

Life, Liberty and Law



Nancy Murphy

Confession, they say, is good for the soul. And penance clears the intellect. Perhaps. But when a man seeks release from his transgressions, and those transgressions have been vast with echoes sounding throughout the world, would a whispered confession provide any relief? Or would life require a courageous public act of admission to wrong followed by actions taken to prevent further damage? I'm inclined to agree with the latter. But where would we find a man with such courage?

From the New England Journal of Medicine, Nov. 28, 1974, an article by Bernard N. Nathanson M.D.

"In early 1969, I and a group of equally concerned and indignant citizens who had been outspoken on the subject of legalized abortion, organized a political action unit known as NARAL — then standing for the National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws, now known as the National Abortion Rights Action League. We were outspokenly militant on this matter and enlisted the women's movement and the Protestant clergy into our ranks. We used every device available to political action groups such as pamphleteering, public demonstrations, exploitation of the media and lobbying in the appropriate legislative chambers.

"In late 1969 we mounted a demonstration outside one of the major university hospitals in New York City that had refused to perform even therapeutic abortions. My wife was on that picket line, and my three year old son proudly carried a placard urging legalized-abortion for all. Largely as a result of the efforts of this and a few similar groups, the monumental New York State Abortion Statute of 1970 was passed and signed into law by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller. Our next goal was to assure ourselves that low-cost, safe and humane abortions were available to all, and to that end we established the Center for Reproductive and Sexual Health, which was the first — and largest — abortion clinic in the Western world.

"Some time ago — after a tenure of a year and a half — I resigned as director of the center, (which) had performed 60,000 abortions with no maternal deaths — an outstanding record of which we are proud. However, I am deeply troubled by my own increasing certainty that I had in fact presided over 60,000 deaths.

"There is no longer serious doubt in my mind that human life exists within the womb from the very onset of pregnancy, despite the fact that the nature of intra-uterine life has been the subject of considerable dispute in the past. Evidence of heart function has been established in embryos as early as six weeks. Recordings of human brain activity have been noted in embryos at eight weeks. Our capacity to measure signs of life is daily becoming more sophisticated, and as time

PARISH PLAY

Fifty children from St. Thomas the Apostle School, backed up by a chorus, will give two performances of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs Sunday, Jan. 19, at 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. The production is sponsored and directed by the Rosary-Altar Society.

goes by, we will doubtless be able to isolate life signs at earlier and earlier stages in fetal development.

"... if the fetus does respond to pain, makes respiratory efforts, moves spontaneously, and has electroencephalographic activity — life must be present.

"We must courageously face the fact — finally — that human life of a special order is being taken. And since the vast majority of pregnancies are carried successfully to term, abortion must be seen as the interruption of a process that would otherwise have produced a citizen of the world. Denial of this reality is the crassest kind of moral evasiveness.

"We are taking a life ..."

Dr. Nathanson does not conclude that this deliberate taking of a special order of human life is wrong. Though he has taken a step toward dispelling the very myths and slogans he labored so long, so diligently, to create and encourage, and though he has denounced what were, a few short years ago, his strongest persuasions, he concludes only that we must allow for a feeling of "deep loss" when we abort a human life. He suggests, as many educated minds before him, that we create a "consultative body of unique design — a psychohistorian, a human ecologist, a medical philosopher, (and) an urbanologist-clergyman" to lessen the weight of the abortion problem.

And here I think his courage failed him completely. The violent frenzy for abortions, the millions of dollars invested by the pharmaceutical industry, the research unleashed in our university medical centers, the countless profitable abortion clinics in America, aborting a million human lives a year, the international repercussions such as the UNICEF-supported WHO Prostaglandin Task Forces, the HEW abortion payments, the Planned Parenthood abortion involvement — how could these be restrained by a select committee of unique design?

Still, in all fairness to Dr. Nathanson, though I question why a man of medicine took so very long to act upon what is common knowledge in medical circles, I cannot help but admire the courage displayed in writing and publishing that article. Surely, he knows far better than I the degree to which he has exposed his family to the slick abuse and ugly epithets of the NARAL, for those who write the literature distributed by the NARAL will not overlook his name. Hatred will find its mark.

But can we not draw some inspiration from his courage? I urge you to walk in the March for Life this week. While we cannot replace a single human life, we can display our concern. And we may help prevent further bloodshed.

A pair of sturdy walking shoes and a bit of courage. Is it asking too much?

60th ANNIVERSARY

Mr. and Mrs. Fred J. Bauer of Gardiner Avenue will mark their 60th wedding anniversary next week. They were married Jan. 20, 1915, at St. Joseph's, Franklin Street. For the past 30 years they have been members of St. Augustine's parish. Their children, are Fred Bauer Jr. and Mrs. Gerald DeGroot. There are six grandchildren.

