

More Opinions

Parents First As Teachers

Editor:

I wish to add my support to the many who have written to express their disappointment with Bishop Hogan's stand in the Pastoral Letter regarding the reception of the Sacrament of Penance prior to reception of First Holy Communion.

I am the mother of six children. Three of these dear little ones received the Sacrament of Penance first. They appear to have the proper attitude toward the Sacrament and its real meaning. The next two children were in the experimental game of "change." In good conscience, we as their parents chose for them not to participate. This is the right of every parent.

I do agree that there should be a distinction between these two Sacraments. For after all, they do serve separate purposes. However, at age seven, a child has a definite need to be able to say "I'm sorry," whether it be to a parent, playmate or teacher, and certainly to Almighty God. This happens to be done most effectively in a physical manner and in this case through the Sacrament of Penance via the physical means of the confessional. The common argument that a child has not the ability to commit serious sin at seven is not really relevant. First of all only God can in the final analysis make that decision. We are, however, obliged to prepare a child to make himself aware of the difference. If we deprive a child of going to God at age seven and physically being able to say "I'm sorry" via the confessional, then how can we expect him to accept this practice at a later age or for a serious offense? I rather feel that in most cases the opportunity has passed. Anyone who has received forgiveness in the physical practice of confession, knows that one feels a great satisfaction and relief for having verbally told God "I'M SORRY." I think we are letting our little ones down. The emphasis today is teaching God's love and goodness. We are not perfect and we do make mistakes, so let's say I'm sorry even at seven years.

Anyone raising a family knows that a child at this age has the ability to expand his conscience in this direction of humbling himself before God!

In the Come to the Father series of religious instruction the program very emphatically states that the parents are the first word and authority in teaching the child in moral growth and an awareness of his duties to God. Therefore, if a parent feels that this is his preference, to follow the guidelines set down by the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church, he merely states this preference to his parish priest and he must comply with the desires of the parents regarding the reception of this Sacrament.

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Campers Hold Retreats

Editor:

Families from Newark and Webster experienced a relaxing yet spiritually enlightening weekend at Skybrook Campgrounds in Dansville on Sept. 14, 14 and 16.

Under the direction of Father Robert Hammond, assistant

pastor of St. Michael's Church in Newark, Father George Wiant of the Office of Human Development in the rural reaches of the diocese, and a staff of young people from Teen Seminar, these families were led in discussion both during the day and in the evening around the campfire. Masses were celebrated Friday and Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

Plans are in the making for another renewal weekend in the Spring. All camping families in the diocese are welcome to participate. These weekends are similar to Family Camp at Stella Maris, except that we use our own camping gear — tents, campers or trailers — and cook our own meals. It is a very inexpensive weekend, but rich in value. We are sure that there are many camping families in the diocese that are looking for such an experience.

For further information, please contact Bill and Barb Peck, 315 Charlotte St., Newark, N.Y. 14513, telephone 315/331-2383 or Bob and Bobbie Weichbrodt, 428 Grace Ave., Newark, N.Y. 14513; telephone 315/331-6967.

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Takes Issue With Column

Editor:

An anonymous writer to Father Hohman's column (9/19) states, "Someone must do the suffering to atone for this sinful world (as so many saints have done). Someone must fast to atone for a gluttonous portion of this planet. This is the tragedy. Christ himself proved it on the cross." This is the Catholic doctrine that sin must be atoned for; that suffering, when endured for supernatural motives, has value in the sight of God. It is the price by which we have been redeemed. It is also the basic doctrine of Purgatory; that atonement must be made for sin. It is very heartening to see that so many of our Catholic laity, trained under the old methods, do have such a firm understanding of our faith.

In spite of the fact that the writer notes that "Christ himself proved that on the cross," Father Hohman in his reply seems to deny that atonement is a "price" that is paid whereby the infinite justice of God receives compensation for the injustice done to the Divine Majesty through sin. Christ, being divine, could make full atonement, that is, could fully pay the debt of man's sins. We, by joining our sufferings and mortifications to the sufferings of Christ, can make vicarious atonement for the sins of humanity.

Father Hohman writes: "Suffering for its own sake is evil. It is only good when it opens the door to a new life, a resurrection. If someone fasts to atone for the gluttonous portion of the planet he makes atonement in the sense that he becomes more fully human, by dying to his animal appetite. He replaces a lower form of life with a higher one." (Emphasis ours). It is hard to understand these statements of Father Hohman since Christ certainly did not become more fully human by dying on the cross or by dying to his animal appetites. Rather, he balanced the scales of Divine Justice by paying a "price" the penalty which sinful man had incurred because of his sins.

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Things Looking Up For the Seminaries

By CHARLES RANDISI

The tide has finally turned, Father Gerald Connor hopes.

After years of steadily declining numbers of men entering seminaries in Rochester and around the nation, the figures (and maybe the trends) are up.

Father Connor, diocesan director of vocations, and rector of Becket Hall, reports that 19 new men have entered Becket and St. Bernard's Seminary this school year.

"This is the first time at Becket that we have had more men in September than we had in June," Father Connor says. Becket Hall, at 75 Fairport Rd. in East Rochester, has been open as a college seminary since 1965, and now has an enrollment of 38.

Father Connor attributes the rise to the more serious atmosphere on college campuses lately. "Over the past few years we had Kent State, teach-ins, and unrest. Now the college campus scene is quiet, more conservative."

The "Jesus Movement" is a factor, he says, only in that it shows "a lot more people turning to God."

Many more men with serious inquiries about seminary life have come to Father Connor lately, he says. One of the key causes of greater local interest in the priesthood has been Teen Seminar, run by Father Robert Hammond.

"Five of the new men that came here this year did so because of Teen Seminar," he says. "Their major interest in the priesthood began after they went to a seminar."

Three of the new Becket Hallers come from St. Leo's parish, Hilton. Father Connor praises the pastor, Father Chester Kloczek, for his ability to show "the positive side of being a priest."

Though the quantity of seminarians is up, Father Connor feels that quality is more important. "When they come to be interviewed," he says, "I tell them I don't work on a commission. I never tell a kid that he should or shouldn't come. That decision is his. It's my job to challenge him, to stretch out his mind and feel him out."

Once a prospective student is accepted, and begins his training, the emphasis on quality continues. "Sure, a seminary is supposed to train priests, but that's only part of it," he says. "It's the student's development as a person. How he acts and thinks is constantly being challenged, as well as his development spiritually."

"The seminary is a time of probation for both the student and the diocese," he continued. "Does this diocese want to buy this man, and does this man want to buy this diocese?"



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