

Editorials

Pope's Question

At his weekly audience of May 24, Pope Paul VI asked the question made obvious by the passage in Italy of liberal divorce and abortion laws:

"Where, indeed, are the Christian people . . . ?"

This was not the main theme of his talk which dealt largely with the problems facing the Italian hierarchy which was at the time at its annual conference in Rome. And indeed the Holy Father made frequent note that hope exists, closing with the declaration, "We must not fear! Christ is with us."

Still, it is puzzling that a nation that is 99 per cent Catholic should accept a liberalized abortion law. Parliament passed the law despite protests from the Vatican and despite opposition from the leadership of the ruling Christian Democratic Party. And some observers feel this law was not the worst that might have happened. If the law had not passed the issue would have been presented in a national referendum and, it is felt in at least some quarters, the general

citizenry would have enacted an even more liberalized law.

Coming on top of the new law permitting divorce, this is perplexing. Yet some obvious reasons exist for such a development. Abortion has always been an alternative — albeit a wrong one — for problem pregnancies. To make it easy and acceptable is appealing to someone considering abortion.

There also is a great amount of anti-clericalism in Italy. Though it would be an entirely different topic to get into a discussion of this, one priest there feels the sentiment is at least partly justified. Thus it would seem that the average Italian, particularly women, may not be open to persuasion from the Church on such matters. Human nature being what it is, even abortion becomes subject to emotional judgment.

Thus once again has been raised the ancillary question to the whole abortion controversy — just what is the Church's role? It is our feeling that regardless of pragmatic motives, the Church just cannot avoid making a stand and a public one. If this hurts the overall cause, so be it. And not only does the Church have a duty to promulgate the moral perspective on this deadly solution but in this country it has the right despite cries of church-state from such quarters.

Thus bishops are faced with a damned if they do,

damned if they don't situation. One way pro-lifers can help alleviate this situation is to make it clear that the anti-abortion movement is pluralistic, that although it welcomes the support of bishops or any other societal leaders, it is not being dictated to by them.

A segment of the pro-abortion forces is either anti-Catholic or is making a strategic appeal to such sentiment. It is incumbent on all pro-lifers to make it clear that the movement is not religiously monolithic.

The pro-life movement must make it clear here and abroad that it is never going to cease its activities as long as abortion on demand is law. The pro-life movement must appeal to the national conscience to make the proper choice. We are not dictating but merely being firm in the defense of life.

For the Holy Father's question, "Where indeed is the Christian people?", though intended for Catholic Italy may also be paraphrased to people of goodwill of all religious persuasion and even those of none — where indeed are the people? Or better, how can the people be reached?

The effort to solve that problem is the essence of the pro-life movement.

and Opinions

How We Can Survive

Editor:
This month the Catholic Worker enters its 45th year. Has this dark age, as Peter Maurin called it, seen any light in all these years? It is hard to believe so. What has happened is that humanity has acquired the means for destroying all life on earth, which means that each of us is implicated in that possibility. Everything about our lives is critically affected by this fact: each choice we make is invested with moral urgency: are we contributing to or resisting the process that is leading us toward extinction? Our response to this overwhelming issue will determine the chances of our moral and physical survival.

Happily, we can say that increasing numbers of people are recognizing the crisis we are facing and are joining in the growing and vigorous struggles against nuclear weapons and power. Much attention will be focused on the United Nations, which this month begins a Special Session on Disarmament. Our hope and interest are perhaps more with what will be happening outside the U.N. and around the country during the next months—the demonstrations, vigils and meetings, in which we urge and invite local participation, that must ultimately prove the decisive element in turning our country around.

Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace, that we fully support and work with, has issued a statement on disarmament in conjunction with the U.N. Session, stressing the "moral aspect of disarmament," knowing that from other sources will come tactical, strategic and practical proposals. The statement concludes:

"We can certainly associate ourselves with the proposal to outlaw weapons of mass destruction (whether nuclear or conventional) and make their use a

crime against humanity; with the proposal to halt research and development projects leading to the production of new weapons; and with the proposal for immediate negotiations for phased disarmament resulting in general and complete disarmament.

However, our larger vision is the unlearning of old concepts of conflict resolution which cannot be applied to a new age. Without unlearning the old response to violence the future is imperiled. Conflict there will always be, as long as human beings are endowed with human nature. The point is to recognize this and make the world safe for conflict. This can only be done by outlawing the organized violence of war.

As for the Christian community, the basic teaching of indiscriminate love embracing friend and so-called enemy has become a practical necessity, an imperative, in an age when indiscriminate destruction threatens the human community and the planet entrusted to its care.

Let us continue to struggle to offer a sign of Christ's Peace.

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In Appreciation Of the Bishop

Editor:
Bishop Hogan's beautiful essay on healing in the May 24 Courier-Journal prompts us to write this letter. We live in an affirming atmosphere in our home and we try to carry this to the various communities we live and work in. We think sometimes that some of the loneliest and thankless people we know are the ones most special to our parish families — our parish priests.

How many times have we heard of someone changing parishes because they didn't like the priest?

How many times we've heard someone criticize a parish priest on something he said or did, or didn't say or do. It's so easy to talk behind someone's back, but have we loved him enough to tell him how what he said or didn't say made us feel?

