Editorial

Our Mission

At times we may fall prey to speaking of the diocese of Rochester in terms of boundaries — this parish or that parish, this region or the other, the Southern Tier, the lakefront. We are prone to forget that the diocese actually extends far beyond such limits; it reaches literally to Chile and Bolivia and Brazil and Selma, Ala.

We at home may be likened to the heart pumping life out to these places which are less remote than they may seem. The arms are the Sisters of St. Joseph in Uberlandia, Sao Simao and Cachoeira Alta, Brazil and Selma, Ala.; the Sisters of Mercy in Santiago, Chile, and the parish of St. Joseph the Worker in LaPaz, Bolivia, set up by our own diocesans — all of this in addition to many city and rural districts right in the diocese.

These "arms" of the diocese reach out to the impoverished and downtrodden to provide a touch of concern, the hand clasp of friendship, the warmth of hope — the evidence of God's love. Yet all of this would be atrophied without the heart, we at home.

Our job is to provide the nourishing assistance. We will have that opportunity on Mission Sunday, May 16, in parish collections. Once again we can reflect our part in this mystical body spreading love and concern as far as we can reach.

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan provided the guideline in his Pastoral Letter, "You are Living Stones" when he wrote, "I want the Church of Rochester to be a missionary Church, for I believe this is central to abundant life in Christ."

Pews and Ballots

Are you registered to vote?

To many that may seem a foolish question. It is not. Thousands of prospective voters in this diocese will be disenfranchised again this year because they will fail to register — unless we all get behind a special program inaugurated by the bishops of New York State.

In a letter to diocesan pastors, Bishop Joseph L. Hogan scored the sad truth that in the election of 1974 only 36 per cent of the eligible voters went to the polls. "In one county of our diocese, 40 per cent of potentially eligible voters were not even registered," Bishop Hogan pointed out.

Now, to some, the question is: Should the Church be involved in voter registration?

Let the New York State bishops through their spokesman, Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York City, answer that. In a declaration last fall, they stated:

"As Catholics, we have a responsibility to promote a just social order, and to provide for the needs and guarantee the rights of our fellowman . . . Unfortunately, the records indicate that the majority of our people do not actively participate in the electoral process, so that a minority of voters are permitted to determine the welfare of our total populace. For a Christian to dissociate himself from the concerns of his fellowman is a violation of his conscience and an abnegation of his responsibilities."

Should we, as the Church, get involved?

If you think it is important not only to make ourselves heard but also to express the concerns of the unborn, the aged crippled, the foreign-born, those under 18, then there only can be one answer.

At the behest of our bishops, every parish in New York State will make the means of registering available on Sunday, June 13. If you are not registered, mark that date down. Don't let June 13 of this bicentennial year go by without resolving to vote.

Equally important, those who are registered to vote should support their parish's efforts to see to it that others register. Many of our poor and oppressed, the very people who most need to be heard, are not registered. When the state's bishops talk about "a minority of voters" controlling elections it is not too difficult to see why some do not want the many to vote.

As for those who do not register, in some cases it is through ignorance — they simply do not know that they may vote. Others, made cynical by an apathetic society, do not think their votes count, which is ironical for probably only at the ballot box are we all equal in a democracy.

June 13 is the day. Celebrate the bicentennial! Be a Christian!

Opinion

Still Critical Of Art

Editor:

With regard to our letter (4/10) expressing shock that a Catholic high school would award a prize to what seemed to us a blatant expression of hatred:

We accepted the gracious invitation of Sister Mary Jean, principal of Nazareth Academy, to visit the school and learn for ourselves exactly what atmosphere existed there. I popped in almost unannounced Friday 4/9 and asked if I could tour the art department.

As an experienced (New York City) and professional artist I felt I could accurately judge for myself the level of instruction and the degree of discipline displayed. I found a very commendable variety of skills-instruction offered, worthy of a school twice the size of 800-student Nazareth Academy. And I witnessed NO shouting, pushing, gum chewing, rock music, Planned Parenthood/ZPG posters, or sulking hulking students.

I saw cleanliness, discipline, crucifixes, photos of Rochester bishops, eager and gifted young artists, nuns in habits, organization, spirit and total courteousness.

I did not read the theology offered at Nazareth and do not know their attitude toward recent encyclical letters from Rome, although if I had asked my request would have been granted.

