

Editorial

In Poor Taste

After the recent Supreme Court decision striking down aid to nonpublic schools, someone asked Glenn L. Archer, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, about future aspects of the dispute.

According to Religious News Service, he said that those in favor of aid would persist, adding, "As we learned from bitter experience, there is no limit to clerical ingenuity."

Such a remark is not befitting even someone basking in the warm flush of a Supreme Court victory. The drive for nonpublic school aid has not been an instance of "clerical ingenuity" as much as it has been the overt, straightforward, and tedious work of many groups, mostly composed of and led by laymen.

True, clerics, and let's call them priests, because that's what Mr. Archer meant, have been involved because parochial schools are their affair. In addition, priests, too, are citizens and, like all Americans, believe in the separation of Church and State. Mr. Archer must be aware of this.

He should also note that the New York State Legislature, where not one priest has ever sat in membership, has consistently worked for aid to nonpublic schools. Even Gov. Rockefeller, who has not coddled Catholics in other spheres, has been a strong advocate for such aid.

Instead of casting stones at "clerics," Mr. Archer had best worry about the ingenuity of laymen, both in and out of public office, who see such aid as a necessity not only for the schools but for the American system.

Faulty Ultimatum

In case anyone has not noticed, Census Bureau figures have dramatically underlined the fact that life down on the reservation comes pitifully short of reasonable existence in this country.

The figures, just released, show that American Indians constitute the poorest minority in this, their homeland. The median income for Indian families was \$5,832 while the national median was \$9,590, according to statistics based on the 1970 census.

And when it comes to reservation living, the figures are even more disheartening. For instance, the median income for families on the Papago reservation in Arizona was \$2,500. Indian families living in cities fare a bit better (\$3,389 in Tucson) and this has led some to campaign to have Indians leave the reservations.

Joe Muskrat, a regional director of the Civil Rights Commission, objects to this line of reasoning. He sees it as an "assimilate or starve" ultimatum.

"The traditional approach to the American Indian has been to seek his assimilation into the larger society, an attitude based on feeling of cultural superiority," Muskrat says.

We agree. We think it is the responsibility of the country, and by that we mean all Americans, to maintain the singular and proud heritage of the Indian, doing so without damaging his dignity and doing it his way. If Indian families prefer to live on reservations, then we must see to it that life has meaning for them there, according to their needs and aspirations.

And if Indians prefer to move into cosmopolitan areas, training and opportunities, in tune with their wishes, should be instituted to help bring their economic standing into line with the rest of the nation.

Difficult, yes. But the foundation should be implanted in the attitude that whatever wealth and opportunity this country has rightfully belongs to the first Americans. This is not to imply that other Americans, particularly minority groups, don't also have legitimate claim to the national bounty, but the time is long past when we can afford to disregard the plight of the Indian because his heritage may be different from the pilgrim majority.

Opinion

Comments On Charismatics

Editor:

Your article on the Charismatic Renewal (Courier-Journal 7/11/73) will be read with great interest by the people of the diocese, especially those of us who are Catholic charismatics. The article covered the broad spectrum of the Charismatic Renewal among several Christian Churches. I would like to comment on the article as it pertains to Catholics within the renewal.

Three areas of uncertainty were mentioned: "the social dimensions of the Gospels, the problem of inter-communion and the 'anti' established Church image that some churchmen, including Pope Paul, ascribe to some neo-Pentecostal groups."

Must Catholic charismatics as a community become involved in social action at this time? The core group of the St. Stephen's Charismatic Community (Geneva) weighed this question a year ago and decided that the primary purpose of the Community, at least at this time, was the spiritual renewal of its members. The members, on an individual basis, are very active in parish and civic activities and should continue this work.

The Vatican regulations on inter-communion were mailed to all Catholic charismatic communities throughout the country several months ago by the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Communications Center at Notre Dame University. Although we are saddened that our non-Catholic brethren can not share the Eucharist with us at our monthly liturgy, we bow to the authority of the Church in this matter.

The "anti" established Church image of some neo-Pentecostal groups of which Pope Paul spoke a few weeks ago was rather puzzling to many of us. Having never held such feelings ourselves nor so much as read about such a problem among American Catholic Charismatics, the Pope's comments came as a surprise to us.

Those of us who attended the 1973 International Conference on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Notre Dame University in June were struck by the realization that the Charismatic Renewal is at the very heart of the Church. Catholic charismatics are being constantly drawn to a deeper love of the Church and its sacramental life under the authority of the hierarchy.

The problem that exists is one of obtaining greater support from bishops and priests to provide the pastoral and theological guidance which Catholic charismatics are seeking from the Church. Our core group recently voted unanimously to suggest to

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Bishop Hogan that a priest be appointed to act as liaison between his office and the charismatic prayer groups. The Bishop's positive response was most gratifying.

