

ERA — Catholic Readers Quiet, Papers Uncertain

By KATHLEEN POWERS
Capitol Correspondent

Only one of the eight Catholic newspapers in New York State has taken a position on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). That newspaper, the Brooklyn Tablet, supports passage of both the national and state amendments.

Another newspaper, The Evangelist of Albany, took a similar position two years ago but is now reconsidering its support.

Of the other six papers one will be taking a position, probably within the month, while the others will be searching for more information on the amendment's impact before acting.

Nearly all editors said that the ERA had motivated little reader reaction. In the recent weeks that the issue has been before the State Legislature, more opponents than proponents, have contacted the state's Catholic press. Nearly all the editors said they are publishing stories on ERA.

Editor Don Zirkel of The Tablet said his paper has been on record for at least two years supporting ERA. "It seems so obvious to us," he said. He said his paper puts out an annual issue on women's rights and supports the complete equality of women.

The Tablet has not received much mail on the ERA. Two groups within the Brooklyn diocese oppose the ERA, the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women and the Diocesan Council of Catholic Men.

The Evangelist took its editorial position in favor of the amendment two years ago, in March 1973. "We felt at the time that the arguments in favor of passage of the ERA and the formalization of women's rights into an amendment best served the interests of justice and equality in America," said Father Kenneth Doyle, editor of the Albany area paper. "We thought the evils which opponents of the ERA saw as consequences to its passage could be averted by subsequent legislation."

Now, however, Father Doyle has changed his mind about the stand. He is re-studying the issue and classified the Evangelist as neutral on the ERA as of the moment.

Syracuse's Catholic Sun takes few editorial positions, usually about matters where the diocese has taken a stand. So far the Syracuse Diocese has not taken a position on the ERA and neither has the Sun, although its editor, Wesley Brush, said that he is encouraging the diocese to do so.

He said his paper has carried news service stories on the ERA, but has not assigned local stories on the amendment. "A small paper doesn't have the resources to do an in-depth type thing on a subject like this," he said. "We depend on sources outside of ourself." Because the Sun's coverage of the ERA has been sketchy, said Brush, reader reaction has not been notable.

Rochester's Catholic paper, the Courier-Journal, has not taken a position on the ERA. The paper has printed several stories relating to the amendment, said editor Carmen Viglucci. But the articles have elicited little reader response.

"For an issue so big across the country, our people haven't been demanding any action from us," said Viglucci. He said editorials in his paper reflect what readers are saying and doing, and since hardly anyone is saying anything about the ERA, the paper has not yet editorialized. However if the ERA passes the state legislature and goes for a referendum before the people in November, (and Viglucci expects it will), the paper will take an editorial stance.

"In the past couple weeks since the amendment passed the State Assembly we've been hearing a little more about it," said Viglucci, "but even that is not much."

The Long Island Catholic will probably be taking its first editorial position on the ERA within a few weeks, said assistant editor Dick Mauter. A staff writer is researching the amendment and, depending on her findings, the paper will take a position, although what position is still unclear.

Mauter said that two years ago his paper published a series on the equal rights amendment, and has printed other stories since then. However reader response, until this past month, was nonexistent. The paper has editorialized on the rights of women several times, but it rarely takes a position on a particular piece of legislation.

Although The North Country Catholic has not yet taken an editorial position on the equal rights amendment, its editor, Father Bernard Christman, said the paper may take a position once he accumulates more accurate information on the amendment's impact. "I'm personally in favor of the ERA," said Father Christman, "but I wouldn't want to put the paper, the diocese or the bishop on the line without first tracing down the many rumors circulating on the amendment."

POOR MAN'S SUPPER

The ministerial staff of St. Margaret Mary Church will serve parishioners and guests a soup and bread meal tomorrow evening to focus attention on poverty and the idea of sharing, and as a symbol of the staff's own dedication to service. The annual Poor Man's Supper will follow 5:30 p.m. Mass. Those who wish to participate but cannot attend may donate home-made bread for sale.

Father Christman said he would like to see the state legislature initiate a fact-finding commission on the ERA. Public hearings would be inadequate, he said, because they would only give prominence to current rumors. "I'd like to see not a rehash of all these innuendos, but the facts. We need the facts," he said.

"Due to our own lack of knowledge we haven't taken a position," said Father Robert Nesslin, editor of the Western New York Catholic of the Buffalo area. He said his paper has published statements of the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) all anti-ERA, but has not published any articles showing support for the amendment. He doubts his paper will take a stand at the present time.


The Western New York Catholic has received one pro-ERA letter to date, and no letters opposed to the amendment. Father Nesslin knows of no Catholic groups in his diocese that have taken a position on the amendment, except the NCCW.

The Catholic News of New York will be running a story on the ERA in its March 6 issue (an outline of the opponents and proponents of the amendment) but so far the paper has not editorialized on the amendment. Editor Mike Murphy said he is unsure his paper will take a position, that decision depending on whether the Archdiocese of New York takes a position. "So far they haven't," said Murphy. "And my feeling is that they would be against it."

He said he has received no letters concerning the ERA at the Catholic News. Individual Right to Life chapters have opposed the amendment in his area.

The Catholic Press Association (CPA), an organization of Catholic print media groups, to which the Catholic diocesan newspapers of New York belong, has not taken an ERA position according to James Doyle, its executive secretary. Normally the board of that organization does not take positions except on matters relating to the actual profession of journalism.

WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr.
Albert Shamon

Sunday Readings: (R3) Mt. 26: 14-27:66; (R1) Is. 50:4-7; (R2) Phil. 2:5-11. Gospel for Procession: Mt. 21:1-11.

Palm Sunday begins the holiest week of the Church Year. Never throughout the rest of the Church Year do Christians enter so deeply into the Passover of Jesus. He passed over by His death and resurrection from the limitations accepted when He emptied Himself in becoming man to the unlimited freedoms of God Himself (R2). In union with Him, we too must strive during Holy Week to make the passage from being slaves to fear, anxiety, group pressure, selfishness, and so on, to a fuller life of love.

With unflinching determination, Jesus entered into His passover. "I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame" (R1). Resolutely, we too should join His entourage and strew the desires of our hearts, like so many garments, that He might come to us and make His dwelling in us.

Holy Week begins with a triumphal procession and ends with a glorious resurrection. The gospel read on the occasion of the procession is taken from Matthew. Matthew, as always, wants us to see Jesus through the eyes of the Old Testament prophets.

The Old Testament is not a garden for buried predictions about the Christ, the Messiah who was to come. Rather the Old Testament unfolds themes leading to a greater understanding of God and man.

When, for instance, Jesus decided to enter Jerusalem on an ass, He did not do this to replay a script written by a previous prophet acting as his press agent. Three hundred years before Christ, the prophet Zechariah proclaimed, "Shout with gladness, daughter of Jerusalem. See, your king comes to you without display, astride an ass."

Sometimes we think prophets are men who simply looked into the future and foretold what they saw. Actually such was not the case. The words of Zechariah, for

instance, were probably occasioned by an actual historical event that he himself had witnessed.

Around 330 B.C., the Macedonian phalanxes of Alexander the Great were ravishing Palestinian cities hugging the Mediterranean littoral. Naturally Jerusalem, just forty miles inland, froze with terror. Zechariah calmed his countrymen by telling them that Alexander would come to Jerusalem in peace. From here, he zoomed off into the far future: a day would come, he prophesied, when the snorting of warhorses would cease and a God-inspired peace would come to the land. On that day their King would appear, not like Alexander on his mighty Bucephalus, but humbly and gently astride an ass.

When a prophet felt his message was not being understood, he frequently dramatized it. Jesus, the greatest of the prophets, felt at the end of His life that His message had not gotten through. The Jewish people were still looking for Him to be a war leader against the Romans. The Palm Sunday welcome was as to one who would lead them against Rome. They had not yet realized His conquest was to be a spiritual one over sin and death.

So Jesus took the passage from Zechariah and acted out the theme of peaceful spiritual leadership that had been preached by the prophet. He sat, not on a warhorse, but on an ass. He rode, not into the palace of a king, but into the Temple of the Lord.

In the West the ass is a beast of burden only; in the East he could be a noble animal. Often a king came riding on an ass. He did this when he wished to signify that his coming was in peace. The horse was the mount of war; the ass was the mount of peace. Jesus came to Jerusalem as King of Peace.

When He came, the crowds erupted into cheers. They shouted, "Hosanna, to the Son of David." David was Israel's greatest king. His Son, too, must be king. "Hosanna to the Son of David" meant "Save us, O King."

The Church is Jerusalem. From the rising of the sun to its setting, Christ comes to her daily at Mass. He comes in the gentleness and humility of bread and wine — the ass and its colt.

How do we come?

Openly with cheers or secretly with jeers? Openly to praise or secretly to plot? Openly with a carpet of palms or secretly with a cross of pain? Or do we come at all?

Jesus weeps. Is it for us? We still have time to change.



Marcy sports her famous button.

'Love My Right to Life' Work of Local Child

By JOHN DASH

Those buttons with the "soft-sell" message: "Love my right to life" beneath the face of a granny, are the work of a 12-year-old sixth grader at Our Lady of Lourdes School.

Seems that a couple of years ago Marcy (who goes by a single "professional" name) drew up the design and her mother, a professional artist and writer, immediately saw the possibilities it had for spreading Right to Life's story.

And since that time the buttons have been cropping up all over the country, some as far away as Hawaii.

Is Marcy impressed with herself? No.

She thinks she would like to be an archaeologist when she gets a little older. Not an artist.

Marcy divulged last week that she has been studying ancient Greece and Egypt and poking around in those countries would suit her just fine.

She's a great reader. Her favorite author these days is

Laura Ingalls Wilder of Little House on the Prairie fame. Her favorite games are Ghost in the Graveyard and Home Free.

She and her family also are great camping enthusiasts and Marcy finds fishing a splendid way to pass a morning.

Marcy's buttons, with the face of a granny, a little boy or a little girl, are available from Rochester Right to Life, 1559 Monroe Ave. Rochester, N.Y. 14618. Proceeds from the sale of the buttons goes to the work of the Right to Life group. They cost 35 cents apiece for the first hundred. They are less expensive in greater quantities.

PARADE

Elmira — The Ancient Order of Hibernians held its annual parade and Communion Breakfast last Sunday in commemoration of St. Patrick's Day. The group was accompanied by the Caledonian Pipe Band as they marched from downtown to St. Peter and Paul Church. Following a Mass, the group marched back to the Eagles Club for the breakfast.