

Editorials

Moderation . . . On ALL Sides

We wish all involved in the abortion confrontation would take to heart the advice Sen. Roger Jepsen of Iowa gave right-to-life marchers in Washington Jan. 22.

"Do not judge your brothers and sisters who disagree with you on this issue but pray for them and urge them to consider this question in a new light."

In other words, vilification, self-righteous vitriol and the tendency to smear should be avoided. Such advice is correct for two reasons: it is the proper way to handle issues that tend to become polarized and it is the route to increased effectiveness in the pro-life, or any other, cause.

However, an ancillary point must be made — this isn't easy.

One reason why it is difficult was provided by another group which demonstrated on Jan. 22. This demonstration was staged by several hundred people, led by 40 ministers and rabbis in vestments, in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. Were they protesting abortion? No. Were they countering the pro-life marches throughout the nation? Ostensibly, because of the date. But what they really seemed to be doing was using a painful situation to take a swing at "Roman Catholic leaders."

According to Religious News Service, they hung a

"Declaration of Conscience" on the door of the cathedral which said that "we view with alarm the growing escalation of violent language and acts that have the appearance of support of the leadership of the church and the extent to which extreme polarization of the issue has led to the cessation of religious dialogue and political debate."

The group further declared that "in calling those who condone abortion or doctors who perform it 'murderers' and 'Nazis' and likening hospitals and clinics to Auschwitz and Buchenwald . . . Roman Catholic leaders have opted for a kind of demagoguery that destroys the spirit of dialogue and sows the seeds of bitter religious discord."

Unfortunately, those on the side of pro-life who have used such extreme language have handed ammunition to such demonstrators. Thus our plea for more moderate language without weakening any commitment to pro-life. Nonetheless this "declaration" reveals an obvious anti-Catholic strain still alive today even among our respected brothers and sisters of other faiths.

False conclusion? Then why does the declaration merely blame "Roman Catholic leaders?" It does not provide any names, dates or statements. In other words, no attribution. Merely a blanket smear of "Roman Catholic leaders."

These religious leaders are well aware that the pro-life movement does not consist solely of Catholics. Many people of their own faiths abhor abortion. And unseemly verbiage has been used by many of all faiths, or no faith, on both sides of the abortion issue.

Where were such religious leaders when Planned Parenthood distributed a cartoon showing a Roman

Catholic bishop providing gasoline for burning down buildings? Where they upset at such inflammatory (forgive the pun) tactics? Did they demonstrate before Planned Parenthood buildings? Do they pretend that the PP simply committed a boo-boo among its otherwise altruistic pursuits? Can they not grant such latitude for the Roman Catholic Church?

In light of such unjust attitudes, we reconfirm our resolve to follow Sen. Jepsen's advice. We will pray for such people and urge them to view the abortion issue in a different light.

As we said, this is not easy.

May we offer the example provided by Father Kenneth G. Jadoff of the archdiocese of New York who responded to this demonstration by saying he found it "a bit disappointing, to think that other people of religious conviction do not share our sensitivity when it comes to the loss of unborn life."

Conciliatory. But he was also firm. He pointed out that six million abortions have been performed in the United States since the Supreme Court ruling in 1973 . . . "so this is a crime equal at least in numbers to the Holocaust. Abortion is the Holocaust of the 1970s. And the Catholic Church will not be silent when innocent life is being taken."

The Catholic Church has not cornered the market on righteousness and "goodness," for want of a better word. All good people everywhere should see the point, and many have. Indeed the pro-life movement is not monolithic religiously. And indeed many Catholics are pro-abortion.

We pray that the unborn do not continue to suffer while we who have been granted life use their plight to take out other differences upon each other.

and Opinions

Fr. Ehmann Is Thanked

Editor:

I would like to comment on Father Benedict Ehmann's beautiful article in Insights in Liturgy in the Courier-Journal, 1-24. It is truly a treasure. Father's gift of faith shines forth from each word he wrote. There is no greater witness.

God pours His grace into our hungry hearts through the Gospel and the Eucharist. I thank Him for that. I thank God for Father Benedict Ehmann and all who are like him.

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Some Rhymes For Our Times

Editor:

The people want a bishop who will walk among the poor;
the people want a bishop who will knock on every door.

The people want a bishop who will work for women's rights;
the people want a bishop who is not afraid of heights.

The people want a bishop who is not too young or old;
the people want a bishop who is not too meek or bold.

The people want a bishop who is bilingual — so they said;
the people want a bishop with all the facts inside his head.

The people want a

bishop who is holy and humble;
the people want a bishop who is not inclined to stumble.

The people want a bishop with the greatest sense of humor;
the people want a bishop — but I think that is a rumor.

It's not a bishop the people want, but some image they invented,
a figment of a dreamer's mind that ought to be repented.

The people need a bishop as the shepherd of their flock
who is willing to be guided by the Lord Who is our Rock.

The people need a bishop who will do the best he can,
but the people should remember that the bishop is a man.

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2 John Pauls Are Praised

Editor:

Can you not visualize the smile of approval on the face of John Paul I up there in Heaven over the beautiful arrival and reception into Mexico of his successor, John Paul II?

John Paul I, it seems to me, served as sort of a "Master of Ceremonies" into a new age of the Church.

His gracious, peaceful demeanor and smile bespoke of "things to come," rather than calling attention to himself.

Seemingly, after his short reign, he gave in graciously to death with the knowledge that he had served his mission, melting into the background, having prepared the way for the follower to come.

All signs point to John Paul II being a "man of destiny," his mission being launched in Latin America with its millions of dedicated souls.

With him at the helm and John Paul I as the pilot, in God's good time, we may well find ourselves sailing into calmer seas.

God bless Popes John Paul I and II.

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Fr. Greeley 'Predictable'

Editor:

In a column by Father Andrew Greeley which

recently came to my attention, my friend and colleague, Professor Philip Gleason, is described as one who "has been storing up animosity, resentment, a desire to hurt and destroy," "as a man who sticks stilettos in the backs of friends," as "patronizing," "nasty," guilty of "fundamental intellectual dishonesty," as anxious "to inflict pain on someone who thought he was a friend." Such quotations become tiresome, so I shall forebear. Suffice it to say that there is much more talk in this short essay about the hate and betrayal and sadism which allegedly lurk within the soul of Philip Gleason.

What has led to this ferocious indictment, to this vitriolic personal attack? Well, Professor Gleason, writing in a scholarly journal a long review of Father Greeley's recent books, has argued that although Father Greeley's published research analyzing con-

temporary American Catholicism has been extremely helpful and creative — the review, let me emphasize, was on balance a very favorable one — there are elements in that work which deserve restudy or even revision. This mild conclusion, of course, was enough to break Greeley's First Law which reads: You must always praise me, totally, completely, unreservedly, because, unlike other public men, I stand above all criticism. If you don't agree with me all the time and in every way, I will whack you with my verbal battle axe. I will label you in the popular press a knave, a fraud, a Judas Iscariot.

Philip Gleason, the most distinguished historian of American Catholicism presently at work in the field, needs no defense from me, nor does his

thoughtful and judicious article which has brought down upon him Father Greeley's wild rage. Yet, for my own satisfaction, let me assure your readers that the monster described by Father Greeley in his column bears no resemblance to Philip Gleason. It is rather the figment of Father Greeley's increasingly paranoid imagination.

How sad that a man of great gifts should waste them on witless venom of this kind. How predictable and trivial and boring Father Greeley has become.

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Expressions of opinions should be brief, no longer than 1½ 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.

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