

Editorials

Should State Define Death?

Seldom has the State Catholic Conference, which represents the eight dioceses of New York, made its opposition to a bill so clear as it has in the case of Assembly Bill 9004 which would enact a statutory definition of death.

"It is unnecessary both medically and socially, it is being offered with the weakest of arguments and there are serious religious difficulties with the proposal," said Charles Tobin, general counsel to the conference.

The eight-page statement on behalf of the state's bishops posed two "vital" questions: "1. Should the state define death by law? and 2. What kind of definition of death will it give?"

"This is clearly an area where a legislative solution

to a problem cannot be obtained because of the myriad of personal, psychological, medical and moral factors which are involved," the bishops stated.

"No matter what definition of death you come up with it is going to impose its will on the doctor and his freedom to act in the best interests of his patient... clearly a bad law, bad medicine proposal."

Various other state legislatures have already set up legal definitions of death and no two are the same. This makes possible the grim possibility that a person judged dead in New York may be still considered alive in a neighboring state.

Perhaps the main objection to a legal definition of death is that it intrudes on the doctor-patient relationship. As the bishops state, "A statutory definition of death is unwise because it will serve to usurp the discretionary judgments that physicians must be free to make... physicians will feel compelled to act in accordance with statutory provisions and not with their own best medical judgments and instincts. They will become servants of the law and not servants of their patients."

The bishops further state: "As Roman Catholics we object to governmental policies which intrude upon the interface between the pragmatic world of government and the realm of religious spirituality. Stated in another way, we object to the government determining what is human life (which we hold as sacred) and what is not. When death is defined, so too conversely is life defined. As Pope Pius XII taught, 'because there is involved here a fundamental right received from the Creator... it is necessary to prove with certainty that it has been lost'."

The bishops conclude: "The common law practice of determining death should remain unchanged because it is legally, medically and morally adequate. The proposed legislation is unsound on all of these counts. We urge its defeat."

This is another hot spot in a long line of issues where the sanctity of life is threatened — abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, in vitro experimentation, artificial insemination and involuntary sterilization.

We, too, oppose it.

and Opinions

Take Life As It Is

Editor:

I would like to address this letter to all those who find it so hard to bear the many difficulties in life.

The first point that I would like to make is that life is difficult, but most people make life much more difficult and hard to bear than it really is.

The life led by Jesus Christ was the perfect life. He was humble. He was deliberately poor and uncomplicated. He was pure... hard working and dedicated. Jesus always put his difficulties in life aside and lived his life for others — for us.

Ultimately, Jesus suffered much and died a cruel death — death on a cross. He did that for you and me; He did it for all people.

Do you really think that there would be so many problems in our lives, so much world unrest (Iran, Afghanistan, right here at home) if people would put their own feelings aside and live as Christ did; for others, interested in others, helpful to others.

We must learn to forget ourselves for the Lord said: "If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind" (Luke 9:23).

We must also learn to take things as they come, live one day at a time, live in the living present if you will.

God in his wisdom has given us life divided into days and night. The Lord taught us to take each day as it comes, to put into each day its quota of prayer, work and education and then get an earned night's sleep in preparation for the next day. So do not be anxious about tomorrow; tomorrow will look after itself. Each day has troubles enough of its own (Matt 6:34).

Most importantly we must make our own happiness. So many people think that they would be happy if only life's circumstances were different: if they had a different job, had never married or had married someone else, if they had gotten married, if they had different parents or educations, if they were in a different religious community or seminary, if they lived elsewhere, had more money — or more possessions, etc. But the secret of happiness,

like the kingdom of God is within each one of us.

We must take life the way God has given it to us.

Edward C. D'Ettoire
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Children Enjoy Rosary

Editor:

Dolores Curran's column of March 5 suggesting a number of spiritual substitutions for the Rosary as a family prayer prompts this letter.

As a teacher of religious education for the past several years, I have found children genuinely interested in the Rosary. The drama of the mysteries, if properly explained, appeals to them. Although time permits meditating and praying only one decade usually, participation is gratifying and even the shyest child seems to enjoy "leading" a Hail Mary.

Our Legion of Mary often provides rosaries for the youngsters and they are most happily accepted.

And I wonder if the Irish would have adhered to the Faith despite years of persecution had it not been for their devotion to the family Rosary?

Mrs. Dolores Lamb
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Prisoner's Prayer

Editor:

Following is a prisoner's prayer.

Upon my knees, I plead, Dear Lord, love me.

In my solitude, I beg, Dear Lord, protect me.

And to the Father I plead, for the courage to accept my place upon this earth.

Now I ask the angels for their guidance through my time of despair.

Across the winter sky, I send these pleas, and pray they are heard.

Now alone, and not so brave, facing the lonely grave, I come upon my knees begging, Dear Lord, protect me.

My heart now aching, tears stain my cheeks, as I cry for

forgiveness, praying, Dear Lord, for your everlasting smile to shine upon me.

John Hemmers
75-A-4301
Auburn Correctional Facility

Fr. Cuddy's Odd Error

Editor:

As an avid reader of Father Cuddy's column, "On the Right Side," I have come to the conclusion that all his writing may be reduced to three literary genres: 1. the diocesan travelogue, 2. the conducted-tour advertisement, and 3. the self-dialogue in question-answer form (the last, no doubt, betraying a nostalgic yearning for the bygone days of the Baltimore Catechism, R.I.P.). All three of these literary forms furnish a convenient framework for presenting a goodly number of truths, half-truths, distortions and anti-Vatican II statements.

