

Editorials

Persecution

Opponents of aid to private schools and proponents of abortion have managed very subtly and successfully to implant an erroneous idea in the collective psyche of the American people. They have, and often purposefully, created the impression that Catholics are opposed to the cherished American separation of Church and state.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Officially and instinctively, American Catholics are among the strongest supporters of the principle that Church and state are the oil and water of the national chemistry and must remain that way. Catholics historically have felt the brunt and recognized the tragedy of state religion.

Along these lines, it is apropos to clearly see the latest example of a state-established religion — as it is practiced in Iran. There, if a person worships his God in a manner different from the established Shi'ite

Muslim sect, he or she may be treated as a traitor.

Thus, the Ayatollah Khomeini has been systematically squeezing the Baha'i sect. And for Khomeini, who must be regarded as a fanatic, that entails that old standby of fearful men, capital punishment. According to Religious News Service, the afternoon newspaper Kayan published photos of seven men killed by a firing squad Sept. 8 in the city of Yazd. Their crime? An Iranian Islamic court convicted them of serving "America and Israel" and "betraying the Koran and Islam."

The Baha'i Sect, which the Shi'ites see as heretical, numbers about 450,000 in Iran, the nation's largest religious minority. Under Iran's new constitution, they have no protection. The ayatollah has closed all their schools and welfare centers, has expropriated their companies and has driven a thousand from their homes. That's in addition to two waves of executions. In addition, Muslim mobs have sacked the Baha'i's holiest shrine — the House of Bab in Shiraz.

The Baha'i faith has its world headquarters in Haifa, Israel. Its name comes from its founder Baha'ullah (Splendor of God) — known as the Bab. It developed

out of Babi, a Sufi (Muslim mystical) movement, founded in Persia in 1844.

For some, it may be difficult to be very concerned about a far-off sect with a strange name. But be assured, there are Baha'is living in our very own diocese.

And it would serve us to remember that there was a time, and there still is today in some parts of the world, when Christians constituted a strange group with an odd name.

However, Iran may be providing us an even more important lesson. We know that a union of Church and state is dangerous. We know that capital punishment is wrong. Put the two together in the hands of a fanatic and the result is a vicious, sanctioned abuse of rights and persons.

Remember this when someone suggests that Catholics are amenable to established state religion. Remember this when someone asks you to support capital punishment. Perhaps the ayatollah in his way is at least baring the real dangers of some practices which might seem acceptable in the abstract.

and Opinions

Polls Don't Prove Much

Editor:

On Thursday, Sept. 25, an article in the Democrat and Chronicle stated that a Gannett News Service-Newsday Poll showed 70 per cent of New Yorkers were against an amendment that would ban abortions. Having a degree in sociology as well as in moral theology, I would like to respond to this from two viewpoints.

First of all, from a sociological point of view, that information was misleading. A New York Times-CBS News Poll (Aug. 20, 1980) asked a random sample of Americans about their views of abortion in several different ways and obtained different results:

First respondents were asked: "Do you think there should be an amendment to the Constitution prohibiting abortions or shouldn't there be such an amendment?" Only 29 per cent of those surveyed favored the proposal while 62 per cent were opposed and the rest were uncertain (similar to the results of the Gannett poll).

Later, the same people were asked: "Do you believe there should be an amendment to the Constitution protecting the life of the unborn child or shouldn't there be such an amendment?" The result: 50 per cent in favor, 39 opposed, the rest undecided. Fully one-third of those who opposed the amendment when it was presented as "prohibiting abortions" supported it when it was presented as "protecting the life of the unborn child." This clearly shows the problems with how polls are used. The language used and the way the instrument is conducted can have significantly different results.

This leads to the second viewpoint which is of a moral concern. We, as Christians, cannot decide on morality because of public opinion. When the high majority of Americans during the 1800s accepted slavery, did that make slavery moral? If 70 per cent of Americans support a build-up of military spending which deprives the poor of needed services and raises the risk of a nuclear holocaust, does that make it right? If 95 per cent of Iranians feel the American hostages should be executed, does that make it right?

The moral decisions we make must be rooted in the guidelines of Scripture, Church teachings and human reason that is based on the respect and the common good of all people (not in polls).

Too often polls assume that people have sufficient knowledge to answer the question asked, and very often they don't. All that the recent poll showed is that there is much work to be done to increase peoples' awareness of the humanity of the unborn and the equal right to reverence and protection that we should all enjoy as children of God and citizens under our Constitution.

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Graham To Speak

Editor:

General Daniel O. Graham, former deputy director of the CIA and chief of the U.S. military Central Intelligence, will be a featured speaker at a luncheon sponsored by the Mindszenty Foundation on Saturday, Oct. 11, at the Genesee Plaza/Holiday Inn. Gen. Graham, who believes that current U.S. policy of detent and disarmament has failed to eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons, will speak on the development of new policies to deal with Soviet nuclear power and Communist advances around the world.

He is currently serving as co-chairman of the Coalition for Peace through Strength. His talk will be open to the public.

