

Editorial

Haunting

Well, one of our major political parties has done it. The Democrats at their Fun City love-in all but avoided the abortion question, as they did many other pressing questions in their superficial show of unity.

Regrettably, the only reference to this pressing issue was a terse platform plank that the party will oppose a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion. Without entering the political arena, we feel it is imperative to note that such a stance detracts considerably from their candidate's projected image of a deeply religious man.

Undoubtedly, Jimmy Carter will find some means to soft-pedal the party's hard line on abortion as the campaign wears on. But the time to act was before and at the convention but his political manipulators managed to still any obvious opposition.

Morally speaking, the plank is wrong. Humanly speaking, it shows a lack of courage and weakness of spirit. Politically speaking, it will haunt the candidate.

The Republican president has taken the same shallow position as Carter — "Personally I oppose abortion, but..." It will be interesting to see how that party, in general, and its platform, in particular, addresses the abortion issue.

True . . . But

"A form of theft."

Thus does the Vatican succinctly describe the world armaments race. Asked by the United Nations what is its view on armament, the Vatican "unreservedly" condemned the arms race.

"Massive budgets allocated to the manufacture and stockpiling of weapons is tantamount to misappropriation of funds by the managers of the large nations or favored blocks," the Vatican stated.

"Disarmament is not a separate reality," the Vatican declared, "it is a part of the whole."

True. True. True.

Yet how in the world are we going to bring about world disarmament when we cannot convince our own legislators that gun control is a simple matter of sanity? How can we call for world disarmament when we will not even control the spread of firearms at home?

This Is Church?

It may be necessary but it strikes us as the essence of bureaucracy. The decision by a parish in St. Paul, Minn., that each parishioner 16 and over must register annually to maintain membership in the parish.

In addition, each parishioner will be required to make a "reasonable" financial commitment, according to his or her income, and to make a self-commitment to service on committees or program development.

The pastor said prospective members will be asked to attend church in the parish for three or four months before seeking admission.

In April 573 individuals received the commitment forms, 386 re-registered. In some cases, one partner in a marriage chose not to re-register while the other partner did.

We suppose there are arguments pro and con. We only would ask, "What in heaven's name does this have to do with Jesus Christ?"

Poor Judgment

News item: Supreme Court has agreed to rule on three more abortion cases during its next session.

Reaction: Too bad for life!

Opinion

Must Altar Be Profaned

Editor:

During the French Revolution the high altar of Notre Dame de Paris was profaned. A naked prostitute was enthroned thereon as the goddess of Reason.

In the (Rochester) "Times Union" of July 1, 1976, another and no less sordid profanation was reported. There in Section C, page 1, under the headline "Rochester at Home, Ready for the Third Ward Tour!" we can read "...the altar that served for many years in old St. Joseph's Church devastated by fire a couple of years ago...with its religious scenes removed and soon to be replaced by mirrors, will do double duty in the solarium, holding some of the large assortment of greenery, and serving as a bar for parties." (sic)

The same page not only supplied the foregoing words but also a picture of the "altar" now perverted to the most mundane use. It now seems so shocking that beer and liquor may replace the sacred body of Jesus Christ.

Now even the words around that old "altar" can change. Heretofore the priest before that "altar" spoke only words that would glorify God; now we can expect words that will go from the silly and inconsequential, to those expressing blasphemies and obscenities.

I don't question the motives of the men who acquired the "altar" for their remodeled home in the Third Ward. But I must ask: A "bar" is a counter or place where beverages, esp. liquors, are served. Such a "bar" has become part of the furnishings of the contemporary home. Such a "bar" would never have been consecrated as an "altar" nor degraded from its former status as a sacred piece of furniture. Hence I ask: why does the former "Saint Joseph's" "altar" have to be converted to a "bar"?

I hope some Catholics will do what they should to end the profanation of an "altar."

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Let's Celebrate Fisher's Feast

Editor:

The feast day of the patron of the diocese, St. John Fisher, has already come and gone for 1976, but there was an idea set in motion in a homily that I heard on June 22 (the



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Vol. 91 No. 12 July 21, 1976
Published weekly by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy 20¢. 1 year subscription in U.S. \$7.50. Canada and foreign, \$12.00. Offices, Richmond Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. (716) 454-7050. Second class postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

Courier-Journal

day of the feast) that I would like to share. How appropriate it would be, the homilist said, to have an annual diocesan liturgical celebration in honor of our patron saint, and where else but at the seat, the chair (cathedra) parish, Sacred Heart Cathedral!

There are several reasons for nurturing such an idea. Perhaps were we so to honor St. John Fisher we might imbibe some of his fortitude. Recognition of main qualities of this 16th Century English martyr might help us to deepen our own sense of identity as 20th Century American Christians. Only two aspects of the rich personality of St. John Fisher may be mentioned here.

