

Editorials

Politics of Death

Death as a corrective tool for societal malfunctioning won two decisive battles last week. And although in both cases the larger issues still hang in the balance, the developments were ominous.

For the fourth straight year, the State Legislature has passed a death penalty bill. Thus far, Gov. Carey has managed to sustain vetoes of the measures. This time, proponents of the bill feel they will have the votes to push it through. Sen. Dale M. Volker, sponsor of the measure in the Senate, feels that house will override the veto although the issue is more in doubt in the Assembly.

Despite years and years of argumentation no one has ever shown that the death penalty is a deterrent to crime, which is the only civilized premise in defense of capital punishment, and even that is imperfect. Few proponents will admit to a desire for vengeance as a motivating force.

In a society endangered by its propensity for turning to violence to solve problems -- from Iran to Albany -- it is an appropriate time to defuse the heat.

We have all heard the arguments for and against the death penalty. We feel the simplest is to point to the

execution of the most innocent of men some 2,000 years ago. We feel the death penalty allows for the repetition of such atrocity.

We urge you, in behalf of the bishops of the United States, to write to your local state representatives against death.

The other disheartening development for those who would choose life was provided by U.S. District Judge John Dooling Jr. of Brooklyn who ruled unconstitutional the law banning abortions by Medicaid. The ruling overturns the Hyde Amendment which bans the use of Medicaid funds for abortions unless the mother's life is in danger.

He stayed enforcement of his decision for 30 days, to give the federal government time to appeal. So it appears a long fight looms, possibly reaching the Supreme Court, where life does not fare very well.

Despite persistent disavowals by legislators, both of these issues are entangled in politics. Although the judiciary, particularly in abortion cases, has often taken the dominant role, our government was established so that any of the three powers, executive, legislative or judicial, has the means to curtail any of the others when they are throwing the system out of balance.

Legislators can reverse judicial decisions, even those by the Supreme Court. Those tired of the dark devices of death must let elected officials know of their concern.

Leadership

Editorials in brief.

Example: Pope John Paul II has given temporary lodging at the Vatican for a family of 12 Vietnamese refugees. He told his Jan. 9 general audience that he hoped the refugees "could continue to find nations and families where they are given encouragement, effective support and integration into a normal life." The Holy Father has made frequent pleas for aid to the victims of strife in Indochina, particularly in Cambodia and Vietnam.

Dismal Figures: According to Religious News Service, quoting statistics from the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a Planned Parenthood affiliate, some 1.32 million legal abortions were performed in the U.S. in 1977. And although 1978's horror count is not complete, the figure was expected to reach 1.37 million. To bring the terrible impact home, that is 29 per cent of all the women who became pregnant in 1978.

Hard to Believe: The National Federation for Decency reports that sex incidents on network television shows dropped slightly in 1979 from the previous year. A study says that such incidents occurred slightly more than five times per hour on the three major networks, compared with nearly six times an hour over the previous season. The prime offender continues to be ABC with an hourly rate of 5.64 incidents -- though that is down from 7.65 the previous year.

and Opinions

TV Show Protested

Editor:

I recently wrote a letter to Joseph Cooper of Xerox Corp. and William Carroll, program director at WHEC-TV, to express my dissatisfaction with the recent airing of the made for TV movie "A Family Man." It indicated a total disregard of the prevailing community standards in our city.

As a Roman Catholic and president of St. Andrew's Holy Name Society, I was most offended by Edward Asner's use of the Holy Name Society as an excuse, to carry on an extra-marital affair.

The Holy Name Society is a sacred organization which owes its origin to Pope Gregory. In 1274, Pope Gregory commanded the Dominican order to foster greater devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, and the Holy Name Society was formed.

As a sacred organization it should not be regarded solely as a fraternal or social group.

I took this film as a personal insult to myself and my religion and immediately changed channels.

I asked the two men not to re-run this program and also asked a public apology to the area Catholics and especially to all members of the Holy Name Society.

John A. Sdoia
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Special Christmas

Editor:

I thought our readers might be interested in how one parish made a small effort to celebrate Christmas for its true meaning.

