

**Editorials**

**The Force**

When John Paul II ascended to the papacy in 1978, it became obvious to observers of the international scene that the world east of the Iron Curtain would be in for some unique problems.

His trip to Poland in which members of the Communist hierarchy had to grin and greet this remarkable man, clearly depicted the dilemma facing the various politburos right up to Moscow.

Then came the workers' strike in Poland wherein the people's determination embarrassed the leadership, eventually overturning the party boss. And all the while, Moscow with its hands already bloody from its Afghanistan adventure, stood idly by, presumably not

ready to risk world ostracism if it entered Poland.

With the culmination of the strike, Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski and Lech Walesa, the workers' leader, met to reaffirm the Church's solidarity with the nation's labor force. Needless to say, it does not bode well for any totalitarian government to have its working class turn to the Church instead of government. In a Communist setup, this is doubly troublesome because of the government's claimed identification with the working class.

But the problem for the Communists doesn't end there. Pope John Paul II in a strong statement on the occasion of the 41st anniversary of the invasion of Poland from the west by Nazi Germany and from the east by the Soviet Union, continued to chop away at Warsaw and Moscow authority.

Speaking in his native language to 900 Poles present

at his Sept. 3 open-air audience, the pope declared that Poland had won the right to national sovereignty; which, he said, "means the right to self-determination in which respect is asked from the international order, from the international moral order."

John Paul said Poland "was not only submitted to the terrible occupation but also gave in Holocaust six million of its sons and daughters . . . justifying in a particular way the moral right to independence and sovereignty."

The Poles present applauded and cheered, "Viva il Papa" and "Long Live Poland!"

Such a scene is not conducive to restful nights for the Warsaw set. And again that must also apply to Moscow.

Yes, this first Polish pope is indeed a potent force threatening atheistic communism.

**and Opinions**

**Thank You, Bishop Hickey**

Editor:

I would like to express my gratitude to Bishop Hickey and all those priests of the Rochester diocese who were so kind to my mother and the family when Dad passed away last July. After I was able to reach Manila and telephone Mother, just before the funeral, I no longer felt so badly about not being able to be there myself.

Mother was completely composed, consoled by the peaceful death of my father, and overwhelmed by the show of esteem and affection for him. She was especially moved that so many priests were here, which she mentioned several times during the telephone conversation. I was particularly touched when Mother said that Bishop Hickey had also come and told her, "I am coming in place of your son who cannot be here." Thank you, Bishop Hickey.

There were no conferees from my congregation present. No one thought to inform them of Dad's death. But Mother did not even notice until I inquired, because the priests of the Diocese of Rochester were showing them such priestly affection.

Thank you. God bless you.

Richard Kraft, SVD  
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**Summer Camp Gratitude**

Editor:

With the successful conclusion of the United Cancer Council's Summer Camp for children with cancer, I'd like to take this opportunity to commend the many individuals and organizations who turned a dream into a reality within the short space of a few months.

Also, I can report that the United Cancer Council will continue the program next year and expand to permit more participants.

While the list of people who contributed time and expertise as counselors and committee members is too lengthy to recite here, certain individuals deserve special commendation.

Gary Mervis brought the idea to the council's public relations committee and subsequently played a major role in enlisting community support.

Bello Snyder, owner of Camp Eagle Cove on Fourth Lake, came forward without prompting from any quarter to offer his facilities free to the campers.

Dr. Martin Klemperer volunteered his essential service as camp medical director.

Doug Brown did a superb job of organizing the camp staff and served as camp director.

Jan Bruzicki served as assistant camp director.

I'd like to commend the staff of the United Cancer Council, under Executive Director Sharleen Bruse, who spent many hours in excess of their normal working day handling the myriad details and logistics of the program.

And, of course, the members of the council board also deserve credit for perceiving the value of the summer camp proposal and approving its incorporation into council activities.

