution, be one of understanding for the mother-to-be, service for her and the unborn and, prior to the crisis itself, a renewed call to courageous self-discipline, responsible sexuality, and reasonable birth control.

Sue Carrington,
Vice President
Rochester Association
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Aid Proposal Supported

Editor:

As a person who believes in human liberation and human freedom, I wholeheartedly endorse your editorial position of offering financial aid as an alternative to abortion to women who face problem pregnancies.

The emphasis on the problem of unwanted pregnancies must now be (and always should have been) to find effective and safe contraceptive methods.

Liz Cirillo
7 Jefferson St.
Auburn, New York

Wednesday, February 28, 1973



New Officers

Recently installed officers of the Msgr. John J. Lee Division of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Ancient Order of Hibernians of Elmira are (l-r.) Mrs. Edward Hughes, recording secretary; Miss Agnes Reidy, financial secretary; Mrs. James Gallagher, president; Mrs. Theodore Marciniak, treasurer, and Mrs. Harry Kahler, vice president.

Priest Tells Masons

Parochial Schools Slow Exodus to Suburbs

The parochial schools of Rochester are a "holding point" for the city, slowing the movement of people to the suburbs, Father Charles Bennett told a group of Masons last week.

Availing himself of an unusual forum for the presentation of the school problem, Father Bennett spoke on the role of the church in the changing city.

He addressed Seneca Lodge 198 in the Masonic Temple, the first priest ever to do so.

Father Bennett is pastor of St. Anthony's on Lorimer Street and administrator of nearby St. Patrick's. He told the *Courier-Journal* he had talked about the Old World cultures that are the core of many city parishes, and about the priest's function in preserving these cultures and using them "to keep the people close to the church."

He said, "I spoke definitely of the financial difficulties, the burden, of maintaining a school that has a debt."

"The question arose, is the school necessary for your ministry? I said it was most necessary under given conditions, to spread the Gospel and give the children the education they need, and I called the school a holding point for its neighborhood, and thus for the city."

"If the school is lost, the ethnic community breaks up, for people will move to the suburbs, as many as can afford to do so, and the city will be the loser."

Father Bennett urged the logic of Clergymen's taking part in "grass-roots" organizations, the neighborhood associations where community planning begins.

"Community planning gives people confidence," he said.

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