

Opinion

Detroit Not Representative

Editor:

The divergent views on representation at the Detroit "Liberty and Justice for All" Conference expressed in Nov. 3's *Courier* stimulates the pertinent question, "Just how representative of Catholics of the Rochester Diocese was the Rochester delegation to the Conference?"

After studying the conference planks which were printed in the three issues of the *Courier* preceding the conference and looking over the delegation, I called Mr. John Erb of the Office of Human Development to ask who chose the delegation and how it was done. Mr. Erb said he did not know and would get back to me. I learned from him that the 9 delegates and 3 alternates were to go at diocesan expense.

I pointed out to Mr. Erb that the delegation seemed heavily representative of O.H.D. I also noted to him that Ms. Ada Marie Isasi-Diaz, from her Oct. 13 letter to the *Courier*, was an activist for women in the priesthood and represented women of similar views

at the recent national Episcopal Church Convention, an act which many Episcopalians felt was an intrusion into their affairs. Ms. Diaz was to represent the Rochester Diocese in the section on "Church" which included "Women in the Church." In view of the fact that Bishop Hogan, who has expressed similar views on women priests, was the only other delegate assigned that section, I questioned the balance of our representation there.

The issue of justice to unborn children rose in the planks under two sections. I questioned why no delegate was picked from among the hundreds of people in this Diocese who have worked on this issue for almost ten years.

In talking to Mr. Erb, I also pointed out the problems people might have in giving him comments and recommendations: the planks were so lengthy and broad that they overwhelmed the task of reading them and putting them into some kind of context in order to deal with them; the planks were printed late. If responses were sincerely desired, it would seem that delegates should have been urged to seek them.

I submitted these concerns and others, which I cannot describe because of limited space, to my

regional coordinator before the conference and asked that they be placed before my Regional Pastoral Council and the Priest's Council. I believe we should take the enthusiasts of the Liberty and Justice for All Conference seriously and take measures to insure a balanced and informed presentation of Church Doctrine and authentic cross-section representation in our diocese. If there is to be liberty and justice for all, let it begin here.

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Homosexuality Condemned

Editor:

Mr. John A. Compa in his letter to the *Courier* (11/10) seems to imply that the punishment for homosexuality will be limited to this life rather than to the next life. This is poor theology. Grave sin will be punished both in this life and in the next. Repentance for sin and a sincere turning to God with one's whole heart will remit the eternal punishment due to sin but it will not remove the temporal punishment. It is Catholic teaching that homosexuality is a grave sin and that those who practice homosexuality are cut off from the life and friendship of God and, if they die in their sins, they will remain that way forever. That is Hell.

Mr. Compa seems to imply that Ms. Dorothy Cullen in her letter (10/20) has no right to condemn homosexuality. However, it is not necessary that she, or anyone else, condemn this most unnatural of all sex sins. The scriptures declare: "They who are carnal cannot please God" (Rom. 8/8); and "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (8/9); and again, "if you live according to the flesh you shall die" (Rom. 8/13).

Lastly, Mr. Compa states, "nor have any human beings engaging in sex" overcome their human nature. The law of God does not require us to overcome our human nature but to live according to the plan God had in mind when he created the human family.

I read with considerable surprise the letter of Father Gerald T. O'Connor on the gift of celibacy. Celibacy is regarded as a gift from God because in the Western world it is regarded as an integral part of the priesthood which certainly is a gift from God. When God calls a man to the priesthood, he gives him the actual graces necessary for his state in life, which in the Roman rite, must embrace the life of celibacy. Since this grace is a gift from God, we rightly speak of celibacy as a gift. We do not think of this gift as in any way changing



"MAYBE IT ISN'T HIS BREVIARY HE'S READING!"

our human nature. It is a gift which is freely given with the priesthood, and which we freely accept with the priesthood. It is a gift which may be part of our cross but which we freely carry for Christ as he accepted and carried his cross for us.

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Feels USCC Is Not Official

Editor:

After reading your comments following my letter of 10/27/76, I find I am in total disagreement with your opinion that official Catholic church policy in America is against capital punishment, for gun control and for amnesty.

