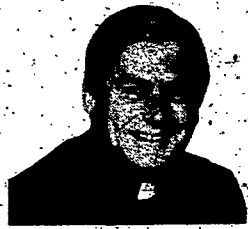


Fr. Louis J. Hohman

The Open Window



War Poses Conscience Dilemma

Dear Father Hohman,

My husband, son and I are having some differences of opinion lately and are now looking for your help. A question arose about the possibility of the re-establishment of the draft and the necessity of our young son to sign up.

My husband served in the armed forces, retired, and now thinks of "army" most of the time. He is definitely not a "dove."

My son, on the other hand, vows that he will leave home and country and never return if he is forced to sign up for the draft. He says something about the whole issue of killing as being against his conscience. We love our son and don't want to lose him.

I remember during World War II how we all participated with jobs, blackouts, rationing, etc. What has happened to our thinking? I am confused. I remember too how we would crowd into our parish church for the Miraculous Medal Novena. What great experiences those were! Whatever happened to that devotion?

Our family avidly reads your column each week and we admire your openness, good sense and zeal. You are a wonderful priest. Keep up your good work, and please answer my letter. We need help!

(Signed) S.R.

Dear S.R.,

I sympathize with your dilemma especially occurring as it does within your own home, between the two people you love most. The problem of the Christian's relationship to war changes in just about every age, due to a number of factors. Because of the rapid changes of the 20th century, changes in attitudes are also very rapid and radical. Very recently the administrative board of the National Catholic Conference published a list of positions on the whole business of registration, draft and war. It pointed out that because of a lack of international cooperation, war could still sometimes be regarded as a necessary defense of what one judged to be right; but it also pointed out that war in most cases was not feasible because the evils that arise from it are so drastic in this day and age. Therefore, it insisted upon the necessity of seeking most assiduously the ending of war according to the pleas of Pope Paul VI. According to the NCC document it is conceivable as a last resort that there could be a just war. Some people say that there is never a conceivable situation in which there could be a just war. As the means of warfare become more sophisticated the likelihood of the latter position becomes greater.

In terms of a position taken by an individual, in view of what was said before, your husband could be in the right, but at the same time the document goes on to state that every person has the moral right to object in conscience to any kind of war, and that this right is recognized by the United States of America.

In the Vietnam War we had instances of what was called "selective conscientious objection." This means that the objection is not to war in general, but to a particular war. According to the NCC administrative board, the individual has also a specific moral, inalienable right to selective conscientious objection, and it is morally wrong to force someone to military service if a particular war in his eyes is not a justified one. The document also states what I think is an important fact, and that is that the people must necessarily be consulted about the viability of a military action. It may seem ridiculous in terms of consulting well over 200 million people, but nevertheless there should be popular input into the decision. I presume that this would not apply to a situation in which we were placed under an immediate total attack. What evoked the revival of registration and possibly of the draft was the situation in the Middle East, where things are not at all clear and where we are talking not of an all-out total war of defense, but rather a war of punishment. The viability of such a war would be under serious doubt. I for one would not accept it.

So your husband and your son would perhaps not agree with each other at this particular point, but if they both allow each other the right to differ, then maybe the thing could be set to rest at least in terms of family peace.

When you bring up World War II, I think you're bringing up a situation which was radically different from the way war is perceived today. First of all, we were not aware of a nuclear capability until it had happened, and that was in the last weeks of World War II. The rest of the time we were quite convinced of the absolute righteousness of our cause and we moved together as a nation to end the threat to our freedom. As you well know, the situation in Korea, and even more so in Vietnam, was totally different from that. We found out that as a nation we cannot assume our personal righteousness or the legitimacy of using violence as a solution.

Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage to the shrines of Quebec is planned for July 5-12. The schedule calls for two days at Cape Madeleine, two days at Ste. Anne's and two days in Montreal, for visits to St. Joseph's. Mrs. Mary Kelly announced that reservations for the bus excursion could be made through 254-3485 or 865-7891.

Fr. Valenti Named Vocations Director

Father Thomas J. Valenti, associate pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church, has been appointed vocations director for the diocese. The appointment, like others announced recently and still others yet to come, is effective June 25, the Pastoral Office said.

The vocations post has been vacant for some time. Father Valenti, 31, brings to it considerable experience of

work with young people. At various times during his seminary years he taught theology at Bishop Kearney High School, was a member of the guidance department at McQuaid Jesuit High School, worked at DePaul Clinic and with youth groups at St. Monica's. He has a BA degree in psychology from St. John Fisher College and an MDiv in theology from St. Bernard's Seminary. He was ordained April 2, 1976.

Course Scheduled In Grantsmanship

A five-day course in grantsmanship, an \$85 billion national business, has been scheduled June 26-30 at the Holiday Inn Downtown Rochester.

Sponsored by the Trinity Council 4618 of the Knights of Columbus with the support of Xerox Corp., the course is limited to 25 persons representing local social and cultural interests.

Participants are taught program planning, researching government and private grant sources and how to write grant applications.

"This is the 10th time we have sponsored the program," said Stanley T. Zawacki, the group's chairman. "Each time we are delighted with the turnout. This reflects the growing need for guidance in this area's institutions, both public and private, that are relying more on grant dollars more than ever."

Tuition is \$375 per student and some scholarship money is available to needy agencies. Information is available from C. Eyres at 423-4882.

Two NFP Informations Sessions Set

Two Natural Family Planning sessions have been scheduled. The first, conducted by Joe and Terri Petracca, will take place from 7:30 to 9 p.m., Thursday, May 15, at St. John the Evangelist on Humboldt Street.

Norm and Sandy Pawlak will conduct another information session from 7:30 to

Holy Hour

A holy hour in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary will begin at 3 p.m. Sunday, May 18, at Holy Rosary Church, under the sponsorship of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima. Father Robert Meng will direct devotions.

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2:00
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