

Opinion

Atmosphere Religious

Editor:

I am writing this letter in response to an earlier letter sent in by a McQuaid student. He stated, "The religious atmosphere at McQuaid is almost non-existent." I have been at McQuaid longer than this student and I would like to offer my opinion.

The McQuaid schedule does include: 1) a morning prayer, 2) periodic confessions periods, 3) Theology classes three out of every six days, and 4) Masses at Christmas, Easter, and other Holy Days of Obligation, but this is by no means the extent of it. There is a very definite religious atmosphere at McQuaid.

I will begin with the two volunteer agencies that McQuaid is involved in. These two agencies are CHE (Christian Enthusiasts) and Magis. These two organizations engage in such activities as visiting nursing homes, working at the Monroe Developmental Center, and tutoring at grammar schools. McQuaid is very proud of these groups for their work in truly living the Christian message.

Another religious aspect of McQuaid is that every morning before school, Mass is offered for those who wish it. And every day at recess, Communion is distributed. During the school year there are mission drives to collect money for the needy. There also is our annual collection of food for the Christmas baskets to give to the poor families of our city. Many of the sports teams at McQuaid have team Masses said for the players and coaches.

There is a heavy emphasis placed on the Theology courses at McQuaid. A student who fails to complete the religious requirements may be declared ineligible and if he's a senior, he may fail to graduate.

I would like to add that not only

is McQuaid a fine school academically and athletically, but also spiritually. The opportunity to grow closer to God is an essential part of the McQuaid education.

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Sister's Quote Contested

Editor:

I am writing in response to the words of Sister Joseph Kennedy of the Diocesan Sisters' Council as quoted in the Courier-Journal (Nov. 17) "what in the name of heaven will Italy do when faced with the beginnings of democratic processes in an otherwise hierarchical system?"

In light of the fact that the representatives to the controversial Detroit meeting were selected by the Office of Human Development and not selected at large (see Priests' Council minutes), just how was the democratic process served in the first place?

In any case, Sister Joseph's article has been sent to the Vatican. There may, of course, not be enough time for a meaningful response to Sister's words but we wanted her (and all) to know that we tried.

We commend the Courier-Journal on the excellent job of informing the laity of the positions and words of our religious.

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Editor's Note: According to a diocesan spokesman, the delegates were chosen by the Social Action Communications Committees of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, Priests' Council and Sisters' Council, the Religious Orders and the Office of Human Development. In addition, the Office of Black Ministries chose one delegate, the Spanish Apostolate one delegate, the Rural Human Development Office two delegates.

Mass Answers 'Alarming'

Editor:

In re: "Is Mass necessary?" — the responses of eight Cardinal Mooney High School seniors.

My heart goes out to these young women and men. It is obviously clear, that somewhere along the line there has been a tremendous breakdown. The common collective theme of their responses is an amalgam of three clichés:

— "doing one's own thing," informally, should apply to the Mass;

— the meaning of Mass has changed;

— making it less formal and shorter is going to increase attendance.

It was interesting (alarming!) to note that there was no mention of the Eucharist or the liturgy of the Word. What about the presence of Jesus Christ with us at Mass?

I would make three points:

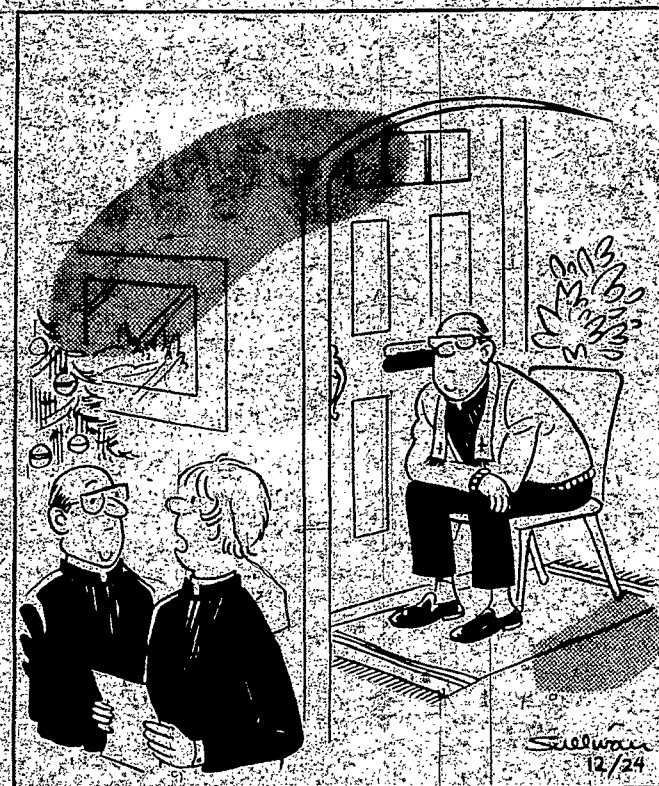
— Who ever said it would or should be easy to be a good Christian or a good Catholic? We should be concerned about doing "His thing."