How many times we've heard that a priest doesn't really care about us or know us. Have we shared who we are or where we are with the Lord with him? Did we love him enough so that he does know us and can care about us?

How many times have we heard "He doesn't turn me on," or "He doesn't do a thing for me." When was the last time we did something for him? Have we loved him enough to try to turn him on?

How many times have we heard remarks about a priest's homily, such as "He's so critical," or "He's too intellectual." Have we loved him enough to help make him less critical? Have we loved him enough to help him speak more from his heart than from his head?

Do we have a mold of what we think our priests should be, or do we love them, for their special unique qualities, allowing them to become who God wants them to be, without

putting demands on them?

We have the power to heal each other as our bishop said, but let us not forget that we can provide the climate for healing in our parish priests, our sisters who have dedicated their lives to Christ and to our dear bishop.

Bishop Hogan, we support you and thank you for who you are and who you are becoming, and we do love you.

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Theological Training

Editor:
The Rev. Louis Hohman recommended that people who see his teachings as subversive of Catholic teachings should get theological training, perhaps at St. Bernard's Seminary, and make acceptability of his teachings easier and more productive (Courier-Journal, 5-10). Possibly even some who are receptive to Rev. Hohman's teachings were bemused or bewildered by that recommendation since he

earlier precluded knowing the truth by his question, "Who will ever know which side God is on?"

Our Lord told Pilate, "... I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice." Authentic Catholic faith has childlike confidence and humbly believes that Our Lord speaks to His fold through the Holy Father and His Church magisterium. These are the criteria by which the public news media objectively recognizes worldwide apostasy within the Catholic Church and by which Catholics can distinguish between God's will and evil in the guise of good.

Our Lord tells us to seek the truth. We do not find it by searching the Scriptures and studying various theologies (250 Protestant denominations in the U.S. do this). Catholic Church teachings which are embodied in Scriptures and her tradition, are guaranteed to be free from error in matters of faith and morals by Our Lord. Furthermore, He manifests His glory through our saints to give us certified models of His faithful servants.

Possibly Rev. Hohman gives too much time and trust to theologians who are impaired with inordinate pride in their disciplines of superficial human knowledge, instead of seeking the Holy Spirit of truth. Our Lord promised to send the Holy Spirit of truth to those who are obedient — submissive to His voice in the Church (St. John 14:15 ff).

Our Lord said a wise man is one who hears His words (the Holy Father and His magisterium) and acts on them (even when they're not labeled infallible). He repeatedly warns that we must have childlike humility and confidence in Him. However, some theologians, priests, religious and teachers have devised or confidently accepted legalisms which appear so good to their prideful minds that they use their offices to impose upon us scandalous disobediences and rationalizations of Our Lord's magisterium. Characteristically they sincerely believe and claim that those who object are enlightened and legalistic.

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Guidelines

Letters intended for publication must be addressed to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604.

Expressions of opinions should be brief, no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed, double-spaced, with names and addresses.

We reserve the right to edit as to length, offensive words, libelous statements, or to reject altogether. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and letters will reflect the writer's own style.

We encourage readers to submit opinions but since we try to print letters from as many different contributors as possible we will publish no more than one letter a month from the same individual.

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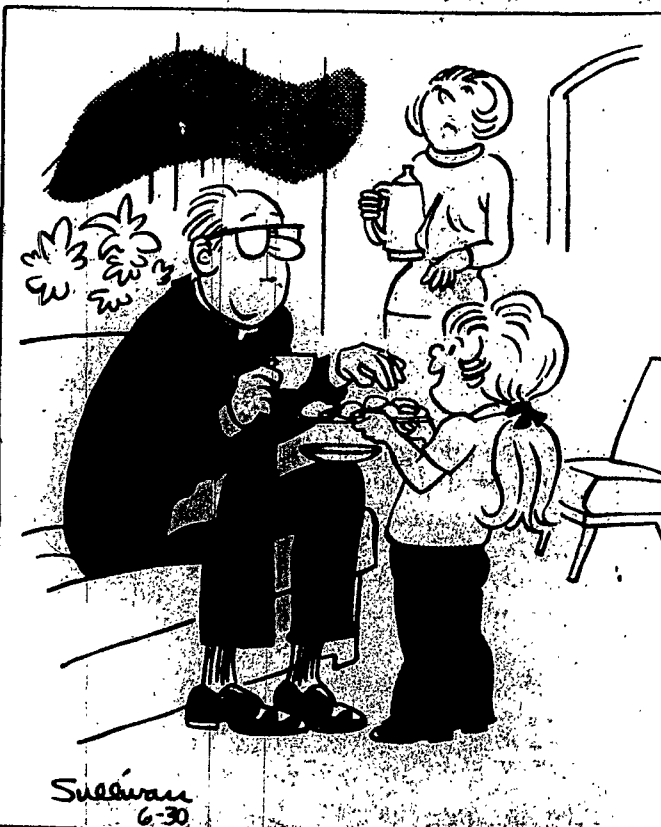
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"MOM'S TEACHING ME TO COOK AN I MADE THESE MYSELF, THEY'RE BANANA CREAM TACOS."