Miss Eleanor Schlafly, well known television personality and director of the Mindszenty Foundation, will also address the conference on "Communism and the Present Danger." She is frequently heard on the program, "Dangers of Apathy." The Oct. 11 meeting has been planned, Miss Schlafly said, to acquaint concerned citizens with some of the important issues and problems they face in the near future.

Father James S. O'Reilly, SCC, and Mrs. Julia Mitchell will conduct a workshop on the "Family under Siege,"

examining attacks on the family structure encouraged by abortion, sexual permissiveness and secular humanism.

Father O'Reilly is a missionary who was imprisoned in China by the Communist government and expelled in 1953. Both Father O'Reilly and Mrs. Mitchell will be very interesting people to meet and talk to during the workshop.

Those attending the conference may also have an opportunity to talk to Gen. Graham and Eleanor Schlafly. It will be nice for those attending the conference to be able to say, now and in the future, that they have met these interesting and knowledgeable people and have discussed timely issues with them.

Further information on the day is available by calling Mrs. Gertrude Newberry, (716) 473-7475.

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Marist Stamp Act

Editor:

Most of us have studied in American history what is known as the Stamp Act. We would like to tell you about what is known as the Marist Stamp Act.

Its purpose is to help the Marist Brothers foreign missions. The collection of foreign and domestic canceled postage stamps has been of great benefit to them.

All types, even ordinary ones, are useful. The brothers are interested in stamp collections no longer wanted; foreign canceled postage stamps; U.S. canceled stamps; first day of issue envelopes.

Please do not damage the little teeth around the edge of the stamps. Kindly send the stamps to me.

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DSC Notes Jubilee

Editor:

St. Paul tells us that "There is a variety of gifts but the same Spirit" (1 Cor.). It is the

richness of these gifts and the action of the Spirit we are celebrating on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the School Sisters of Notre Dame within our Diocese.

The Sisters Council of the Diocese of Rochester sends them warmest greetings, gratitude for their years of generous service, and prayers that their vision and hopes may be realized for the Church of the 80s.

Our gift to them is a donation in their name to the Southwest Ecumenical Mission's Food Cupboard. This service expresses the wish of all congregations in the Diocese; the hope and desire to be of service to those who are very dear to the Lord — the poor.

We join all the people of the Diocese in our expression of congratulations.

The Sisters Council  
Of the Diocese of Rochester

Technology: The Beast?

Editor:

For a nominal sum you can now buy a miniature computer containing the vital statistics and life history of every average individual in the nation — much of which we ourselves are unaware. Pat Robertson explored the eventualities of this computer in "Seven Days Aflame" (700 Club, daily, 5:55 a.m., Channel 8).

Possibly within two years Robertson sees a mark tattooed on every individual — babies included — without which no one will be permitted to buy or sell. Non-cooperators will have their marks nullified — imagine their predicament!

Come to think about it, how else can the present brand of free enterprise (freedom to plunder) be corrected in a world where a billion people are hungry while an affluent minority wastes enough to feed them?

According to Robertson, the computer can be either a boon of mercy or the Beast of the Apocalypse — depending on whether or not the world responds with genuine love and compassion, with the Golden Rule of Christ the Lord.

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Peacemakers' Birthdays

Editor:

This is a late response to the birthday of Gandhi (Oct. 2), and to the Feast of St. Francis (Oct. 4).

St. Francis is thought of as one who helped maintain the credibility of a Church which had fallen away from an earlier faithful witness to the Gospel of Peace. His words from his "Rule for a Layman's Third Order" are as timely as ever: "They are not to take up arms or carry them about for any reason."

Gandhi lived in the midst of a land occupied by an exploitive foreign power, as did Jesus. He expressed the belief behind his resistance to that power: "If love is not the law of our being, the whole of my argument falls to pieces." The good fruits of Gandhi's life, so visible in the political world, were based on this truth, not on the clever manipulation of people. This contrasts with our present election scene where "leaders" serve to highlight feelings of fear of militarism, violence and revenge.

Within this passing U.S. empire, we are all implicated in its preparations of ever greater violence towards the earth and its inhabitants. What if we could gain or control the whole world? We have lost our soul. How can we continue saying through action or non-action that there is no force but a force of arms when we consider the

examples of Francis or Gandhi? Let us strive to make specific and concrete in our diocese their spirit of non-violence, mercy, peace, respect for the earth, justice and redemption.

St. Luke wrote: "... he set his face resolutely towards Jerusalem."

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Devotees Thanked

Editor:

I would like to thank all the devotees of Mary who have contributed in spreading our Lady's message of Fatima.

God will certainly bless them for their beautiful faith.

We are living in very difficult times when some of our most cherished beliefs are being called into question, and problems of everyday living are becoming more complicated. Our times are calling us to deepen and renew our convictions which Christ has given us, and to imitate His fidelity and love for the Father.

It is a time for great sacrifice, prayer and penance. Your response has been very heartwarming. May God and Mary bless and love you.

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"I LIKE THE MAN, BUT HE'S A LITTLE TOO PAROCHIAL FOR MY TASTES."