If the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in America ever goes astray, it could well be due to the aloofness of too many bishops and priests.

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Article Criticized

Editor:

Referring to the Courier-Journal "news analysis" on the Charismatics (7/11/73), let me begin by saying that the article is definitely slanted to give a completely false picture of people engaged in the Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church. The very illustration used was meant to give your readers the impression that the movement is a "hippy" movement, a "Jesus-freak" movement. Nothing could be further from the truth. Pentecostal Catholics are for the most part clean-cut, intelligent and proper. Most have an educational background that is above average for any other such groups.

Pentecostal Catholics are by and large absolutely faithful to the Church and its teaching authority. They have a respect for its priests and bishops that no other group can surpass. If the Pentecostal Movement has caused "disturbance" and "division" in the churches, as is alleged in the article, one need only point to Jesus Who also caused "disturbance" and "division" in the establishment of His day.

The very fact that "inter-communion" is a problem stems from the desire of pentecostal Catholics to follow minutely the regulations of the Church in this matter, thus outshining many other organizations and individual priests who couldn't care less whether or not there is inter-communion, or even whether the Church should be obeyed in such basics as celebrating Mass as the Church regulates it.

Since when does social action embrace only such things as the interracial movement, voter registration, farm worker movement, peace demonstrations and civil rights action? If this is all that social action is all about, then we surely need a new definition for a life of complete and total commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. Has Father Fichter ever heard of the Legion of Mary and its commitment; or FISH and its commitment; or Operation Lonely and similar endeavors which seek out the lonely, the aged and the sick in hospitals and nursing homes? Many pentecostals are actively engaged in these pursuits.

I daresay, from my own experience and from what I have seen from my own vantage point as leader of a large prayer group for almost four years, Catholics who become pentecostal become better Catholics than ever before, with a deep love for the Eucharist, and for Scripture, and obedience to the teaching authority of the Church. As a matter of fact, I daresay that the response of pentecostal Catholics to whatever is truly Catholic is phenomenal. Let's not point the finger at the exception to this general rule, for then we too can point the finger at any of the social action causes mentioned in the article and many more besides. Every cause picks up some fringe people. Pentecostalism does, social action in any of its forms does, even the Catholic Church does.

Pentecostal Catholics sincerely want to have priests and bishops in the movement to guide and counsel them. We pray for that each day. And it will surely come. Prayer never goes unanswered.

Praise the Lord Jesus!!!

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Explaining Charismatics

Editor:

On July 11, 1973, the Courier-Journal printed an article entitled "Charismatics: Too Spiritual?" To enhance its appeal, it appeared on a full page in a black border with the logo "Criticism Mounts."

In this strange piece of journalism, three issues were raised as criticism of Charismatic Christians. The unsigned article stated that we who have experienced the infilling of the Holy Spirit, do not relate "to the social dimensions of the Gospels." It implies that inter-communion is a major problem in Charismatic gatherings. Finally, the issue of loyalty to the Church is raised.

It is grossly unfair to measure any group of Christians by the rubber yardstick of some social activists. The enthusiasm of some of them is so great for their cause, that they are willing to abandon their jobs, ignore their families, and forgo their vocations. The first commandment of Our Lord, to love God, seems forgotten. The second commandment, to love our neighbor as ourselves, or more to the point, to love others as He loves us, should never be ignored by Christians; but first, and foremost, should be the praise of God.

How many Sunday Christians, particularly in a Catholic Church, know their neighbor in the pew next to them or care what his needs are?

Many of us in truly active parishes are delighted when 10 per cent of the families participate in any parish related activity. Of these, if one per cent are involved in "social action," it is unusual. Yet the author, quoting Father Joseph Fichter, alleges that Charismatic Christians fail in this regard with an average 15 per cent participation in such laudable activities. No person who has made a commitment to Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit can fail to love his fellow man as the Lord commanded. Although we feel compassion for all the less fortunate, some of us believe that we should start with family, friends, neighbors, and fellow parishioners before we tackle the problems of the city, country, and the world. This approach is a question of priority, not a pattern for neglect.

Inter-communion is only an issue when we as Catholics make it so. This is true at a Charismatic Christian meeting or at any ecumenical gathering. If a fellow Christian shares in the Body and Blood of Our Lord with faith and reverence, and understands and accepts our belief in the Real Presence, what right do I or anyone else have to judge or challenge him?

We recognize the Catholic Church as the guardian of our faith and the custodian of Christ's teaching. We also recognize that it has been and still is an institution that has some self-appointed judges in clerical garb. We are not anti-establishment; we love, respect, and serve our church in every way we can. But, I for one am disturbed and find it difficult to show affection to those who display a lack of charity in their words and actions toward us.

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