

Editorial

A Job for TV

"Listless children with skeleton faces, distended stomachs and protruding bones are so weak and so fragile that they cannot manage to digest food. In one wing of the old, crowded building, the Sisters had to persuade a frightened mother to let go of a 16-pound baby who had just died."

"The real tragedy became more apparent and more forceful when the doctor told me that the 16-pound baby was two years old. More than 24 months of gradual starvation had taken from the poor little child the power to survive and develop."

These are the words of Cardinal Terence Cooke in a recent New York Times article written after his return from a personal tour of starvation areas in Africa.

Still photos in newspapers and editorial sermonizing apparently cannot bring the dire message home to Americans. Cardinal Cooke has said of us, "We are acting as if we have not heard."

His first-hand view, of course, gives him a perspective the rest of us lack. However, there is one medium where the message can be effectively communicated and that is television. A recent brief movie clip on one of the network news programs showing hopeless human beings sitting in the street waiting to meet death graphically portrayed scenes smacking almost of public execution. Mothers futilely cuddling their starving infants mock madonna tableaux. Television should do more such newscasts and documentaries.

And surely we all can do more. Two days of fasting a week, as recommended by the U.S. bishops, is a good start.

Don't Get Conned

It is the time of the year to write the annual editorial warning readers, particularly older ones, not to be taken by flim-flam artists. The editorial may be hackneyed and a commonplace annual fixture — but those who practice their wiles on the unsuspecting never take a holiday.

May we advise you, our readers, to think twice before doing business with anyone you do not know. Do not go to your savings without consulting someone you know and trust. If you have no one to confide in, and someone suggests a withdrawal of funds, consult your banker.

Please, let's all advise others of the need for caution in these areas.

Be on guard against the more direct criminal — muggers, car thieves, burglars. Think twice. Don't leave those just-bought presents on the seat of the car; use the trunk. Don't sport any cash in stores or banks. You could easily be followed.

Don't ruin your Christmas, or your life, by falling prey to any crook.

Speaking Up

Two men who in no way can be plastered with the label "fanatic Catholic" have made forceful public announcements opposing abortion.

Thank goodness that men such as Dick Gregory and the Rev. Jesse Jackson are unafraid to speak their minds. Because they do, the propaganda ploy of those who oppose pro-life, whereby the movement is branded a tool of the American hierarchy, is set back.

Gregory told a National Youth Pro-Life Coalition that he fully supports the right to life of every human being "from conception to natural death" and that he "unequivocally" supports a "total human" life amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would promote the value and dignity of every human life."

Speaking at the same meeting in New York City, Mr. Jackson, according to Religious News Service, said that it was not so much the genocidal aspects of the pro-abortion movement that bothered him as the effect on people "who operate without any sacred absolutes. You can't kill people just because they're in your way."

The past records of these social activists would defy anyone even to suggest that they are front men for any hierarchy. That charge also is patently false when applied to the millions of other pro-lifers of every religious persuasion across the nation.

Columnist Disputed

Editor:

I ask fellow Catholics to begin to examine whether our diocesan leaders are in the forefront of the fight against abortion in an effective way. To start, one can review the last paragraph of Father Hohman's column dated 10/16/74, and his full column dated 10/23/74. Father is clear about his personal opposition to abortion. However, he brings to focus one of the major obstacles to the constitutional amendment process now required to deal with the abortion issue. That is one of several ways to understand his comments is to conclude that a valid option for a Catholic citizen is to avoid civil law involvement on abortion, chiefly because our society is pluralistic and/or because of Father's advice concerning the history of placing "legal roadblocks" on moral matters (10/23/74). If this be a valid Catholic option, he should tell us that directly, taking the time and space to explain it.

