

# More Opinions

## Austerity Seen Lacking

Editor:

There appears to be a contradiction in the Oct. 16 issue of the Courier-Journal of significant importance in Church thinking. I refer to the articles titled "The Church and Inflation" page 1 "St. Christopher's Plans Building" page 19, and "Parish Plans New Hall" page 2. Although the "The Church and Inflation" article deals primarily with organizations external to the Church, one must assume (although there were no specific and positive actions identified, that the Church would internally initiate to curb inflation or excesses) that the Church would be willing to do its part internally to curb excesses or "nice to have" items. I refer to words in the article, "There is a growing call by Church leaders to their memberships to follow a simpler, more austere lifestyle." I think that surely this must also apply to the lifestyle of the parish, diocese, etc. Again, I refer to words in the article, "Pope Paul, in fact, urged Catholics to try to understand the moral and civil advantages of austerity. He said that one advantage was an increase in charity toward those less fortunate, especially the poor and suffering."

I couldn't agree more with the above statement. It should be obvious to all that the poor and less fortunate will suffer most in the time of inflation. It is also obvious that for the last 10 to 15 years, the world has gotten used to excesses in all areas of life. It is clearly time to "bite the bullet" and to make the necessary but unpopular decisions to determine priorities for allocating income. I would disagree with requesting parishioners to increase contributions by 10%. Rather, we should present the alternatives, and risks and then make the tough decisions to drop programs. These are the kinds of actions and decisions that many corporations are making and will hopefully continue to make. The Church must do the same, otherwise its words to the world are meaningless. In other words "do as I say, don't do as I do." I believe people are generally complacent toward initiating action by either government, state, Church, etc.

I choose to expand a bit on the article "St. Christopher's Plans Building" because I was fairly close to it. The Church was initially designed and built to serve as a multi-purpose building. It appears that rationale is no longer true. I'd be interested to know what changed so drastically to necessitate asking the parishioners for \$175,000 when the parish is already in debt for \$185,000. Don't ask Church members to give to the missions or all the other worthy causes unless and until the Church is willing to review its own excesses and priorities.

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## Idea of Limbo Disturbing

Editor:

Pastor G. Stuart Hogan's letter (11/20) in which the Church's teaching of Limbo for unbaptized persons is reiterated, prompts me to say that it is just such teachings that made me begin to question. My children, disturbed by the thought of little babies being denied the presence of God, brought home questions from school. It was then I discovered that the pat. learned-by rote answers of my childhood really did not speak to those inner questions of mind and soul. How

to equate "Limbo" with Christ's Gospel of Love? Why should an unbaptized infant be barred from the grace and love of God just because a particular ceremony has not been performed? Can the omission of baptism determine a child's destiny for all eternity? I found I cannot imagine or accept that the loving Father of Christ's teaching will deny His presence to anyone because of the omission of a ceremony here on earth.

In discovering that the Church's answers were not always ones I could accept, I was shaken. In questioning the Church's authority, I had given up the "safety" of a fixed position. No longer could I dismiss a doubt or question with "Well, the church teaches such and such" — I had to think for myself. Through many long months, I have begun to find answers that speak to the inner recesses of my heart. In searching and reading and questioning, I have come to believe that in accepting or rejecting teachings of any church, an inner discernment is necessary; and that the authority in religion should be our inward response to the religious teachings put before us. I believe that Christ's statement, "The kingdom of God is within" means exactly that. If we are sincerely seeking answers through meditation, prayers for guidance, and weighing of all available evidence, the "kingdom of God within" will speak to us.

Browning's poem "Paracelsus" says it beautifully:

"Truth is within ourselves,  
it takes no rise  
From outward things,  
whatever you may believe.  
There is an inmost  
centre in us all  
Where truth abides in  
fulness; and around,  
Wall upon wall, the gross  
flesh hems it in,  
This perfect, clear  
perception — which is truth.  
A baffling and  
perverting carnal mesh  
binds it and makes all  
error, and to know  
Rather consists in  
opening out a way  
Whence the imprisoned  
splendour may escape.  
Than in effecting  
entry for a light  
Supposed to be without."

Christianity is not a system of theological doctrines or creeds — it is a way of life. We are not "God's children by adoption"; we are His true children — brothers and sisters of Christ, our perfected-elder brother who stands as a beacon and guide to us all as he says, "Follow Me."

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## Service: First Duty of Priest

Editor:

Whether or not religious leaders of the people of God should run for elected office should depend upon a proper understanding of Christian priesthood (religious life). The one priesthood of Jesus is shared by all who are identified with Him through faith and baptism. The entire community of believers is a "royal priesthood" which title is not one of magnificence except in the sense of denoting a kingly service to the world. The leaders of this community have a special share in this priesthood because of their special role in the sacramental re-presentations of the mysteries of Christ, but they are no more "other Christs" than the rest of the baptized. There is a danger however, that these "ordained priests" take on themselves or have bestowed on them an atmosphere of wizardry, as though they were endowed with magical powers. This danger has been realized in the past and remains with us today. It has created a caste system in the community which was never intended by the Lord, for whom to be greater was to be servant of all.

Vatican II has revived the concept of Church as community and stresses the communitarian function of the person appointed for leadership. (PO 6) "The office of pastor is not confined to the care of the faithful as individuals, but is properly extended to the formation of a genuine Christian community." There can be no community without leadership and the Sacrament of Orders shows its ecclesial grace by providing leadership for the Church. It is for this that the apostle becomes all things for all men that he may gain all for Christ. But the leader is not an absentee landlord. He must work with the faithful as well as for them remembering that they have an important role to play in the transformation of the world.

In ministering to a local community of believers, it is important that the leader, or leaders in a sharing of government, not feel constrained to do everything as though the grace of his office bestows both omniscience and omnipotence. His is an important role, but there are varieties of gifts among the people which are not the by-product of ordination. The minister points the way; the pilgrims move forward. If a religious has a particular charism for organization, for political activism, for labor relations, for penal reform, for any of the campaigns for human development, all to the good. However, he need not be embarrassed that one, another or even all of these potentials are

lacking to his person. Let him show (from knowing) what needs to be done and inspire others to the tasks at hand. This is the age of the laity because more of them are expert in the physical, social and political sciences.

community of Believers is gathered for the gathering of the entire human family into the family of God. Their leaders serve them towards this end.

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