

Editorial

Page One Story

Problems in getting out a newspaper are generally quite boring to outsiders. Still we think a dilemma we faced with our Dec. 5 Page One is worth sharing with our readers.

We had decided to run the introduction on the U.S. Bishop's pastoral letter on Mary and had selected art work of Our Lady, in blue, naturally, to accompany it. It all made for an attractive and informative Page One.

Then came notice from the police that they needed our help in finding a suspect in the slaying of Michelle Maenza. It would be of assistance if we would use the police sketch of the suspect. We knew Page One was the only place for proper exposure of the sketch.

To some it may be unseemly to have a murder suspect's likeness sharing a page with the Blessed Mother. We hope no one was offended. We feel that Mary, the spiritual mother of us all, would have approved of this course in view of the nature of this heart-rending crime.

Strange Role For Priest

At this particular time when the nation needs the moral persuasion of religion more than ever, it is sad to have a priest-turned-politician trying to divert attention from the Watergate crimes.

Yet that is exactly what Father John McLaughlin, SJ, who serves as a special assistant to the President, attempted to do last week when he declared that for churchmen to point accusing fingers at the administration is for the pot to call the kettle black.

"The churches have their own histories of irregularities, disorders, scandals," he said, according to Religious News Service.

"And my feeling is that the senior officials in the White House and others in the executive branch are no better or no worse, no more sinful or less sinful, no more sullied or unsullied morally, ethically, or spiritually than the people in all other occupations — including the clergy."

He further likened the Watergate situation to the "peccadilloes of novice nuns."

It is strange reasoning indeed for anyone to claim that we the American people (and lay aside any religious connections) have no right to criticize what has probably been the most corrupt government in our country's history.

When Father McLaughlin tries to blackmail religious leaders into silence in the face of moral turpitude on the part of their government he adopts the same mentality that says Catholics should not speak on up on national moral issues because they will then create divisiveness. This is the same lack of vision that tries to weaken the press rather than strengthen it.

And when he equates, for instance, government-ordered burglaries and the establishment of elite and secret police forces with the trivial sins of novice nuns he not only betrays a queer moral blindness but also uses the occasion to take a petty swipe at an honorable vocation — the Sisterhood.

True there may be some element of a witch-hunt involved in Watergate right now but that is mainly because those who know all the facts have for some still unknown reason refused to reveal them.

There have been enough guilty pleas, enough indictments, and enough still unanswered questions to make it obvious that there is more to the whole mess than we have been told. The administration, and Father McLaughlin himself is part and parcel of it, must stop impeding the investigation and must stop creating diversionary tactics. They must simply tell the whole truth. When the kettle is indeed black, we cannot pretend it is white or even gray.

Until Father McLaughlin and his political bosses do just that the American must not be cowed or tricked into not asking questions and demanding answers.

Silence in the face of such governmental tactics would be immoral in itself.

Opinion

'Catholics' May Hold a Clue

Editor:

After having read the stark statistics of older Catholics who no longer attend Mass, one wonders if one reason may not have been stated in the TV presentation, Catholics.

The people didn't like the new English Mass so they wouldn't go. When they were permitted the traditional Latin Mass, they returned. This is wrong, of course, since the Mass is the Mass.

However, it is painful and confusing for older people to be confronted with a complete reversal of attitude towards what they had learned, tried to live, and teach their children in their efforts to deserve the name Catholic.

After presenting them with seemingly endless changes in the liturgy, variations from Mass to Mass, and parish to parish, is it a surprise there is a disruption in their spirituality? Other surface appearances of inconsistency (i.e. leaders questioning papal authority, their children being counseled to practice birth control, et al) can't help but reinforce the thought that "Yesterday's orthodoxy may be today's heresy."

At present most liturgical movements are aimed at those who are comfortable with the modernization of the Mass. Many parishes have scheduled folk Masses on a weekly basis to fulfill the Sunday obligation.

It would seem there is no room for the more traditional minded. (Even if you didn't understand the Latin Mass, you knew it was, like God, unchangeable! — all over the world. A source of peace, strength, and world-wide communion.)

Let's hope that each parish will try to include the traditional minded (younger to older) in the overall Sunday liturgy.

Mrs. Shirley F. Schuhart
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Blessed Are The Needy

Editor:

I would like to express my gratitude to the people of the Courier's Christmas list and to the many others who live in material need.