— the meaning of the Mass hasn't changed in 2,000 years. Love and beauty are in the hearts and eyes of the beholder. The Mass is and will always be the re-enactment of the greatest sacrifice one Human Being has ever made for others. It is our source of spiritual sustenance in our continuing struggle for sanctity and a life in Grace.

— is 45 minutes a week to prepare for the rest of our lives too much to ask of Catholics of any age?

A recent article in the Democrat and Chronicle cited growing national concern for the increase in the number of "unchurched" Catholics. I believe that there is serious cause for concern. Of one thing I am sure — it's time to get back to the basics in all our homes and religious education programs. Maybe it's time to dust off the Baltimore Catechism and bring all the statues and loving pictures of the Blessed Virgin Mary out of the closets! Perhaps it's time to restore Benediction and the Rosary to a more prominent place in our liturgy committee planning activities. The message of Vatican II was not to de-emphasize it was to re-emphasize. It was to clarify, re-prioritize and re-new.

Finally, it's time to take a look at the results of the last 10 years of



THEY SHOULDN'T KEEP THE MAILMEN SO BUSY AT CHRISTMASTIME THAT THEY CAN'T GO TO CONFESSION LIKE EVERYONE ELSE!

religious education reform. If the random sample of Cardinal Mooney students' answers is truly representative, we've an extremely serious challenge! And please remember, it's not the students' fault. Catholic clergy, religious and parents alike share the ultimate responsibility and accountability. Parents must clearly understand that they have primary responsibility for the religious education of their children. Their children learn their values in their homes. It is the responsibility of the clergy and religious to assist in the process with humility, love and above all by example.

The time is ripe for aggressive, positive leadership and action. Do those individuals who have staff responsibility for this sphere of activity in the Diocesan Pastoral Center have a game plan? Or will the number of "unchurched" Catholics continue to climb? The Catholic Church in the United States, to include the Diocese of Rochester, was unprepared to handle Vatican II and its aftermath. Will history repeat itself?

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More Letters On Page 9

There is, of course, always some possibility of desecration of the Blessed Sacrament by insane or malicious people. This is a matter that can be left to God if reasonable safeguards have been taken. Our Lord is hurt more when access to Him is frustrated than by some misguided soul who abuses a Host.

Priests are called to serve souls, not to impede devotion. Policies that make God hard to get need to be examined and revised.

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Teen Seminar Appreciated

Editor:

As the Christmas season approaches, expectation of the coming Christ has been growing in my thoughts through the recent Sunday sermons I've heard. On Wednesday, Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, I was sitting in the chapel at Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua listening to Father Bob Hammond and concelebrators continue with thoughts of Mary and the conception of Jesus when I began to realize something. The expectation of the coming Christ was so vivid in the eyes of all the young people rejoicing at this closing Mass of the Teen Seminar program that I realized I had only to look for Christ in the people that I was surrounded by and He was there for me.

Teen Seminar is giving Jesus back to our young people and it's contagious. Thank you, everyone, for a precious Christmas gift.

Phyllis Hoagland
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Editorial

A Lesson For Christmas

Sometimes the complete lack of mention of certain facts in the Bible transmits a message every bit as real and important as those painstakingly set down on paper.

For instance, nowhere in the New Testament is there any mention of the physical characteristics of Jesus Christ. Was he 5 feet 10? Was his hair red? Or his eyes blue? Was he muscular or lanky?

Curious folk that we are, we would like to know these things about our Savior. This is understandable. Journalists probably feel even more strongly, perhaps wondering how the Gospel chroniclers could leave out such basic information. They must have realized that we would want to know all we possibly can about our God.

We must conclude that the writers of the Gospels, divinely inspired in their work, could see no reason for recording this information. Obviously it really doesn't matter if Jesus was white, pink, brown or black. If he was short, so be it. If he was tall, amen. It happens that it is not God, Jesus, or the Gospelers who put any stock in such incidental information. Only we are apt to miss the man for his trappings.

So this Dec. 25, as we turn in our bibles to the wondrous story of that very first Christmas, it would serve us well to reflect on the fact that often things conspicuous by their absence can be as important as the lessons spelled out in bold black and white.

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Don't Impede Holy Communion

Editor:

It is a matter of indifference to me whether I receive Communion on the tongue or in the hand. I thank God that I can receive because I am able to go to church. What about the multitude of aged and infirm shut-ins who long for spiritual consolation and are presently deprived?

In the church of the catacombs, sharing in the Eucharist was considered so important and so desirable that those at Mass took a portion of the Host home to be consumed by those unable to be present. Over the centuries a false reverence for the Host developed the custom of infrequent Communion so that by the 19th century many pious persons partook of the Blessed Sacrament only once a year. Now we realize that this was wrong, and large numbers receive the Blessed Sacrament each time they attend Mass. The shut-ins, however, have an underprivileged status because present-day ritual restricts distribution of Communion.

It should be possible for any parishioner to ask the priest at the end of Mass for a Host to take home to a sick member of the family. The pastor, knowing the case and recognizing the legitimacy of the request, could put the Host in a cellophane envelope with instructions to burn the envelope after the Host had been consumed.

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.