

Editorials

# Death Penalty and Holy Week

Some 2,000 years ago the most innocent man of history was unjustly executed. Only God knows how many times similar travesties have been committed in the name of justice since then.

Long before Jesus Christ became the most famous victim of capital punishment, men were killing men under the protection of the law. Perhaps long ago they were more honest about it than we are today. Then they talked about "an eye for an eye"; we prefer to talk about something called "the deterrent factor," something most experts agree does not exist.

Not then, not now have men heeded the Lord who said, "Vengeance is mine."

Over the millennia men have executed their fellows. What problems have been solved? It boggles the imagination to wonder how many persons have been taken aside and killed in cold blood - guilty or not - with the approbation of the state. Who among the majority of senators and assemblymen (and women) who see fit to continue this practice can truthfully declare that it has ever solved any problem?

Who among the senators and assemblymen (and women) who are supporting the death penalty can say with surety that revenge is not a motive? Not the only motive? We ask our representatives in Albany to examine their consciences.

One assemblyman has been quoted in the newspapers as saying his position in favor of death is consistent with the people he represents. This assemblyman, who happens to be from our diocese, should turn to Luke, Chapter 23, when the "assemblage" brought Christ before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. As he protested that Jesus was without guilt, the crowd screamed, "Crucify him. Crucify him!" Pontius Pilate also listened to the crowd. And we have been crucifying Him ever since.

In one of several parallels between now and that trial and execution of long ago, the Assembly is voting on the death penalty during Holy Week. It seems apparent that by the time we are published, two days before Good Friday, our assemblymen (and women) will have followed the lead of the Senate and sanctioned death.

We have our disagreements with Gov. Hugh Carey but in this case we are deeply grateful that he has reiterated that he will once again veto capital punishment when the bill reaches him.

The scenario is strikingly similar. The sanhedrin and the crowd demanding death. The governor saying no. The only difference is that a man named Hugh Carey may have learned something from reading about a man named Pontius Pilate. This governor has said that he will not wash his hands of the matter.

Then, of course, will come the attempt to override. Perhaps between now and the override vote, some of our Albany representatives will reflect on history. That is why we ask all those who abhor death by statute to write their state senators and assemblymen (and women). Send them this editorial.

For your sake. For their sake. For mankind's sake. For Christ's sake.

## Happy Easter

The entire staff of the Courier-Journal wishes all of our readers, their families and friends happy Spring, happy Easter, happy Resurrection.

# Opinion

## Death Penalty Decried

**Editor:**  
Last year we wrote our assemblyman, James L. Emery, expressing strong opposition to the death penalty. Mr. Emery replied that he was committed to voting for the measure because in reply to the question "Do you believe the death penalty is justified for punishment for first-degree murder?" in a questionnaire sent to his constituents, the response was 80 percent yes, 20 percent no.

Why did so many say yes? Maybe because we have good reason to be frightened by the murder, rape and other horrible things we read and hear about, and we believe the death penalty might be a deterrent. Or maybe we are just used to the idea. The death penalty has been around for several thousand years, and "a life for a life and an eye for an eye..." is as old as the Bible. But these principles have not worked. We have been practicing them since the beginning of history and we still do not have peace or an end to violence.

Can violence overcome violence? It seems not. Perhaps the old adage "violence breeds violence" is true. It has never been proven that the death penalty is a deterrent to violent crime.

All punishment is, in a sense, violence. Killing a person for a crime, however, is so extreme and irreversible, so savagely violent, so against our normal human instincts.

When we do kill a person for a crime, are we not sweeping our own guilt under the rug? - society's guilt for permitting an environment which breeds killers, rapists and other violent people? Are we not trying to deal with violence itself and turning our backs on its cause?

This is a vital current issue. Your legislators and the governor deserve to know how you stand on it, and why.

**Adolph and Loe d'Audiffret**  
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## Wrong Place For Column

**Editor:**  
You are to be congratulated on the growth which has taken place in the Courier-Journal during your editorial leadership. As you know, growth can be measured positively by what

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preceded or negatively by what should be.

While the positive aspect is evident throughout each issue, a rare instance of the other was found in Father Paul Cuddy's column of March 1.

Without a doubt, a number of my reactions to it are subjective. You see, I am a parishioner of St. Mary Our Mother where Father John Firpo is associate pastor. During the nine months since he has been at the parish, his many homilies have been well-prepared, well-delivered, and very meaningful.