The parents of this year's First Communion class, at St. Michael's Church in

Lyons, were responsible for the Children's Christmas Party. Instead of the traditional Santa and Mrs. Claus passing out gifts, we had a birthday party for Baby Jesus. The Sunday bulletin carried the invitation. Children enjoyed a story about the first Christmas, and a message from Father Richard Orlando, our pastor. Everyone joined hands around the huge birthday cake and sang "Happy Birthday Baby Jesus," and together blew out the candle. Everyone enjoyed Christmas movies followed by birthday cake and punch. We closed the party with Christmas carols.

The parents all had a good feeling that we chose the right theme for the party. And every child, at least for 2 hours on Dec. 16, knew the real meaning of why we celebrate Christmas.

John Burns, Carrol Treas
Christmas Party
co-chairpersons
St. Michael's, Lyons

Vatican II A Mistake

Editor:

It has been a long time that we average Catholics have been exposed to the heretically nauseating jargon of an unpastoral breed of theologians of post-Vatican II. Quousque Tandem...

In the first place we don't understand what they are talking about. In the second, we get the enfeebling idea that the Catholic Church is eroded from within and without.

The ecumenism we hear about seems one-sided: to protestantize our church to the point that even the so-called World Council of Churches (whoever they are) fulminates against us, threatening "immediate ecumenical repercussions." Let anyone who sincerely desires ecumenism humbly come to Peter, because "on this Rock" our church was built.

The aggrionamento deteriorated into a pseudo-renewal or, as some conservative authorities put it, "into an anthropocentric doctrine, a betrayal of the faith under the cloak of liberalism by pseudo-theologians who have lost the credentials of Peter and the faith of Paul."

These theologians confuse instead of clarifying. How many people understand them? Vatican II "should never have happened" at least not by tearing down the singular unity of the Roman Catholic Church. The barnacles encrusted on the Bark of Peter could have been scraped by other means. The way it was done, it opened "a can of worms" for the neo-Arians of this era.

I agree with Father (Kenneth) Baker. And I find no directional signs in pluralism.

Ave, Pope John Paul II, your children "te salutant."

Michael M. Miller
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Shannon View Applauded

Editor:

Msgr. Shannon's superb

letter (C-J 1-2-80) regarding Edward Schillebeeckx's "trial" and Hans Kung's "censure" deserves applause. Congratulations, Msgr. Shannon, for having the courage to acclaim publicly your convictions on these unfortunate issues in the Church's history.

Kathleen M. Rimlinger
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No More Patronizing

Editor:

We have just written a letter to our bishop objecting to recent happenings in the Church that trouble us. Especially, we objected to the actions, approved by Pope John Paul, of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in issuing a declaration against Father Hans Kung and in harassing Father Edward Schillebeeckx -- two men who have dedicated their lives to helping us know Jesus better, and therefore to love him more.

Partly in this connection, we told the bishop we would like the Church to treat us not like mentally immature children, but like intellectually adult human

beings with consciences capable of making right decisions and minds capable of sorting fact from fiction. There is, however, not much hope for that if Archbishop John R. Quinn, president of the National Council Conference of Catholic Bishops, speaks for a majority of bishop in his statement on the Kung matter reported in the Courier-Journal (1/2/80).

The meaning we read into Archbishop Quinn's statement is that the declaration against Kung is not so much a theological one, but is for protection of the innocents -- that's us -- from truths that conflict with or question Catholic Doctrine.

The Kung-Schillebeeckx matter has grave implications. It is much more than a small-minded persecution of two fine theologians; it is an infringement on our right to freedom of thought and decision; it is authoritarianism. Silence about things like this implies approval or, at least, acceptance. Therefore we are protesting. But one voice is rarely heard -- 50 voices can work wonders.

Adolphe and
Loe d'Audiffret
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Dark Side Of Abortions

Editor:

If half of the population believes that a fetus is like an appendix or tonsils (no life) and the rest of us know that is an unborn human, why do the pro-abortionists get their way while we do nothing? We should have a much greater emotional impetus to get the abortion laws repealed, than they did to get them passed. Is it because we humans are so advanced and sophisticated that seven million murders of the unborn since 1973 shouldn't bother us; or is the real reason that in a dark corner of our mind we feel that these terminations will lighten our welfare rolls and help the population explosion? I wonder how many of these millions would have been the leaders and saints of tomorrow we so badly need.

Tom Freeman
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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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