Like the children of Bethlehem, you have more to give than the average person. The fewer possessions that grip you, the

COURIER-JOURNAL

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan
President

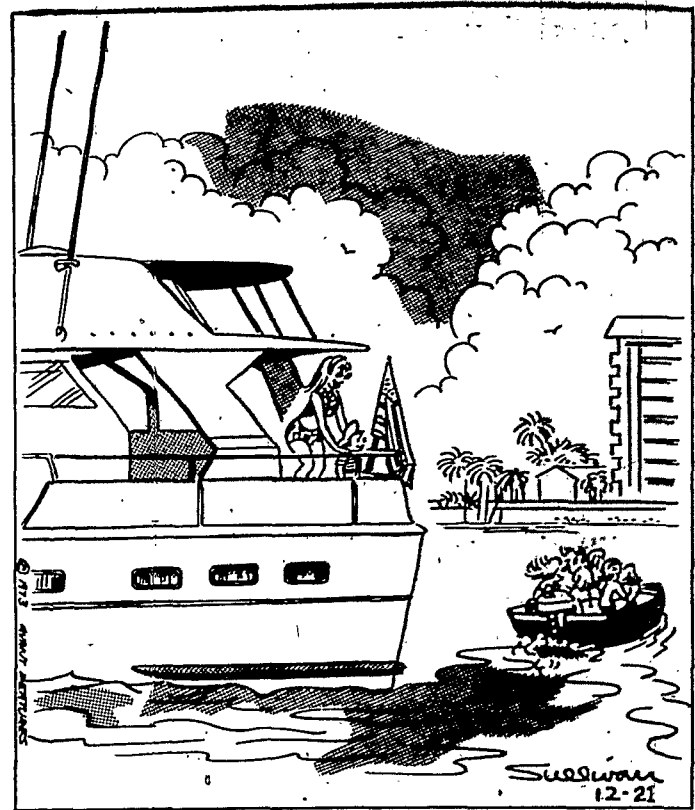
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"WASN'T THAT NICE? THOSE ARE CALLED 'CHRISTMAS CAROLS,' DEAR!"

greater capacity there is in your heart for genuine giving. Yes all of you have something to give more precious than the most expensive and sparkling material gift of this season. You can represent Christ and accept the gifts of those who NEED to give.

Fortunately my circumstances will not allow a gift of money, therefore I am compelled to give myself in time. It would be easier to write a check but I am forced to struggle with my inadequacy to send you a sense of dignity and a knowledge of your own personal worth to the world. I have known your ability to encourage those around you with a marvelous sense of humor, a kind word, a smile, love, leadership of the strongest kind and especially prayer.

Thank you for these outstanding gifts which will shine like the brightest star above the stable of Bethlehem.

(Mrs.) Barbara Fischer
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Abortion Most Urgent Issue

Editor:

On Nov. 28, a Clergy Conference was held at Becket Hall. The theme of the conference was "Respect for Life." It included the following subtitles: "Youth," "Elderly," "Family," "Society's Unwanted." The last study referred to the nation's aborted children.

Abortion is the most urgent moral issue before the American people. It may well be a more difficult issue to solve than the Vietnam War. It will need an equally vociferous, popular protest. Every year that the war against the children of America continues, more human lives will be lost, gruesomely murdered, than were sacrificed in the whole Vietnam War. In this war against the children, those who die will not be defending a weaker nation against aggression. They will die to satisfy the lusts of America, the selfishness of unnatural mothers, and because of the indifference and inertia of the millions who still call themselves Christians — even Catholics.

Of all the moral issues before Americans and Catholics today, abortion certainly must be given top priority. It has an urgency not to be found in the areas of "Youth," "Elderly" or "Family." Because of this urgency, it would seem that the full three hours of the conference should have been devoted to solving the problem of abortion. There should have been a full statement of the problem, goals should have been clearly defined and plans laid to attain those goals.

Instead, 30 minutes were allowed to four lay organizations, an average of seven minutes for each speaker, to explain to the clergy what their particular group was trying to accomplish in relation to the abortion issue. The

Diocese of Rochester was not represented on this panel, or at any other time during the conference, on the abortion issue. One might be forced to conclude that leadership came entirely from the laity.

In their fight against the unnatural crime of abortion, the American people face an almost insurmountable obstacle in the ruling of the U. S. Supreme Court that no state can outlaw an abortion under 24 weeks. For the time being it would seem that the only way this decision can be overturned is by a constitutional amendment. Already such a movement has been begun. Several states have approved such an amendment. What is lacking, obviously, is dynamic leadership. Candidates for the United States Congress and Senate must be made to understand that they cannot hope to win an election if they favor abortion. It has been said that 65 per cent of the voters in Monroe County are Catholics. Here is a moral force which no candidate for office could hope to resist when moral issues must take precedence over party lines. Catholic resources must be mobilized; there must be dynamic leadership. The goal is the amendment of the Constitution to protect human life at all ages. Human life IS protected at all ages by the Natural Law but the Supreme Court has bypassed the Natural Law and declared that our national Constitution does not give the right to life to the unborn child until after the 24th week of life.

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Thanksgiving Theme Shared

Editor:

We would like to share with you our Thanksgiving Mass at St. Alphonsus in Auburn, N.Y. Our theme — He is a Giver of Gifts, A Giver of Hope and We Shall Live, featured the new anointing of the Sick — combined with the traditional Thanksgiving Day celebration.

Under the direction of Father Edward Palombos and Pastoral Assistant Sister Catherine Ann many received the healing power of the Church in a very simple but beautiful ceremony during the Mass. It was truly a moving experience for all those present.

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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.