Father Cuddy's critique, unfortunately, is based on hearing just one of Father Firpo's homilies. The generalizations tend to misrepresent the whole. Yet Father Cuddy does show his astuteness and experience in the last paragraph of the column where his remarks have application to anyone in the homily - or public speaking - business. The value of those hints is immense.

My objection to the column is not based on what Father Cuddy said as much as that the news section of the Courier-Journal was used to say it. It would seem that individual critiques belong on the editorial page.

Perhaps the distinction I make between what is said and where it is said is fine line. Many measurements, however, are still done by fine lines.

I look forward to the continued growth of the Courier-Journal.

**Aloysius F. Stanton**  
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## 'The People Take Umbrage'

**Editor:**

It is with the greatest respect for the priesthood that some of **The People of St. Mary Our Mother Church** respond to Father Paul Cuddy's critique of Fr. John Firpo's "sermon" that appeared in the March 1 issue of the Courier-Journal.

Father John does not preach, he teaches. He is gifted with some of the most beautiful charisms of the Holy Spirit; wisdom, knowledge, discernment, but best of all an alive apostolic faith! His teachings are alive, Jesus is real in his life, and with the Holy Spirit working through Fr. John, in our lives.

Love permeates Fr. John's being, such an open channel for the Spirit's use. Was it Christian love that Fr. Cuddy used to admonish his brother priest in a newspaper column?

The word "relationship" was one example given as a term **The People** would find theologically technical. "Permeated with unction" might pose more of a problem. We believe the Christian community of St. Mary Our Mother can handle "relationship." Fr. Firpo is a living, active, joyful example of Christian relationship to his flock.

You said, Fr. Cuddy, you don't remember what Fr. Firpo said, but you came away with a happy impression... etc.

Isn't that a sign of a good relationship; a sign of the love that pulses through Fr. Firpo for his people?

**The People** take umbrage, Fr. Cuddy, but as Fr. John has told us, "We must be



"LOOK AT IT THIS WAY: MY PERMANENT IS SYMBOLIC OF THE PERMANENCE OF THE CHURCH!"

prepared to suffer and perhaps shed our blood for our love of God."

St. Mary Our Mother parish is a loving "band-aid."

Peace in the love of Christ.

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## Tuition Aid Opposed

**Editor:**

In the three and a half years since the racial school problems began in Boston nearly 50 percent of the white children have left the public school system. More than 50,000 have left in Los Angeles. The northern whites have copied the southern whites in transferring their children from public to private and parochial tuition-charging schools.

Now, the Packwood-Moynihan bill would reward these racist parents by giving them a tax credit to offset the tuition payments, thus encouraging millions more parents to transfer their children out of the public schools. That will create a divisive dual school system. On one side we will have a white private and parochial school system staffed mostly by white non-union teachers and on the other side a black public school system staffed by mostly black union teachers. Then, what chance do you think an adequate public school budget would have of being passed by the white voters?

Under the tax credit plan, non-Catholics and Catholics who don't have children in private and parochial schools will have to make up the difference by having their taxes increased. They will be paying double taxes to support two school systems. And that will be compulsory for them. It has been voluntary for us Catholics who freely choose to send our children to parochial schools.

Parents paying their children's tuition to private schools operated by Moonies, Nazis or Communists would also be eligible for tax credits.

Considering how hard it is to get enough tax money to properly finance our public schools, it is disgraceful to see the many Catholics voting down our school budgets in order to save ourselves tax dollars at the

expense of the public school children, while we campaign to raise the taxes of everyone else via the Packwood-Moynihan bill.

At present, Catholics may freely vote for their representatives on public school boards. If the Packwood-Moynihan bill is passed, non-Catholic taxpayers would have no representation on parochial school boards. That is taxation without representation and in my opinion unconstitutional.

However, too many Catholic nationalists don't care what is constitutional nor what the Supreme Court rules. They insist that their selfish sectarian interests and opinions prevail and have no hesitancy in threatening our legislators with the power of their voting bloc.

**Walter O'Hagan**  
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## A Use For Stamps

**Editor:**

Among the numerous requests for contributions I received in the past few months was a newsletter from St. Labre Indian School. They have been working to enrich the lives of Crow and Cheyenne Indians in Montana. Besides monetary donations, they have requested S and H green stamps toward the purchase of a new automobile for the school.

Since the S and H redemption centers in the Rochester area have closed, I thought others, like myself, may have been left with some unredeemed stamps. I'm sure the school would be grateful for any donation of stamps, and thus something which might be sitting in a drawer unused could be put toward a good cause. Send them to St. Labre Indian School, Asland, Montana, 59004.

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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.