

Ford and Abortion

Whether President Ford means what he says about not liking the Supreme Court decision on abortion (and we must assume that he does) is not as important as whether he can do anything about it.

First of all, it should be noted that the President was not personally going out of his way to state his position that the Supreme Court had gone too far when it restricted states' ability to legislate on abortion. He was merely answering a question which he could not duck. This is not to level any criticism at Mr. Ford but it must be remembered that he is a political realist. Indeed, however it was heartening not to hear those tired words of others — "I personally am opposed to abortion but

After the interview, the presidential press secretary was quick to say that Mr. Ford is not obliged to seek a change that would reflect his view on abortion because "presidents do not propose constitutional amendments."

We also disagree with the President that abortion should be dealt with on a state-to-state basis but that is not the intent of this editorial. Rather we would like to point out that the President's statement, regardless of implementation, amounts to some sort of breakthrough for the pro-life movement. At the least we have a President who does not stand either in the camp of those rigid liberals who refuse to see that pro-life is humane as well as moral or in the camp of the shilly-shallers who equivocate on abortion.

The President's remarks when seen in the light of the ever-increasing importance of abortion as an issue in the upcoming New Hampshire and Massachusetts primaries means that abortion at long last must be taken seriously as a national question.

We have a feeling that politicians who have slipped through on the "personally..." but stand will find that it will have all the security of a banana peel when average Americans get a say through the ballot box.

We also advise all to keep an eye on pro-lifer Ellen McCormack in the New England primaries. She may not defeat any major candidates (although stranger and worse things have happened) but her showing should be strong enough to make all take notice.

That alone is an end devoutly to be wished.

Bright Hope

When William Crimm sang Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen during the installation of Father Jerome R. Robinson as the new head of our Black Ministries, one could sense that perhaps wonderful changes are in the offing for this diocese.

Not often are Catholic churches graced with such authentic American music which seems only consistent in light of the anglicizing in this country of the rest of the Mass. Of course, the installation was not a Eucharistic liturgy but nonetheless the strains of the Negro spiritual within the confines of Immaculate Conception Church in Rochester gave hope of new blood and spirit for this pilgrim Church.

The "hope" in store has to do with what Pope Paul VI has called "the gift of negritude." When the Pope uses this phrase he is not talking about what the Church can do for blacks but rather what blacks can do for the Church.

At a time when all the numbers in the Church seem to be declining it should be a challenge to realize that a whole body of spiritual, gifted American Christians have not really been invited into the fold. However, it is depressing to think that it is the inherent racism of the American Catholic Church that has kept blacks away in droves. For indeed if there is another reason there are not greater numbers of black Catholics it is difficult to come by.

We wish the new director of Black Ministries well. At his installation, Father Robinson talked of sharing our stories. All of us — whites, blacks, Spanish-speaking and others. A kind of intertwining of the spiritual sinews of the various ethnic groups, strengthening the entire body of the Church.

Last Aug. 27 we editorialized that some "soul" would be a welcome tonic for the Church, particularly in America. We reiterate that proposition.

Opinion

Conscience Also at Issue

Editor:

This IS NOT a letter which seeks to cut through and take sides in the mix of human motives, acts of conscience and exercise of episcopal jurisdiction which is the "Case of Father James Callan." IT IS a letter which seeks to express great pain at the apologetic overkill which the front page of the Courier-Journal (Feb. 4, 1976) embodies.

Perhaps it was felt necessary to feature the various background and explanatory pieces on that front page in reaction to the extravagant headlining of the "Callan Case" in the secular press. But, if we Christians the inheritors of a legacy of hope and peace which frees us to act on principle rather than defensive reaction, cave in in controversial moments, then where is the peace?

Perhaps it was deemed necessary for the good of the people of God to supply a full explanation of the "Callan Case." But a "full explanation" is not what the front page of the Courier gives! Through the repeated use of the word "disobedience," and the phrase "turn aside from... (or 'ignore')... his brother priests... we have no mention of "conscience."

We are told on Page 2: "Thus, in the eyes of diocesan officials, the Father Callan case comes down to two simple issues: his refusal to obey his Bishop and his rejection of official policy formulated by, agreed to, and upheld by his brother priests."

