

**Editorial**

# Youth and Suicide

Studies have shown that suicide rates among our young people have risen dramatically and are still on the ascent. A New York Times report revealed that researchers estimate that between 70,000 and 80,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 will attempt suicide within the next year and that some 3,500 will succeed.

In Los Angeles County suicides among youth have more than doubled in the last 10 years.

The question, of course, is why. No sure answers appear. One mental health expert feels that "many young people who commit suicide have never had one person they can trust and admire."

Another seems to imply that many people have too much too soon — and have learned distrust at an early age.

Could be that older generations have not been giving youngsters much to emulate. Public lies, so much in the news these days, are one thing; more serious is the willingness of many to accept them as part of our social fabric — "That's the way things are done."

As heinous as that attitude may be there are other accepted norms that breed distrust. They are obvious — the idolization of material things, the business-as-usual attitude in the face of moral tragedies such as the Indochina War, all things becoming acceptable in the drive for wealth and power. These facts are so obvious that decrying them becomes platitudinous. And it is easier to bemoan the situation than to come up with constructive ideas to improve it.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, however in his series on Youth and the Church, has offered some realistic starting points for remedying the situation, at least among Catholics.

"We must show young people a living Church that is a sign of hope — a community of faith, witness and service, a community that yearns to share with them and support them for this life and the life to come. While not making less of the Church's message of truth and worship, we should be especially aware of the Church's vocation as servant ministering to the moral and spiritual needs of man, particularly the poor, the ignorant and the oppressed. This aspect of the Church's ministry seems particularly attuned to orientations within today's youth communities."

The "we" the Bishop refers to is not the "we" of the "we and they" groups so famous among sociologists but the "we" of the Church. He explains: "The Church is where we are, what we are. We are the Church."

He urges greater reflection and more thorough planning in parish, campus and diocesan youth programs. His series should be must reading for all concerned with this problem — and that all includes all of us.

The usual answer offered is better communications but that is a nebulous idea and perhaps even faulty in suggesting the "we and they" concept. The best communications is the pooling of resources, ideas, and efforts among all age groups. The aim would not be to bridge the generation gap but to make it obsolete.

Such positive and constructive efforts must be undertaken to destroy distrust among our youth. They must be undertaken to bring youth into the Church as fully involved and respected operatives. They must be undertaken to rid older people of self-righteousness that seems to be playing a part in literally driving our youngsters to suicide.

## The Beginning

It would have to be a Jesuit.

Father Luis Schokel, SJ, offered some advice to those who would like to have a better knowledge of the Bible.

"Start reading it," is his advice.

# Opinion

## Questions

### 'Double Standard'

Editor:

I would like to comment on Rev. G. Stuart Hogan's letter (Courier-Journal 7/11/73) response to Ellen Zazycki's letter (6/27/73).

Since I am a Catholic and the mother of three children that I wanted, I felt the responsibility of looking into religious theology on the abortion issue. Much to my surprise, I found that there is a wide range of theological opinion as to when a soul enters a fetus. Dr. Elizabeth Fariens, a Roman Catholic theologian, and Father Robert Drinan, SJ, dean of the Boston College Law School, are but two distinguished Catholics who support non-law concerning abortion. The Church's current stand on abortion only dates back to the early 19th Century. Also, the matter of women having souls was debated in the early days of the "Church." Interesting!

Regarding legislation, I find it incomprehensible to understand Senator Buckley's position on this while at the same time he voted against stopping the bombing in Cambodia.

Since society, including clergymen, has contributed greatly to the "double standard" of morality, and since few men, if any, have ever taken any responsibility for birth control or shared in the labors of child care, I would suggest that you examine your own conscience, and stop playing God.

Although I personally feel that I wouldn't have an abortion, I must be sensitive to women who are not as capable and fortunate as I am. Therefore, as a caring human being and Christian, I must in good conscience support a woman's personal decision of moral judgment and responsibility. Having a child must be a free choice with love and commitment and joy, not a punishment.

Hopefully, when all men take their share of responsibility, abortion won't be necessary and we will be able to look back on this as a sad but necessary thing of the past.

Before judging a woman's place a person should continually seek out knowledge and truth. A good place to start would be to read the following books: Women and Jesus, by Alicia Craig Faxon; Woman in a Man's Church, by Arlene Swidler.

Jesus was a feminist! (The dictionary defines a feminist as one who advocates the political, social and economic equality of women.) As Christians, shouldn't we all be?

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"LISTEN, YOU WERE THE ONE WHO WANTED TO LET HIM CHOOSE HIS OWN RELIGION WHEN HE WAS OLD ENOUGH!"

I would also like to mention that I am a member of St. Joan's International Alliance (U.S. Section) which is an organization of Catholics devoted to securing legal and de facto equality between women and men on all levels. As St. Paul states in Gal. 3:28. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is neither male nor female; you are all one in Christ Jesus.

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## Analysis Questioned

Editor:

The article "Charismatics: Too 'Spiritual'?" deeply troubled me. Can we ever be too spiritual? Pope John prayed for a new Pentecost and now that our precious Lord is answering that prayer, now that we are truly seeing the Spirit work in a mighty way, are we going to stifle this renewal which we need so badly by a fear of being too spiritual?

I am sure that after the first Christians received the fullness of the Spirit and were filled with a strong love for Jesus they too were accused of being too spiritual but as Jesus said, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and render to God what is God's." We are God's children and He should come first — involvement on the social and parish level will follow as the Spirit leads.

I have not taken any surveys but I suggest that those who think of the Pentecostal Movement as an isolating experience should take a closer look at those in their parish who are Charismatic and I am sure it will be evident that many of them are involved in the Parish — not only in a social sense since walking in the fullness of the Spirit is a way of life no matter what one is doing and an awareness of Jesus' love enters into every work. This love will surely die if it is kept inside; it is only through sharing that those walking in the Spirit grow.

Your article on Teen Challenge in the same issue is a good example of how one who walks in the fullness of the Spirit must share the love and power. Rev. Wilkerson and the many people who work on Teen Challenge all over the country are reaching out to their fellow man through the power of the Spirit.

Let us be open to the workings of the Holy Spirit and not be afraid of criticism for being too spiritual in today's materialistic and scientific world. With today's cries for social injustice let us look to the Giver of Life, the Great Social Worker, and let us receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit not to become isolated but

to receive a greater love for Jesus and through Him a greater love for our fellow man.

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## Would Turn Flag Upside Down

Editor:

I would like to suggest that every Catholic organization in the diocese — church, school, convent, etc. — fly the United States flag upside down until decent people have purged this country of its current barbarism.

The United States has divorced itself from the Judeo-Christian tradition of respect for individual lives by the Supreme Court's decision in favor of murdering unborn children. This is nothing but a descent to barbarism.

This country has divorced itself from its original concern for religious values and freedom by totally perverting the First Amendment to the Constitution. Our founding fathers deemed that religious education was essential for the well-being of the country; now only atheistic schools are considered "American."

Flying the flag upside down is a signal of distress. Such is the present situation, with the highest court allowing funds for only those schools that are devoted to the religion of secularism, and sanctioning deliberate killing for the sake of convenience.

The situation amounts to a war. On the one side are those, mainly Catholics, who respect every human life (a cripple can be a saint), who look to God as our Creator and ultimate purpose, and who are concerned with justice and freedom. This side is losing. On the other side are the destroyers of civility, humanity, and freedom.

We need to confront this barbarism with actions, and we need to adopt a concrete distress signal. No symbol could be more appropriate than turning the flag upside down — until this country is turned upside down from its present depravity to a concern for human life and justice.

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Opinions to the editor should be addressed: Letter 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.