

Editorials

The Heart Knows

Whether the State Legislature acts on the proposal to raise the public assistance level is questionable. Albany-watchers worry that the lawmakers will adjourn today (Wednesday, June 11) without acting to help the poor.

Because of deadline we cannot state with surety when this adjournment will take place. We urge our readers to keep informed on the matter.

If the legislature does adjourn today it may be only temporarily with a resumption after Election Day. Thus the opportunity of writing the governor and your legislators would be still viable. If adjournment is final, then those in dire need of help will have been neglected by our legislators for another year.

These are the political considerations. Moral and spiritual concerns on the matter also exist and need to be propounded.

We would not hesitate to say that there is not one single reader who does not realize that it is our Christian duty to take care of those afflicted by hunger and poverty. No argument diminishes this fact; no platitude enhances it.

However, this being an age of statistics, we ask our readers to re-consider the plight of those on public

assistance. A family of four receives a basic cash grant of \$258 per month to cover the cost of food, clothing, utilities, educational expenses and medical expenses not covered by Medicaid.

This allowance has not changed since 1974.

In Monroe County, this family of four also may get a shelter allowance of \$192 with heat or \$156 without heat.

And please, dear reader, don't fall prey to the temptation to belittle those on public assistance and thus erase the natural urge to help.

Nearly 70 percent of those on public assistance are children. And more than half of them are under eight years of age!

A great portion of the rest are aged, blind, disabled. The State Catholic Conference — and this is not a monolithic drive; many denominations joined in the effort — points out that "the mythical public assistance caseload of non-aged, non-disabled, employable adults is just that — a myth."

We must not allow ourselves to be victims of this false stereotype. We must not be led from the course of justice by mythical figures. We must not be enticed by comfortable but untrue arguments.

We must follow the dictates of our hearts. Think of it, 802,845-children in our own state ill-fed, ill-housed and neglected! Bishop Matthew H. Clark and the other religious leaders of this area have called on us to help. We must act.

Cowardice

We can understand and sympathize with the helpless situation Father William O'Malley describes in his letter elsewhere on this page. Unsigned attacks are a malicious and dangerous ploy — we would hope that anyone who contemplates them would stop and realize this.

Newspapers receive many such messages and they quickly are thrown into the trash. Unless for a worthy reason, we do not print opinions that are unsigned, regardless of the sentiment expressed. The many reasons for this policy are obvious; suffice it to say that writers should have the courage of their convictions.

But Father O'Malley refers to something a step beyond a merely anonymous letter. He has been defamed, misrepresented and personally pained — all under the implied guise of Christianity. What he does not mention, but which we're sure he realizes, is that if the perpetrator is unbalanced enough to send such a letter what malice is he or she spreading by word of mouth?

Such reprehensible tactics are at once symptomatic of and contributory to the general malaise unsettling the present-day world. They constitute no small matter; they are part and parcel of the violence we all should be condemning.

Slandorous and/or libelous gossip is a close cousin to the obscene telephone call. Its capacity for harm, or downright evil, is enormous.

And regardless of the intent, such modus operandi have absolutely nothing to do with Christianity, good, truth or righteousness.

Father O'Malley expresses it well; such letters are the act of cowards.

and Opinions

Unsigned Attack Cowardly

Editor:

I am in receipt of various pieces of anonymous mail from people I must believe are "concerned Christians," at least in their own minds. I feel a bit helpless, since the writers have me at a disadvantage — which is, I suspect, precisely where the writers would like to have me. But it does seem a mite unfair, and perhaps you will allow me to focus the attention of your readers not merely on the unfairness of anonymous mail but on its cowardice.

The latest contribution was a clipping from some newspaper, a rather salacious piece about Fr. Robert Drinan, SJ, who is not only my fellow Christian but my brother in religion and my friend, who did a great deal to save the suffering Catholics of El Salvador from even more pain than they are presently undergoing. The writer of the article seemed unaware of that, describing Drinan as "just another flaming liberal." Everything else Drinan did was completely erased by his vote on abortion funding. Personally, I would have preferred Drinan to have abstained on that bill, but what he did was not able in my mind to negate everything else that he did. Perhaps I read more into the parable of the Prodigal Son than either the author of the article or my kindly correspondent do.

What irritated me most was the anonymous note, in red felt-tip pen: "Some of these comments could apply to 'actors.'" Since Jimmy the Greek would refuse odds on the bet that the writer reads the Courier-Journal, let me try to reach the faceless accuser to say that Pope John Paul II was — and surely is — a consummate actor. He does not withdraw his name from plays and books that he has written.