As recently as late 1960, a book written by the Rev. Bertrand L. Conway, imprimatur by the late Francis Cardinal Spellman, stated "The Catholic church has always taught the state had the right to inflict death for serious crimes."

This book, *The Question Box*, contradicts the position on capital punishment taken by the U.S. Catholic Conference.

The July 76 newsletter, the *Mindszenty Report*, states "The U.S. Catholic Conference has also gone on record supporting gun control, opposing capital punishment and urging arms limitations and general military disarmament. As though there were no legitimate arguments on the other side of these issues, USCC simply closes its mind and makes its decision, ostensibly speaking for all the Bishops of the U.S."

"But USCC does not..."

The award winning Catholic weekly, *St. Louis Review*, writes "The publication of a pamphlet by the U.S. Catholic Conference does not necessarily imply the approval of that document by the bishops of the United States, or even of any particular committee of bishops."

Concluding I would say that the *Courier-Journal* is spreading false information when it states that the United States Catholic Conference has presented official Catholic Church policy regarding capital punishment, gun control and amnesty.

I hope to see the *Courier-Journal* print a retraction.

Robert Bart
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Editor's Note: We pointed out in regard to Mr. Bart's previous letter that the U.S. Catholic Conference is

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indeed the official voice of the Catholic Church in the United States. We also explained that individual Catholics are not bound by its positions on the issues raised by Mr. Bart. The USCC is the corporate presence of the Catholic Church in the United States and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops is part of the USCC. Because some disagree with their positions against gun control, against the death penalty and for amnesty does not make such positions any less official. Such positions are merely guidelines for Catholics, not inflexible rules.

Congress Hosts Thanked

Editor:

We, the Parish Council of St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads, New York, would like to take this opportunity to thank the wonderful people in the Rochester Diocese who opened their homes and hearts to us "out of towners" during the recent Parish Congress.

We not only met truly inspired people at the congress, but derived an additional benefit, sharing hospitality and housing with those who sacrificed their own personal comfort and families, in order that we might be made comfortable.

It appeared that the Holy Spirit had a hand in selecting our Hosts, for what began by chance, materialized into a dialogue of tongues.

We cannot say enough for the people who arranged such a magnificent setting allowing the participants to receive the full impact of the speakers.

Our thanks again, praying that our parishes will one day again meet in the Common Priesthood of the Faithful.

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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.

Editorial

Thanksgiving

We happen to think that too often there is too much guesswork or downright distortion of what our colonial forefathers meant by this statement or that declaration.

We have the distinct impression that Tom Jefferson, George Washington, Ben Franklin, if it weren't for the elysian comforts of their probable surroundings, might get a mite upset at the way their own ideas are bandied loosely about by present-day debaters.

By and large, however, they should be pleased, we imagine. The republic has survived and is keeping pace with the world. And for that, we still, as did the pilgrim forerunners of our colonial forebearers, have reason to be thankful. Thanksgiving has been a national holiday of ever-increasing spiritual significance, and we have a hunch that that's how those early settlers wanted it.

Despite the fact that it may invite overindulgence and despite the sad fact that this generation of Americans may not be as wont to invite as many to the feast as did the first "thanks-givers," the holiday thrives because it somehow has caught the essence and the flavor, the hopes and the dreams, the simplicity of this nation.

Thanksgiving is spiritual without being denominational.

It is giving without extravagance.

It is national without jingoism.

It is traditional without being sentimental.

Because Thanksgiving belongs to no one it belongs to everyone.

The very word is a prayer and when the Lord surveys His creation we imagine the fourth Thursday of November in this upstart nation brings a smile to His visage.

Places of worship will be full — willingly, happily and purposefully full. No other holiday, short of the great religious feast days, so molds spiritual community.

And as the great communal amens rise to the heavens this Thanksgiving, let us all work to add some extra hope to its meaning.

When we offer our prayers of gratitude, may we be so bold and so presumptuous as to ask that the methods, means and attitudes be included in all of us that will make Thanksgiving future see All Americans invited to the feast.

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