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**Gratitude For Help**

Editor:

In the Courier-Journal of Aug. 20, you were kind enough to run an article on Page 2 entitled "Help Needed." We wish to let you know that we had an immediate response (in fact, several) to your article which resulted in Genesee Settlement House receiving an excellent refrigerator-freezer to help service our food cupboard. We appreciate your generosity and that of your readers. Please accept our heartfelt thanks. With the unit we are now about to expand the services of our cupboard by providing eggs, butter and peanut butter and some other items to people in need who really need these added items of staples for their diets.

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**Is It Time To Excommunicate HITLER?**

By Edythe Westenhaver  
Religious News Service

A recent suggestion that the Roman Catholic Church excommunicate Adolf Hitler has brought a time-honored but always controversial ecclesial practice back into the news.

The Catholic Church still practices excommunication — excluding someone from the community of the faithful for scandalously sinful acts — though less frequently than it once did. The mainline Protestant churches, as they have become more liberal, have abandoned the practice, but many of the more conservative Protestant bodies, as well as the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, still use it.

The proposal that the Nazi dictator, who was baptized a Catholic, be excommunicated posthumously comes from Harry Cargas, a St. Louis Catholic author who has specialized in writings about the Holocaust and who was recently named by President Carter to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

Although aware that excommunication has heretofore been used only against living persons, Cargas recently argued in the independent National Catholic reporter that "it is important that the church break precedent and publicly pronounce against the dead Nazi leader."

Such a move would have two effects, Cargas feels. "First, it would be a sign to our Jewish brothers and sisters — a sign of acknowledgement of our past failures and an attitude of repentance for Christian participation in the Holocaust.

"Second," Cargas asserts, "the excommunication of Hitler would be an unmistakable message to the contemporary neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klanners and others that those who preach racial hatred and their followers are behaving in a morally reprehensible manner."

The Catholic Church's failure to act publicly against Hitler and his regime — a failure Cargas describes as "notorious" — follows a Vatican policy that grew out of the unfortunate aftereffects of the excommunication of Queen Elizabeth I of England. Up until that time, the church had frequently excommunicated civil leaders as a way of protecting society — most often, the poor and the powerless — from various forms of spiritual and secular tyranny.

But in the new era of European history that was ushered in by the Protestant Reformation, the action boomeranged, and those who suffered were the faithful. The excommunication of the Tudor queen as a heretic by Pope Pius V provoked a virulent persecution which took the lives of 189 men and women, and caused imprisonment and loss of possessions for countless others.

The papal decree intensified the monarch's efforts to extinguish Catholicism in her realm — virtually wiping out Roman loyalties in England, where great numbers of people had remained loyal to the old church despite the actions of Elizabeth's father,



Henry VIII, and setting off a 400-year civil war between England and Ireland.

The Catholic Church dropped the practice of excommunicating public figures where harm to innocent parties might result, and on these grounds, has defended its policies of not condemning the Nazi leaders, some of whom had been raised as Catholics.

The Roman Church has traditionally employed two types of excommunication: a more severe form which involves a formal and specific public decree and instructs the faithful to "avoid" the expelled party, and a lesser, automatic form in which the offender is to be "tolerated."

Anyone who kills a priest is automatically excommunicated as, for example, the murderers of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. Before the prelate's assassination last March, he had on two occasions issued formal decrees of excommunication against those who had killed several priests in his diocese.

Voluntary abortion carries an automatic penalty of excommunication against the woman and whoever assists her. The United States is the only country which ever levied automatic excommunication against divorced Catholics who remarry outside the church, but the 93-year-old ruling was lifted in 1977 by Pope Paul VI at the request of the American bishops.

Priests have frequently been excommunicated for heresy of schism — most notably, Martin Luther. In 1977, a Mexican priest, Father Moises Carmona, was formally expelled for refusing to recognize the legitimacy of Pope Paul VI or the reforms of Vatican Council II.

Despite frequent rumors, no action has so far been taken by the Vatican to excommunicate Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, the dissident French prelate who has been periodically ordaining priests, establishing churches and celebrating Mass in the superseded Tridentine Rite. The archbishop was suspended, a lesser step, in 1976.