What goes beyond irritation to helpless fury is that the writer used the same red pen to outline statements about abortion, as if telling me that those sentiments were mine. A circuit must have blown the writer's crystal ball. I have written in the public press condemning abortion. I have written in the pages of this paper condemning abortion. On my lapel I have a red rose insignia — which even many priests do not know is a Right to Life symbol. As I have said before in these pages, I thank God that my eternal judgment is in the hands of my Father and not in the hands of self-righteous cowards who guess what one thinks and who execute in the dark and run.

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Parish Shares In Community

Editor:

Dolores Curran (Keep Our Parish Ours), take heart! St. Augustine's Church on Chili Avenue fits her description of a typical parish's efforts to survive but with two twists. It is a city parish located in the changing and progressive 19th Ward and it is not autonomous.

St. Augustine's and St. Monica's on Genesee Street have joint staff meetings, joint staff meals and share a staff business manager. They work together in youth ministry and prepare their children jointly for First Eucharist, First Penance and Confirmation.

For over five years, St. Augustine's and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, a block apart, have shared liturgies (the lighting of the Easter fire and Seder suppers, for example). Their Joint Education Committee, composed of staff and lay-

people from each church, have developed a Joint Sunday Morning Education Program which reaches preschoolers through adults, singles, marrieds, Episcopalians and Roman Catholics.

All of the above mentioned congregations are part of a larger covenant, the Southwest Ecumenical Mission, composed of Christian Churches in the area who share liturgies as well as community involvement (FISH, Food Cupboard, Clothes Closet, for example).

Ms. Curran states that she feels it is often the pastor who shies away from such cross-parish activities. I agree. St. Augustine's and the other churches involved have been blessed over the years with priests who not only see Christ in the sharing, but who value, along with many of their parishioners, the enrichment inherent therein. Praise God!

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Appeasement Won't Work

Editor:

Because of a typographical error, it was stated incorrectly in the letter of Mr. Lee Strong that I doubted a just war is possible today.

Also in his letter, Mr. Lee incorrectly assumed that Vatican II condemned all nuclear weapons.

What was condemned was the indiscriminate use of these weapons, not the weapons themselves.

Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes) states: "The defensive strength of any nation is considered to be dependent upon its capacity for immediate retaliation against an adversary. Hence this ac-

cumulation of arms, which increases each year, also serves, in a way heretofore unknown, as a deterrent to possible enemy attack. Many regard this state of affairs as the most effective way which peace of a sort can be maintained between nations at the present time."

Peace groups, on the other hand, advocate unilateral armament by the United States even though the Soviet Union is militarily more powerful and much more aggressive.

This in itself should make us all suspicious of peace groups.

While there are sincere individuals involved in peace groups, there are also individuals in these groups who are working for the Soviet Union.

Therefore, we should never forget that the Soviet Union is serious about world conquest and will use any means in its power to attain this goal.

During the 1930s, appeasement was a policy that encouraged Nazi aggression. Since Communist aggression is even more contemptuous of appeasement, we should not deceive ourselves into thinking that unilateral disarmament will deter Communist aggression. We should remember that evil prevails when good people do nothing.

Our "do nothing" surrender in Southeast Asia led to the murder of millions of Indochinese by their Communist "liberators."

Let us learn from that mistake.

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Holy Day Idea Worrisome

Editor:

There are 8,760 hours in a regular year. How nice that Roman Catholic authorities



OH, COME ON, HARRY! IT ISN'T LIKELY YOU'LL SIT NEXT TO THAT BODYBUILDER AGAIN DURING THE SIGN OF PEACE.

might release followers from the chore of worshipping God for three of them. After all, I'm sure that most of us need those three hours to shop or clean house or watch television or hone athletic prowess or keep abreast of world news or — hey! — we can all use an extra three hours of sleep, can't we?

I think it would be much nicer if those authorities let us choose the two feast days we'd like to still observe — shouldn't "individual situations" be considered in this democratic era? I'm particularly edified to see that Ascension Thursday may be celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter. If our national holidays can be shifted around for purposes of convenience, why not our religious holidays?

These decisions regarding religious practices are generally made by those who are, presumably, devoted to their faith, their God. It really matters not when they must attend Mass or fast or exercise some form of penance or worship — they will do it

regardless. Are they perhaps unaware of the weaknesses plaguing most church members? When most of us are released from a compulsory act of this nature, it being suggested that spiritually we benefit more from voluntary action, we tend to agree and... not do it. For example; de-emphasis on Confession: so many persons now confess once a year, if that. This erodes our state of soul; pushes aside thoughtful resolutions for improvement.

Making the practice of religion easier, more pleasant, does not necessarily increase adherent quality or quantity. Some are deterred by the difficult, but many feel that what requires work is more worthwhile; the goal you work for gives more joy. Educators have begun to question the theory that if school is fun, kids learn more/better; should our bishops be raising the same question? Is it possible that the road to impotence is paved with good intentions?

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