My reactions to his column run the gamut of a number of emotions, some of which it would not be in good taste to express in a letter to the Editor. Be that as it may, I feel a responsibility to Father Cuddy to point out an odd error in his column of March 12. Strangely, he does not seem to know who his Bishop is: One would certainly expect that he would know that Matthew H. Clark is the Bishop of Rochester. For he calls Father Kennedy "our head liturgist." Now anyone who knows anything at all about liturgy knows that in sound Roman Catholic doctrine it is the Bishop — and he alone — who is the "head liturgist" of the diocese.

Father Kennedy must surely be flattered by this unexpected elevation to episcopal status. But, alas, Father Kennedy, no Courier column — not even Father Cuddy's — carries the weight of an Apostolic Letter from Rome.

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Finds Fault With Seminary

Editor:

I would like to respond to the recent clarification by Father Lioi, St. Bernard's Seminary rector, on why St. Bernard's will continue to use Hans Kung material in view of his censure by the Catholic theological circle. Let me in all seriousness say, balderdash.

That there will be a sifting of the wheat from the chaff is quite apparent. But what is apparent to this reader is that the wheat of Catholicism is usually the chaff of St. Bernard's.

One readily remembers the firing of Father Turvasi from St. Bernard's and the subsequent firing of two others because "the curriculum was being diluted, that psychology was becoming more important than theology (Democrat and Chronicle, 1-15-79). One also recalls a letter to the editor (Times-Union, 3-5-77) in which the Rev. Mr. McCluskey and 14 other seminarians from St. Bernard's, publicly voiced their dissent to Rome's final decision on women priests. Where assent has inexorably been essential to Catholicism, and particularly stressed in the documents of VC II, somehow dissent is now being stressed as the "norm." But anything short of complete loyalty is disloyalty.

Another similar incident happened to occur this morning at Mass during which one of the seminarians from St. Bernard's gave the homily. I had almost always thought that the current and commonest heresy in Christology was to ascribe ignorance to Christ: Our Lord prior to His baptism in the Jordan. Now, however, I find that this Modernist theory, which is really a heresy, has advanced to the point that our Blessed Lord is now unaware of his identity and mission even at the Transfiguration.

When those at St. Bernard's bring teaching in with the Catholic Faith and in conformity with the Second Vatican Council, I will believe they have finally found their raison d'etre.

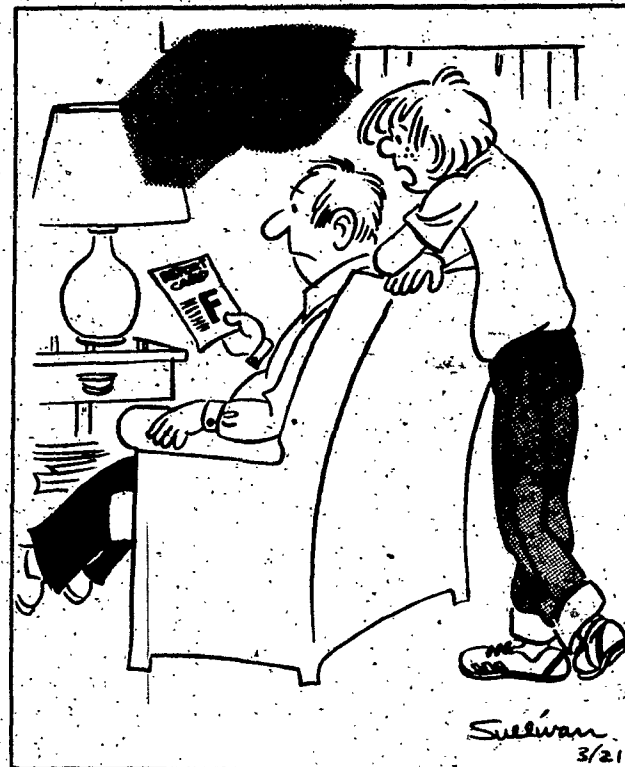
Richard V. Hussar
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Sharing The Blame

Editor:

I would like to respond to two letters — C.A. Irwin, Feb. 27, and Ann L. Wood, March 12.

We have opposite viewpoints and they are both correct. I am a second grade CCD teacher and I certainly don't claim to be one with teaching expertise nor one with a teacher's background of any nature. I found myself volunteering because for three consecutive weeks our pastor



(now deceased) actually begged for teachers. I didn't feel I was qualified nor that I could do a good job for these children, however, I did feel I was better than NO teacher at all.

Yes, we do feel some of our children receive the sacraments without being totally prepared. Yes, we wonder if we are doing the right thing when we let this happen. Believe you me, we do the very best we can in the 45 minutes a week we have. But what is the right thing to do when the majority of the children attend Mass five times during their lifetime. The first at Baptism, the second at First Communion, the third at Confirmation, the fourth at the wedding and the fifth at the funeral. Two of the five they are carried in!

It is right for us teachers to sit in judgment and tell these children they cannot receive the sacraments because their parents do not hear their prayers? Perhaps we as teachers should share the blame with the parents. We are at fault because we let the children come to God unprepared and the parents are to share the blame because they do not prepare the children to go to God.

Marty Hayes
RD2
Wayland, N.Y.

Grateful For Help

Editor:

I would like to convey my thanks and gratitude to the

people of the Rochester Diocese for their generosity.

Because of their giving, Birthright has been formed in Seneca County. This organization is actively concerned with our belief that human life is sacred. The importance of your generosity and support can never be overestimated. To borrow a phrase from another organization, "Thanks to you it's working."

Bob Van Sickle
Assistant Director
Seneca County Birthright

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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