

Editorials

Do You Keep the Faith?

James sent us a letter which, as does all Scripture, applies even more strongly this day than it did when written almost 2,000 years ago.

He writes to us, "What good is it to profess faith without practicing it? Such faith has no power to save one, has it? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and no food for the day, and you say to them, 'Good-bye and good luck! Keep warm and well fed' but do not meet their bodily needs, what good is that? So it is with faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless."

Such advice is particularly on target as the 11th annual Courier-Journal Christmas Fund begins this week. The drive aims to help the very neediest of our brothers and sisters during the holy season commemorating the birth of the paragon of charity.

Just why is the message from Scripture so apropos?

Because in our very midst, in this diocese, we have brothers and sisters with "nothing to wear and no food for the day." This is not a handy generalization but a fact, substantiated by accounts of needy cases provided by the various agencies of Catholic Charities which will be published weekly until Christmas.

If there is anything astounding about the cases it is not that they exist but that there are so many more than the 100 chosen as the neediest. They are only representative of the many more in dire straits as we head toward Christmas.

Almost all of the people cited in these cases suffer from one end of the year to the other, true. But their misery is intensified at the time of the year when so many others are engaged in the festivities surrounding modern Christmas. Psychologists tell us that depression is deepened at Christmastime. The reasons, we think, are obvious.

Catholics have taken to heart one of Christ's most graphic guidelines, "Whatever you do for the least of my brothers, this you do for me."

Simply put, many of our sisters and brothers, and we refer not to those in seemingly remote places but to those with whom we literally rub elbows, will not have the opportunity to note Christ's birthday in 1980. Unless we help.

Old people, perhaps with only a few or just one Dec.

25th left, will not have a Christmas this year. Unless we help.

Children, surrounded by the festive panoply, not only will not receive a visible sign of the celebration, but also will suffer from the pain of hunger. Unless we help.

The lonely will be further ostracized. Unless we help.

For many, there will be no joy, no hope. Unless we help.

We cannot shrug it all off by cheerfully saying into the wind, "Have a good day."

"What good is that?" James has asked us rhetorically.

We fully realize that Courier readers, and Catholics in general, need little urging to come to the aid of the troubled. The Courier-Journal Christmas Fund is proof of that. It has grown steadily since its inception 11 years ago and last year, for the first time, broke the \$50,000 mark.

But with unemployment, rising fuel costs, the general upturn in costs for the essentials, more and more persons have fallen into the web of poverty. Consequently, more and more is needed to help them out.

and Opinions

Due Notice Received

Editor:

In my recent letter to the editor of the Courier about the distribution of the Holy Communion, I did not mention any parish at all.

Yet, I notice a few toes were stepped on in my parish. Sorry about that!

As the old saying goes, if the shoe fits, wear it.

James M. Cowger
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Prayers For Yazback

Editor:

As a Church community, our respect for Tony Yazback stems from his outstanding integrity, which in our opinion is beyond reproach.

As this time, our concern is that justice be rendered as quickly as possible for all concerned.

We assure Tony and his family of our continued love and prayers.

Harold E. Peiffer,
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Misquoted, Sister Says

Editor:

I would like to clarify a misconception that may have been conveyed in the Nov. 12 article: DSC Meets in Geneva. My remarks regarding values were made in the context of society at large and not the public school system. I felt that I was erroneously quoted in this regard. I sincerely feel that the public school system is doing an admirable job. As you know, however, they do not have the same freedom to teach Christian values as do our Catholic schools. It was my firm belief in our opportunity to do this in our Geneva Catholic schools which prompted my remarks.

Sister Mary Maywalt
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Fr. Ehmman Commended

Editor:

It was my good fortune to be able to attend the concert given last evening at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Williamsville by Father Benedict Ehmman and his Gregorian Choral. What a distinctive pleasure to hear again the official music of the Church done by professionals! And what an inspirational message derived, not only from the concert but also from the talk given afterward by Father Ehmman on the

Liturgy of the Hours and its place in Catholic worship today!

May God grant us more men with the zeal and the spiritual calibre of Father Ehmman in order that His worship and praise may be enhanced in His Church.

