

Editorial

The Bishops And the Candidates

The recent meetings between the presidential candidates and panels of Catholic bishops leave a wide and wild assortment of tastes in the mouth, ranging from the sour to the delicious.

Not the least of the aftertastes is a tart one that to many the meetings had the appearance of inquisitions. Surely most people should know better but still one may be excused for feeling that the conferences are an affront to the spirit of separation of Church and state.

To counter-balance this inference, it should be noted that such candidates routinely meet with all kinds of societal leaders, not merely to be analyzed but also to learn first-hand the priorities of their various constituencies. Certainly, Catholic leaders, even the hierarchy, have as much right to be heard in a democracy as leaders of the Jewish, black or business communities. And vice versa.

Still the meetings constitute a delicate situation, as witness some news reports that implied jagged differences between Jimmy Carter and the bishops. Actually the meeting was cordial and circumspect even though the bishops said they could not accept the candidate's disowning of a constitutional amendment on abortion. An equally civil meeting with President Ford drew the bishops' conclusion that his personal stand on abortion also is unsatisfactory though his party's platform plank is commendable.

But, as we said, the meetings had wider import than the mere questioning of the candidates. They also provided the candidates and bishops with the splendid opportunity of exchanging views on other subjects capturing the Church's interest. Employment, hunger, illegal aliens, and human rights in foreign policy were some of the other Catholic concerns on the agenda.

As William V. Shannon pointed out in a recent New York Times column, the Catholic Church opposition to abortion is only one facet of its effort "to create a society of hope." Shannon puts it clearly, "The church looks at America and the world and sees many evidences of despair—drug addiction, divorce, alcoholism, Malthusian despair, against these and many other evils the Catholic Church affirms life and articulates a message of hope."

Thus it opposes capital punishment, supports gun control, endorses amnesty, rejects unemployment, and works for decent housing and proper medical care. And Shannon notes, "As part of this broad effort to build a life-sustaining society of hope the Catholic Church affirms the right to life of the unborn child. It nurtures the hope that every unplanned and unwanted child, every mongoloid child, every handicapped child can find love in this world from adoptive parents if not from his own. It worries that a society that kills the unwanted child may soon be a society that kills the senile, the insane, the retarded and the incurably ill."

This is the beautiful message that the Church has for America. Hopefully, the bishops managed to get it across to the presidential candidates. Persuasion is needed, not mere quizzing.

As for the image of such meetings we think there are some things that should be done to erase the inquisitorial aspect. The candidates should also meet with others in the pro-life movement. Dr. Mildred Jefferson, for one. Second, the Church should be represented by other than just the hierarchy. Lay people representing the Church's pro-life, anti-abortion stance is a more honest and effective portrayal. The Bishops, while making their anti-abortion stance clear, have stayed in the background and the laity has carried the ball, willingly and effectively. This is merely telling it as it is—and as it should be. So in our view, the meetings with Ford and Carter would have been more effective if Catholic laity were more visible. The very word hierarchy unfortunately and unrealistically scares many other-than-Catholic Americans and tends to obfuscate any issue in question.

Second, it would have helped in the broader spectrum of the American people if they could have realized that the Catholic Church is a humane as well as just organization.

Opinion

Non-Voting Criticized

Editor:

For the first time in my life I am writing to a newspaper.

It was Father Greeley's column in the Courier-Journal, 8/25/76, that got to me. Although many of the statements he made were true, he was too extreme in the entire column.

However, it isn't this I take issue with. It is the paragraph where he states, "I have been a Democrat all my life and would not vote for a Republican." Narrow minded bigotry! He also states, "I stayed home in 1972 and will find no trouble doing it in 1976." In that case he should keep his opinions to himself if he won't express them at the polls.

The only people who have the right to criticize the government and those seeking to be elected is the person who votes every year. This is a privilege and the duty of every citizen.

To have a priest, who should set examples for the rest of us, make a statement such as this is incomprehensible.

By the way, I too am a Democrat, and have been all my life, but I do not vote party, I vote for the man.

Mrs. Edith W. Hogan
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Selfishness Destroys Love

Editor:

The Letters to the Editor appearing in the Courier in recent weeks have been outstanding. They have shown sound reasoning, understanding, and an admirable knowledge of the decrees of the popes and the writings of the Fathers.

I believe that this diocese can be very proud of these Catholic laymen. The correspondence has been on a very high level. I believe that it shows self education on the part of our laity who are trying to learn for themselves just what the Catholic faith teaches.

However, the letter of Edward A. Veith (8/11/76) contains statements and reasoning which are very erroneous and misleading. These must not be allowed to go unanswered. Veith states "Right to life in a mother's womb is not fulfilled if her child must later starve to death in her arms." This is a very misleading statement. Of the more than a million children who



IT PROBABLY NEVER HAPPENED TO ANYONE BEFORE, AND I... I HESITATED TO TELL YOU ABOUT IT BECAUSE IT'S SO SHOCKING...

died in these United States last year through abortion, not one would have died in the arms of its mother because of starvation.

Our national relief program runs into the billions of dollars. Probably more than 50% of all abortions are performed on women of the more affluent levels of society. The root cause of the vast majority of abortions is the unwillingness of the mother to accept the day-to-day drudgery of bearing and raising a child. Human selfishness destroys natural and divine love in the soul.

When the Lord said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (Jhn. 10/10), as quoted by Veith, he referred to the life men would be able to live as the result of his coming into the world, not the temporal blessings they would receive. For the first three centuries of the Church's history many of the Christians were slaves who did not have even natural rights. All Christians faced the possibility of martyrdom. Evidently, having life more abundantly for the early Christians did not mean a greater share of this world's goods.

I will not uphold Jimmy Carter of the Democratic party in this year's elections because the party has gone on record in its platform as opposing any movement to amend the Constitution so as to render abortion illegal and save the lives of more than one million children every year in these United States. Since when has the Democratic party had the right to tell its members and the citizens of this nation that they can not amend the Constitution? Who in conscience can support a political party which denies the right to life to its future citizens?

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We Can Learn From Greeley

Editor:

In a recent edition, where a reader has asked that Father Greeley's column be withdrawn, in captioning the letter it would seem that a very poor choice of words was used with the word "Venom" by our editor.

Let us hope it is not Father Greeley's intention to spread venom in his writings. We may not agree—in spite of his training and knowledge—but who are we to pass judgement?

I like reading his column and believe we can learn much from his point of view on the church, and what is happening in the minds of her members, both hierarchy and laity alike.

More Letters on Page 6

Let us exercise the love and peace we wish in offering our hand to our neighbors during Mass.

Again let us be charitable with words.

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NFP Booklet Available to All

Editor:

I am happy to inform you that, for Southern Tier Catholics, a very comprehensive and clear booklet on Natural Family Planning has been prepared by Father Joseph Egan of St. Patrick's Parish, 614 Park Place, Elmira, New York 14901. Entitled "Family Planning For The Practicing Catholic," it describes the authentic Catholic doctrine and position and also gives a clear understandable explanation of the Natural Family Planning Method. If this is not sufficient, Father Egan has in the parish library other lengthier material to assist your understanding, but many find that the booklet is enough. It is available to all who enquire. (Thank you Father Egan!)

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ACCD Prayer

Editor:

Lord, do me a favor, will you! Nothing too big. Help me in my fifth-grade religion class this year. Open up my mind so that my heart will know what's going on. (Think what that'll do for my soul, Lord!) Do this for me and for all the grades—Please! Amen.

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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.

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