First, he was his own man (just as his great friend, St. Thomas More, "Man for All Seasons" was). Anyone who opts for placing his head on the block (thereby insuring his moral integrity) over a comfortable security and the adulation of his King has to be his own man and not the product of a group of wayward advisers. Secondly, St. John took the adamant position he did against the apostate King Henry VIII because his will was to remain faithful to the Pope and the Church which he saw as guided by the Holy Spirit.

In the eyes of some, St. John Fisher died a loser, weak and aged, the last Bishop of Rochester, England. For others, however, he died strong and holy, leaving behind him all the evidence of the true winner, for he bequeathed a storehouse of moral courage, wealth which is ours for the asking — not only in a diocesan liturgy on June 22 (it is said that on the Feast Day of a Saint he (she) stands beside the liturgical celebrant with new gifts); also throughout the other days of the year a tapping of this spiritual deposit may help to meet the kind of pressures we experience here in our American Rochester. The intensity of these pressures heightens, seemingly, by the hour.

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Columns Questioned

Editor:

In light of statements on contraception and the Pope made by Father Hohman in the Open Window columns of (1) 5-12-76, (2) 5-19-76, (3) 6-9-76, it becomes necessary to present the Church teaching on contraception together with the authority with which it is to be taught and to correct the improper image of a weak Paul VI given in reference (2). No alert person can read the last paragraph in (2) without entertaining the notion that, in the final analysis, Paul VI rejected the majority report out of fear and out of weakness as a leader. It follows that he remains a weakling in view of his repeated support of the long standing Church teaching against contraception. The "guess" offered in (2) about Paul's action not only offends the character of this brave Pope but it is unwarranted in light of the claims of the Catholic Church, and the particular history of the teaching against contraception.

In reference (1) it is surely suggested that the Church may be in error on its teaching against contraception. Your columnist fails to inform his readers that in the General Catechetical Directory, THE official basis for all Catholic catechisms in the modern world, the teaching against contraception is required by the Church "to be held by all." The columns do not refer the reader to the inerrancy of the Universal Church and the ordinary magisterium on this matter (see, e.g. Vatican II, and Noonan's work *Contraception*, 1965), nor does it point out the implications of dissent for so called "modern" reasons, none of which prove the older teaching wrong. The columnist also does not try to alleviate unnecessary confusion that could be done, for example, by

citing the well researched observation that "the theological history of contraception is simple, at least with regard to the central question: Is contraception always seriously evil? For in answer to this question there has never been any variation and scarcely any evolution in the teaching." Furthermore, one does not help modern man, who readily accepts many "unnatural" processes by oversimplifying the Pope's statements as in (3). "It is not I but rather the Pope who says that what makes birth control wrong is the unnaturalness of it."

* Daniel Callahan (ed.) *The Catholic Case for Contraception* N.Y., 1969, London, 1969, pp 179-180.

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Father Louis Hohman is also the episcopal adviser to the Courier-Journal. He replies, "There was no intention whatsoever to convey the impression that Paul VI was weak in choosing the minority report of the birth control commission. It merely conveyed the idea that he felt it was more important to maintain consistency than to accept the arguments presented in the majority report. No other meaning need be taken. It is also important that we do not fit the church's teaching on this matter under the heading of absolute and final infallibility or inerrancy. The door is left open for development and we need not discuss that point any further."

Engaged Encounter

Editor:

We'd like to thank the Courier-Journal for the notice of our Engaged Encounter weekends for 1976 and add just a bit to it. Engaged Encounter had its first weekend July 11, 1975, at St. Michael's, attended by 40 couples. We now have provided premarital instruction for 43 couples, 42 from the Rochester area and one from Sudbury, Ont.

We hate to call it instruction since we learned so much ourselves from these couples. The weekend can be substituted for pre-Cana and we give the Office of Family Life certificate, but some of our couples have made both the Engaged Encounter weekend and pre-Cana. We do not instruct but members of the team (a priest and two married couples — one married a short time and the other longer) share their own life experiences and the engaged couple discusses very important questions concerning their future life together.

The cost is \$60 per couple. This includes separate rooms, and all meals from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. However, couples who would like the weekend but haven't the funds are urged to call us — we are able to sponsor a limited number of couples per weekend.

We do pre-Cana as a couple and it is a very good pre-marriage program. But the weekend has the advantage of offering the engaged couple an intensive experience completely removed from the distractions of the modern world, especially the bustle of wedding preparations. Our unofficial motto is "a wedding is a day, a marriage is a lifetime."

Our telephone number is 342-2279 and Rick and Bobbie Diehl's (reservation couple) is 254-8582.

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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 1/2 pages, typed double-spaced, with names and addresses. The paper reserves the right to edit all letters.