I concluded that the depiction of nuns of yesteryear, designed perhaps as a statement of humor, was an unfortunate selection for an award from a Catholic school. It did not strike us as humorous, and it did not accurately reflect the image of the Nazareth Academy in any way. I found many pieces of artistic expression which in my professional opinion would have better served the school, and far more accurately reflect to a public starved for artistic discretion, the true image of Nazareth Academy. I still question the validity of the artistic judgement in the award selection.

Art is of course a matter of opinion, and it always has been. But any artist knows that he cannot cover what is spoken in his creations . . . they speak eloquently for themselves. The innate beauty and force of art is matched step for step by the dangers.

I know that the painting in question did not reflect accurately the total picture of the Nazareth Academy. And I suggest to any parents, who are considering a Catholic high school for their daughters that they visit and ask and witness for themselves Sister Mary Jean's splendid and history-filled school on the hill.

Mrs. Thomas H. Murphy
91 Westland Avenue
Rochester, N.Y. 14618

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Bishop Joseph L. Hogan
President

Anthony J. Costello
General Manager

Carmen J. Viglucci
Editor

Rev. Louis J. Hohman
Episcopal Advisor

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Time to Be Christian

Editor:

We see in Sister Maureen Murphy's tragic experience a call by the Holy Spirit to be truly Christian. St. Paul admonishes us in his letter to the Ephesians, Ch. 6, v. 18 "Never (to) get tired of staying awake to pray for all the saints . . ."; this is part of our commission as followers of Christ — that we support one another spiritually, through prayer, motivated by our love for one another in Christ's mystical Body.

Jesus said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Those who would condemn Sister Maureetn would do well to ponder these words of Jesus, and attempt to imitate His reaction to the human failings of the people of His time in His condemnation of the sin rather than the sinner, for the sinner is an errant child of God, while the sin is a child of Satan.

It is our prayer that Sister Maureen will seek the forgiveness of our all-loving God and that she will turn to Jesus in this time of trial, for He is "the Way, the Truth and the Life", the Sustainer of all things, without Whom we can do nothing; and that the love of Christians will shine through this situation to help her overcome the ill effects created by this traumatic occurrence.

Mr. and Mrs. Donald J. McCooey
73 Eastland Ave.
Rochester, N.Y. 14618

All Human Life Important

Editor:

I have been concerned for some time with the manner in which the debate over the issue of abortion is shaping. I would like herewith to offer some of my thoughts on this most important matter with the hope they may engender more thinking by others.

First, it is my belief that abortion, except in rare instances, is a less than human response to a pressing human problem in much the same way that all killing, except that done in self-defense or by accident, is a less than human response to other human problems. In these matters we fall far short of the response we should expect of ourselves when we consider the potential of the gift of human life we have from Our Father.

Second, I believe we cannot honestly blame our legislators nor the Supreme Court for the ease with which an abortion can be obtained at present, nor the frequency of its occurrence. In many ways our legislatures reflect the thinking of the majority of our people, as often does the court and though not always, but often, our laws and verdicts, for good or ill, represent our attitudes. Further, I think it wrong for any of us and especially the Church, to point a finger of guilt at those who have undergone an abortion. This a matter for their own conscience and it lies between them and Our Father — as does the personal conduct of any of us.

Third, I believe that abortion, indeed, intentional violence to human life in any form, is frequently a result of an immature understanding or realization of the value of human life. Instead of prizing it as the sublime gift it is, we, like children who are without reason, may bring suffering or death to others to satisfy some drive or desire on our part. Or, being sensible in part to the value of human life, we are driven by others who are selfish enough or powerful enough to force their way upon us or whom we are too weak to resist for a variety of reasons and so succumb, in the case of abortion, to its apparent easy solution to our problem.

Fourth, I believe there will be no real solution to the problem of abortion until we can raise the level of regard for human life in our society and we cannot help others realize the value of human life until we begin to realize it ourselves. Even then we must start with those close by — in our own community. We have within ourselves, through the grace of God, the inclination if we choose to use it, to lift our love and regard for ourselves and others toward a level in keeping with our eternal destiny. Admittedly, this way is slow and difficult but it is a way which though hard for us is possible with God. Think only of the effect of one man upon the world a few years ago — Pope John — whose life expressed so simply and beautifully a Christ-like love for all men, that every nation on earth was moved by his example.

Unless we can develop a love and concern for others and a deeper and richer realization of the value of human life, no law or constitutional amendment will be of much avail in resolving the problem of abortion or any other violence worked upon mankind.

A. E. Guidarelli, O.D.
110 High St.
Newark, N.Y. 14513

"NO, DEAR, THAT WASN'T *ANYTHING* LIKE THE APOSTLES TALKING IN TONGUES!"

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