Sister
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Altar Girls Disturbing

Editor:

I was disturbed and shocked when I read the article by Susan McNamara in the Democrat and Chronicle Nov. 10 on altar girls.

Secularism again rears its ugly head in the Church. Defying the pope's order to stop using girls as altar girls.

The Rev. J. Callan should be taken to task for allowing girls to serve at Mass. Also the Rev. Louis Hohman for condoning the use of altar girls. There are too many priests in the diocese (with too liberal views) that encourage secularism in the Church. We take it for granted now that women distribute Holy Communion, act as lectors and women strumming guitars at folk Masses. Now the latest gimmick to emerge is having altar girls serving at Mass.

Thank God that here at St. Pius 10th we still have the traditional altar boys serving the priests at Mass.

Charles G. Mikeltish
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Death Penalty Supported

Editor:

In their most recent attack on capital punishment, the Courier-Journal hailed the Massachusetts Supreme Court's action of over-throwing that state's recently passed death penalty law.

The reasons given for this decision were that the death

penalty violated the ban on cruel and unusual punishment and that it also discriminated against local minority groups.

Reflecting on these reasons, it is quite obvious that logic was discarded.

Are criminal acts to be prosecuted on the quota system basis? Should a criminal escape punishment because he or she belongs to a racial minority group?

As for being cruel and unusual the crime of murder while not that unusual any more is certainly cruel and should be punished accordingly. To most people that means capital punishment.

To say the defeat of capital punishment is "a victory for humanity" hardly coincides with the facts. The defeat of capital punishment is really a victory for the murderer and a defeat for law-abiding citizens.

As long as the murderer knows that murder will not be punished severely, there will be inadequate incentive to avoid that crime.

Robert Bart
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Fr. Harley View Applauded

Editor:

Three cheers for Father Ron Harley's letter of Nov. 5! What a refreshing, intelligent, compassionate plea he makes! His point about being careful of the public language we employ is well-taken. "It is often demoralizing when it could be, instead, very healing and life-giving."

Of late, I, one of the "fragile ones" I suppose, who chose to leave the priesthood because I learned the hard way that I was at that time not fit psychologically to minister to others, have been more and more appalled and disheartened by the growing juridical and legalistic emphasis which seems to be pervading the ruling class levels of the Church. And it seems to me that the most serious all-pervasive, underlying problem of the whole fabric of institutional Roman Catholicism is still repressed sexuality which results in



"YOU CAN SHOW FATHER LATER HOW YOU COLLECT COINS, DEAR."

widespread neuroticism, manifested by an obsessive preoccupation with the very subject it is trying to repress.

In addition, I must say that I feel utter pity, as well as compassion, for a priest who considers it a worthwhile expression of his ministry to rummage around in men's rooms in Ireland looking for obscene graffiti to condemn and paying others to do this police work for him, thus feeling spiritually gratified by this kind of crusade even to the extent of minimizing the importance of proclaiming the gospel word of Christ. My opposition to this kind of ministry, let it be known, does not come from a "radical's" permissive approval of indecency or obscenity, but from a conviction that young people (and old) are going to be inspired to fulfill the God-given potential for goodness and greatness that is in them by a much higher-minded, positive, trusting, intelligent expression of the love of God and of life than this.

Finally, I also find it hard to understand how a person who believes in the Incarnation and in the Mystical Body of Christ, both faith concepts which joyously express the presence of God's spirit and life in all of creation, can be so

prejudiced against a simple thing like a "cold New England winter scene" or a Christmas tree, or wreath, or holly, or a drum, bugle and spinning top, that he suggests that people who favor these symbols are anti-religious and uncultured! Might it be not be that they simply have incorporated Christ into their everyday, down-to-earth lives? Certainly these symbols represent things which are as much a creation and dwelling place of God's life and spirit as a stained glass window portraying a mother and a child.

What "ought to be," in the mind of your columnist critic, apparently excludes what millions of others find is a perfectly acceptable expression of the joy and love and happy memories of Christ's birthday for them.

My prayer is that the love and light and joy of God may continue to flow in our lives, unhampered and unhindered by spiritual direction of this kind, and may we all freely choose the Christmas stamp we desire. Father Harley seems to me to be a guide with whom this would be possible.

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Guidelines

Letters intended for publication must be addressed to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 South Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

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.