But in 1968 the Catholic bishops of the United States referred to themselves as "witnesses to a spiritual tradition which accepts enlightened conscience even when honestly mistaken as the immediate arbiter of moral decisions (Human Life in Our Day). And, in the 13th Century Thomas Aquinas said: "Anyone upon whom the ecclesiastical authorities impose a demand that offends against his clear conscience should perish in excommunication rather than violate his conscience."

I am not a partisan on this very sad issue. I do not have enough knowledge. The Bishop who can write — and live by — in the Courier a few years ago: "Pomp and power may be signs of success in human enterprise, but they will forever remain signs of failure in the life and work of the Church," and the young priest who can speak with such respect and affection for the leader he is disobeying are certainly players in the great but often tragic, drama which occurs

when human beings a little less than the angels exercise their conscience.

But the Courier does Catholic Christians and Catholic religious traditions little service in covering this unfortunate event as if conscience were not at issue.

Padraic O'Hare, D.Ed.
Consultant for
Educational Planning
Pastoral Center
1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14624

Media Seen As Slanderous

Editor:

I wonder if it is as plain to other Christians as it is to me that we are not getting the truth from our newspapers, newspapers, newscasts and the mass media in general. We are being told half-truths and vicious gossip as if it were proven fact. As one policeman put it everything is slanted to the left.

There are ever-increasing instances on TV of Christians being depicted as idiots and bigots (Archie Bunker) or adulterers and murderers (Kojak, Jan. '76). I have noticed this on many, many others as well. I have particularly noticed, too, that the Irish are more and more frequently (pointless to the story) being depicted as despicable and loathsome characters. (Most Irish are Catholic, and very strong in their love of God and country. No, I am not Irish.)

John F. Kennedy has been posthumously defamed. The FBI and CIA are being harassed and slandered. On Channel 21, Sunday, Jan. 18, a "humorous show" called Picadilly Circus held up to ridicule the Anglican and Catholic churches, and all morals and decency were snickered at. And these are just a few very recent instances.

It's time we Christians woke up and started to heed Our Lady's Fatima message — the daily Rosary, amending our lives, penance in the form of the duties of our state of life, or very, very soon, we too will be one of the "Iron Curtain" countries.

[Mrs.] Arlene O'Connor
214 Haddon Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14626

Jesus Offers A Real Peace

Editor:

I would like to comment on the Courier's coverage of TM. Contrary to the idea of it being a way to the peace of God, the scripture tells us that Jesus is the only way to God. "I am the Way, yes, and the Truth and the Life. No one can get to the Father except by means of me." (John 14:6).

Jesus also said "Peace I leave you, my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto



"YOU SAVE SOULS. I SAVE SUCCOTASH!"

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you! In my opinion the prince of this world is trying desperately in these days to deceive people honestly seeking a little peace of mind. Peace is a gift. Indeed it can be a gift of God (one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit) or it could be a deadly gift, a counterfeit of the father of lies who puts such innocent price tags on things. The serpent is still the craftiest of all the creatures the Lord God has made (Gen. 3:1) and makes things so appealing. The secret lies in God's Word which tells us first to seek the giver of the gift we desire (Matt. 6:33) in this case the prince of peace, Jesus Christ.

If we truly seek Him, commit unto His precious care our very life then He will give us peace. Having sincerely done this then we might try the "Lord's TM" found in Phil 4:7. The seventh verse of His formula promises: "If you'll do this you will experience God's peace which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thought and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus."

May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ truly be with you.

Judy Donoghue
5 Eugene St.
Rochester, N.Y. 14606

Columnist Disputed

Editor:

Father Louis Hohman's statement of Jan. 7, "The Pope allows us to regard it (artificial birth control) as a not entirely closed issue" is a blatant misrepresentation of Humanae Vitae of Pope Paul VI, of Casti Connubi of Pope Pius XI and its reiteration by Pius XII, of Mater et Magister of Pope John XXIII as well as the U.S. bishops' pastoral "Human Life in Our Day."

There is more than just the sadness father mentioned of disloyalty to the Church and pope(s) but also in the fact that natural family planning has advanced to the state where it is as effective as the pill but less dangerous.

Louis J. Pasqua
133 Exchange St.
Geneva, N.Y. 14456

Letters intended for publication must be addressed to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604.

They should be no longer than 1-2 pages, typed, double-spaced, with names and addresses. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.