Some baffling aspects in his Oct. 23 column include the failure to point out that any governor can publicly advocate the amendment process without violating his oath to uphold current law. Similarly, the correct "matched" response for the citizen is not to consider leaving the country, as Father suggests, but to advocate the constitutional process. As another example, why distract readers by hinting that anti-abortion legislation is aimed at making people "morally good" when the aim is certainly to protect the third party — the innocent unborn. Even were he right about the current law reflecting the code of the majority, why should Father Hohman or any of us be satisfied that the contemporary public, only superficially exposed to the scientific facts of pre-natal life, is an adequately informed majority? Pro-life groups which have studied the scientific facts could use more helpers to disseminate them and might even get more help if our spiritual advisers informed us more clearly about our responsibilities. Like it or not, Father Hohman's first attempt at clarification (10/23/74) will influence many Catholics to hold back.

Finally, those who might fight solely against abortion without at least a voiced concern for other life issues should be admonished that God may someday rebuke. How can you say you love the unborn whom you do not see, when you fail to love My already-born whom you do see — in your slums, your prisons, your neglected institutions?

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Courier-Journal



"I CAN'T MAKE IT FOR BOWLING TONIGHT, FRED... THIS IS MY NIGHT TO BE ON DUTY WITH A DOCTOR AT THE LOCAL SUPERMARKET CHECK-OUT COUNTER."

Guidelines For Ecumenism

Editor:

St. Thomas More supplied a 15th Century view of ecumenism that might be imitated by our own. He wrote in his 'Utopia':

"Though there are many different religions among them, yet all these, no matter how different, agree in the main point, the worship of the one Divine Nature, as though they were all going toward one destination by different routes. So nothing is seen or heard in the temples which does not suit all their religions. Any rite that is peculiar to some one sect is celebrated in a private home, but the public worship is performed in such a way as not to interfere with the private rites. There are no images of God in their temples, so that everyone may conceive of God in any form he wishes. They do not call upon God by different names, but use only the name Mithra. However they may conceive of him, all alike agree in calling the one Divine Majesty by this name. They offer no prayers that will offend any sect."

Any comment upon the saint's words would have to admit: (1) everyone's conscience must be free; (2) all religions worthy of the name must help mankind attain salvation; (3) rites and dogmas "peculiar" to any one religion must not intrude upon "public worship." (4) so called "public worship" must not interfere with "rites" and dogmas "peculiar" to any one religion; God is acknowledged to be "a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit." (5) the use of a common name for God tends to unify religious worship; (6) and last of all, "prayers" must foster charity and good will among the members of all sects.

If ecumenism is to develop and express God's will to men, then why cannot St. Thomas More's words provide the most workable guidelines?

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Church Needs Our Religious

Editor:

The recent editorial "Should Religious Run for Office?" raises some essential questions. The propriety of religious running for government positions is only an example of much more fundamental issues facing Christ's Church.

One could argue exhaustively and fruitlessly over the role of the

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religious with respect to the spiritual and humanitarian purpose of the Church. Disregarding that aspect, it is probably safe to assume a religious in government is motivated to use his position to reform or bring more morality and humanity into government with the ultimate objective to benefit mankind. Can he do this? Yes.

Can he do this in the most effective, far reaching, and permanent way? No.

Government is capable of legislating or controlling our hands. This has never been nor never will be sufficient in itself. The basic problem confronting us today is in our hearts, i.e. our attitudes and beliefs toward one another and God. There is only one organization in the world capable of forming and changing our hearts — the Church. Look around us at the ills befalling our world. They are many and need no elaboration. Can they be legislated away? But could the Church have prevented or alleviated these ills by instilling into mankind by word and action the basic message of Christ: "Love God and Your Neighbor"?

Unfortunately, in the minds of many, the Church has come to mirror that which is wrong with government. Many see it as being too "big," unresponsive, bureaucratic, hung up on protocol and trivia, hypocritical, etc. The Church may have more problems than the government.

In my mind a religious running for public office is attempting to reform an institution (government) which, regardless of how pure and moral it may be, cannot solve our most basic problems. His or her efforts will be diluted and misguided. The Church has the capability of doing more for all of mankind both spiritually and physically than all governments combined. We need the full time efforts in the Church of all religious.

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