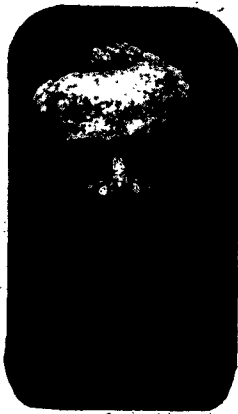


Ash Wednesday — A Call to Conversion —

There are some very wise words recorded in the BOOK of ECCLESIASTES, rendered popular through the contemporary ballad, "Turn, Turn, Turn." It seems especially appropriate today, as the Lenten season begins, to recall these words for you. They bear a familiar ring:



For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born,
a time to die;
a time to weep,

and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn,
and a time to dance . . .

Today, Ash Wednesday, significantly points to a special seasonal time in the life of the Church. For the People of God, it is a time of reflection and prayer, rich in meaningful symbolism, recalling the purpose of our earthly life and the promise of salvation. The ashes in today's liturgy remind us of the insignificance of dust and the humble reality of everyday life. At the same time, the symbolic use of the ashes causes us to reflect thoughtfully upon the challenge to the Christian growth potentially hidden within the many moments of our simple daily routines.

Lent is a time of 'spiritual housekeeping', calling Christians to serious meditation and

The Slot Man

A Suggestion for World War Three

By Carmen Viglucci

Cancer is no bigot. It chooses its victims without regard to race, creed or nationality. In its various forms it strikes all age groups. In these days of divisiveness, it could be a grim paradox that this wretched disease could serve as a catalyst to unity.



There is no reason why all the people of the nation, all the peoples of the world, should not join together and in one mighty universal effort rip away the secrecy surrounding this killer.

Anyone who has had cancer (and there are 1.5 million Americans alive today who have been cured) or who knows anyone who has had cancer is aware of the particular dread encompassing it. It is probably fair to say that fear of this disease lurks in the back parts of all our minds at all times.

This fear is legitimate; cancer is widespread and is listed by the American Can-

cer Society as the No. 2 killer disease in the United States.

self-evaluation with the intention of embracing the Gospel message with greater fidelity. "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel." (Mark 1:15) This Gospel mandate is a challenging invitation stated with unrestrained candor. Throughout the New Testament the central message of Jesus' preaching was simply this: METANOIA, have a change of heart. Metanoia is a religious term, meaning conversion to God based on a change of heart that is decisive.

It is the strength of commitment to Gospel values, characterized by an undivided sense of purpose, that enables a person to translate Christian ideals into visible Christian actions. The ability to convert pious platitudes into Christian witness rests in large part upon our willingness to listen prayerfully to the demands the Gospel makes upon us within the daily routine of life.

For our daily living the Gospel invites us to deepen our sense of faith in order to acknowledge and to accept a Father's living presence in our daily situations, as an opportunity to grow graciously. The Gospel challenges us to a renewed spirit of courage, to continue to resist and overcome the petty selfishness that unwittingly but sometimes stealthily assumes more prominence than we desire. The Gospel asks that we choose those values which ultimately free us from the biases and prejudices that narrow the breadth of our vision and the horizons of Christian hope.

Conversion to Gospel values is not easily won. Conversion of heart is earned through the day by day, sometimes almost imperceptible, 'little' struggles that annoy and burden us. Through the presence of God's grace and our own persistent efforts we are able to change our attitude towards our neighbors and the material goods of this world, so that we may finally achieve that change of heart of which the Gospel speaks.

Over a long period of time, the assimilation and integration of positive Christian values into our daily existence does radically change the shape and direction of our lives. Personal integrity and simplicity of life-style are clearly demonstrated as characteristics of the adult Christian.

Lent is that special time in the Church's year to pause and carefully consider our faithfulness to the Gospel. Though Lent has undergone many changes in its prescribed observances, the Church has never lost sight of the purpose of this penitential season, and has always concentrated upon the value of repentance for purity of heart. While Church laws imposing some external religious practices have been made less stringent, the value of the traditional trilogy of Lenten works (prayer, fasting and almsgiving) has not been lessened. The purpose and value of Lent and Lenten practices should be incorporated into Christian life as part of its interior strength and richness.

Yet there is hope. In the early 1900s few cancer patients had any choice of cure. In the late 1930s fewer than one in five was saved. Ten years later one in four was saved but from 1956 one in three was saved.

These percentages can be bettered and the good news is that such eventuality is squarely in our hands — each of us.

The key is early detection. I know we've all heard it a thousand times but cancer, caught early enough, is curable. The odd fact is that many of us simply do not go through the motions of a yearly checkup.

The American Cancer Society points out that 111,000 cancer patients will probably die this year who might have been saved by earlier and better treatment.

In this respect, be aware of cancer's seven warning signals: change in bowel or bladder habits; a sore that does not heal; unusual bleeding or discharge; thickening or lump in breast or elsewhere; indigestion or difficulty in swallowing; obvious change

in wart or mole; nagging cough or hoarseness.

Better treatment can come about through research. Many people have been working indefatigably for years in seeking the root causes of this disease. Progress has been made, still the cause eludes detection.

The national administration has moved to join the struggle through governmental funding. This is a laudable move. I, for one, would hope now that the Indochina war is over, that the nation mobilize its amazing resources — governmental and industrial — into an all-out effort to win the war against cancer.

Tell your government, through your representative, that you are thankful for the initial move it took against cancer. Then tell them you'd like to see it expanded.

In fact all the nations of the world could seize upon this unlikely circumstance to find common ground.

Let's start World War III — the human race vs. cancer.

Editorial

Thwarting the Pro-Abortion Mentality

The Courier-Journal has been running a series of editorial challenges to area legislators to propose state programs to help women with problem pregnancies to reject abortion and choose life.

This newspaper, of course, is not alone in this endeavor. Various right to life groups, Birthright-type agencies, and legislators themselves are in favor of such programs.

Our response from legislators has indicated that, at least in some cases, the word "challenge" may be too strong for some already have such proposals in the planning stages. (See Letters to the Editor).

We have suggested legislation in the area of state aid to those families who adopt mentally or physically deficient children and also mandatory rubella vaccination for all women of child-bearing

age. Rubella is a leading cause of birth defects in the United States.

There are other areas of concern, such as insurance programs, job-training, day-care centers, removal from our minds and hearts of any stigma attached to children born out of wedlock.

One of the most active pro-life groups in the state is Women for the Unborn in Merrick. That organization suggests that the state create "centers to make easily accessible to the woman who wishes to continue her pregnancy the necessary medical services and psychological counseling" and further proposes that the state pursue an advertising campaign giving the "name and address of a center where the woman who wishes to continue her pregnancy can receive medical services and counseling in support of her decision to give birth."

Ellen McCormack, Women for the Unborn's columnist, says that society not only makes it easy for a woman to have an abortion, but actually undermines her motivation to choose life. "Abortion is easily available but the alternatives are often not so easily available," she points out.

In addition to a constitutional amendment to erase the recent Supreme Court decision, these are just some plans for action for pro-lifers. One assemblyman also says that though restoration of the anti-abortion state law may not be possible, anti-abortionists should be on guard against further erosion of even our present liberal law, to the point where there would be no limits at all.

All of which underlines the fact that there is no rest ahead for pro-lifers. Nor for pro-abortionists.