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COURIER-CALENDAR

- Northwest Area Senior Residents** — Monthly get-together at St. Peter and Paul school hall, 1-4 p.m. tomorrow, Jan. 16; friends welcome.
- Alhambra Ladies** — At K of C, 513 Monroe, 12:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 22. Mrs. Donald L. Woerner presiding.
- Court Our Lady of the Cenacle, CDA** — "Hobo Night," 8 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 21, St. Philip Neri school hall; Mrs. Gerald Sullivan hostess.
- 80th Seton** — Tonight at 8:30, with Mrs. James Kraft, Mareta Road.
- St. Charles, Elmira Heights** — Card party, 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 22; \$1.
- St. Pius X** — Early Education Program open house today and Jan. 20, 22. Information, 247-5650.
- St. Thomas the Apostle** — Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs performed by Parish children directed by Rosary-Altar Society, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 19; \$1.25 adults, 50¢ children.
- Mercy High School** — Student cast in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, 10 a.m. tomorrow and Friday, 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 18, sponsored by Parents Association. \$2 adults, 50¢ children.
- Duplicate Bridge** — And bring-you-own-lunch club, for retired people and others free, on Thursday mornings; play begins at 10, in Maplewood Park building at Eastman Avenue, sponsored by City Recreation. For information: Mrs. Shanley, 342-5794.
- Area Religious Educators' Workshop** — Jan. 27-29: Notre Dame Retreat House, Canandaigua; guest speaker, Father Thomas Francoeur, chairman of Catholic Studies, McGill University, Montreal.
- Family Life Office** — Information meeting on natural family planning, 8 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 26, St. Pius X, 3000 Chili Ave.
- Nazareth College Concerts** — College Chamber Orchestra, 8:15 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 19, and Renaissance Baroque String Ensemble, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 21, Room A-13, Arts Center; both free. Sunday program includes Bach's fifth Brandenburg, Dr. Albion Gruber conducting, Star Spangled Washboard, 9 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 25, Arts Center auditorium, sponsored by college social board; \$3 in advance, \$3.50 at door.
- Strasburgh Planetarium** — Silent Spheres, through Feb. 2, plus children's specials: Space Adventures, 4 p.m. tomorrow and 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 18; Space Wizard, 9:45 a.m. Friday, Jan. 17, live theater for pre-schoolers. Reservations: 244-6060, ext. 56.
- Slide Show** — Pilgrim Virgin Statue's progress through the diocese, 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 26, Kearney Hall, St. John Fisher College.

Deadline

Calendar items should be mailed to the Courier-Journal Calendar Desk, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. Deadline is Wednesday noon, one week ahead of the publication date.

Sisters Council Meets

By MOLLY JUDGE

The proposed Pastoral Council Constitution was accepted with reservations during the Diocesan Sisters' Council (DSC) meeting at Our Lady of Mercy Mother House on Jan. 16.

It was suggested that the Pastoral Council membership composition and method of obtaining seats be revised during the first year of operation.

The sisters recommended that the question of accountability, be dealt with during the first year or six months of the Pastoral Council's operation. The DSC felt that emphasis should be placed on the service departments to strengthen regionalism and to insure that the Council be truly representative.

Sister Eleanor Celentani, the DSC representative on the Social Action Communications Committee, delivered a Committee report which elaborated on the United Nations proclamation that 1975 be International Women's Year. She mentioned that the purpose of the year is to promote equality of women, to ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort and to recognize the importance of women's increasing contribution to world peace.

Sister Mary Bernard Butts read a letter from the Sisters of St. Joseph Senate that expressed unanimous support for a proposed sister's workshop. It also specified that the workshop should be planned and staffed by area sisters and that the major theme be feminism.

The DSC moved to accept the recommendation of the SSJ senate to staff the workshop with sisters and designated a committee to explore the issue. "We've got something here and we should be proud to display it," said Sister Mary Gerard Flagler.

A report of the Subcommittee for the Revision of the By-Laws was presented by Sister Edwina Butler. Included in new suggestions to be added to the by-laws was that the general Superior of each congregation

based in the diocese, or a member of the administration appointed annually by her, be added to the DSC membership. The report also specified the membership of the executive,

personnel and budget committees along with their responsibilities. Sister Edwina said she would welcome additional suggestions from the DSC members toward by-law revision.

Observers Report On Family Court

By BONITA BALDWIN

For the past ten months, twelve women from the Task Force on Courts sponsored by Church Women United have been observing Family Court, the court traditionally closed to the public. The women reported their findings last Wednesday at the Judicial Process Commission luncheon discussion at United Presbyterian First Church.

Mrs. Lois Davis explained that the Task Force first sought admittance to Family Court to learn what was happening to children in the court system. They found that Family Court does not spend the major part of its time adjudicating juvenile cases. Instead, more than half of the Family Court cases are support cases involving absent fathers. The Task Force report states that judges have to spend time figuring budgets, due to inadequate preparation on the part of family, attorney or the Department of Social Services. The report also noted time wasted because of disorganized filed and ineffective personnel scheduling.

One major concern of the Task Force is PINS, or Persons In Need of Supervision. PINS petitions are brought before the court

primarily by the school districts. They concern truants mostly, although incorrigibles, runaways, and sexually promiscuous adolescents are included. Task Force observers note that the total responsibility is placed on the child in PINS cases. The Force recommends that parents, schools, and involved agencies be given balanced responsibility. It was suggested that PINS be changed to FINCH, Families In Need of Court Help.

Asked if there should be an alternative to Family Court, Mrs. Jean Izard replied, "We really don't have juvenile delinquents. We have juvenile delinquent parents. We spend so much time teaching young people how to earn a living; we need to help young people learn how to parent."

The Judicial Process luncheon discussion today will be at the Chamber of Commerce at 12:15 p.m. Louis Tomson, Executive Director of the Committee on Public Access to Records is to speak on the Freedom of Information Act.

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