

Editorials

Hostages

We realize that because of "weeklyitis" we are late in joining in the celebration over the freedom finally granted to our 52 American brothers and sisters.

So, please, dear reader, allow us nevertheless, to join in the celebration. Frankly, we just don't want to be left out of perhaps the most joyous news event in many years.

And we won't get too wordy. Our message, in fact, is short and simple:

PRAISE THE LORD!

Chicago's Spies

Chicago, that city made infamous by police brutality televised live during the Democratic Party national convention of 1968, apparently has not learned anything from it.

The Chicago Police Department has established a "subversive unit" which spies on groups the police deem "subversive," we must presume.

The Alliance to End Repression, along with the American Civil Liberties Union, is suing the city to stop the practice. According to Religious News Ser-

vice, Richard Gutman, an attorney for the alliance, said, "Because the 'Red Squad' started files based upon vague political criteria, rather than law enforcement concerns, no group was safe from inclusion."

Among the groups spied upon: the National Council of Churches, Catholic Interracial Council, Ecumenical Institute of the Church Federation of Greater Chicago, Latin American Ministerial Association, Archdiocesan Latin American Committee, Bahá'i Center, Protestants and Other Americans for Separation of Church and State, American Friends Service Committee, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Jewish War Veterans, American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League.

But they are only some of the religious groups considered by Mayor Jane Byrne and her police force. Others included the United Auto Workers, the PTA, the League of Women Voters, the NAACP, Urban League, the Atlantic Monthly and the Planned Parenthood Assn.

When police forces in American cities resort to such spying and infusion of organizations such as the PTA or the Chicago Archdiocesan Latin American Committee, how are they performing differently from the very subversions they are supposed to be opposing?

A Shameful Society

For want of a better name, let's call it The Society. We all have long known about it through newspapers, books, movies, radio and television. In no way, is it new.

The Society tries to present a clean, scrubbed look but closer inspection reveals that is not as it seems. Though run by highly capable, successful and even respected personages, it is nonetheless rotten and corrupt.

To protect their powerful positions, its leaders have established intricate, extensive and highly efficient networks that reach into all our lives.

As we know, The Society pays homage to widely accepted ideals — motherhood, family, patriotism and even God. But in reality it deals in drugs, prostitution, pornography, terrorism, game-farms and other nefarious money-making schemes, as well as more legitimate enterprises. In order to maintain such a complicated range of pursuits to the profit and power, penalties have to be imposed on those who break the rules — even unto death.

And, naturally, factions develop. Disputes between them are settled by "wars." Often without regard to "right," power asserts itself and the strongest, best-armed and most ruthless survive.

Should we tolerate The Society any longer? Can anything be done about it? Are we powerless to restore dignity to it?

These are all legitimate questions because The Society is not some secret organization. It is our society, the one to which we all belong.

and Opinions

Millions Of Hostages

Editor:

Pax, I have been amazed and saddened not to find someone using the hostage situation to teach about Christ. We were all hostage, and He offered Himself to gain our freedom. This is reality, not myth.

Imagine if the hostages in Iran did not know they were being held hostage, that they had a homeland where their Father and mother, brothers and sisters were waiting for their return. Imagine if their ransom had been paid and they did not know it, or did not know who paid it. Most incredible, suppose they did know that they had been redeemed but elected to remain in captivity, locked in, dominated, deprived, undernourished, enslaved.

A large part of the world is concerned about 52 people held captive in Iran, and well they should be. But what of the millions who know nothing of the freedom of the children of God, or knowing, have rejected it in spite of the price paid by their Brother.

What of them?
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Sex-Ed Questioned

Editor:

Father John Reedy is to be congratulated for his column

(C-J, 1-7) in which he takes a "second look" at sex ed. He had the courage to admit that, up until recently, he probably didn't have all the facts and he apologized for it. He has cause to be concerned about what is happening in the classrooms of our country.

The sex ed programs are set up in order to "help" our young people get through adolescence with all the knowledge they need about their sexuality. That's the catch! They just might be getting a lot of knowledge that they don't need. We seem to have "progressed" from the cold biological facts to thorough information about every possible lifestyle, sexual deviation, contraceptives (what they are, how to use them, where to obtain them and how effective they are), and — when they've covered every possible way to prevent pregnancy — fertilization (including the latest scientific forms of genetic manipulation). Now we all know that, to be fair to everyone, the teacher is not allowed to introduce his or her values into the presentations — no matter how noble they may be. However, the students are encouraged to share their opinions with everyone (nothing said should be considered wrong) so that we really end up with a situation where kids are teaching kids!

Obviously, someone has to teach THEM. How fortunate we are to be blessed with membership in the true

Church which was instituted by Christ Himself! And yet, how many of us are ashamed of His teachings, or afraid of them? We make apologies for being Catholic and let others tell our children that their sexual activity is their "choice" or that they have the "right" to do what they want with their bodies. Christ never taught by the use of multiple choice. He cared enough for us to tell us what we have to do in order to find happiness forever with Him in Heaven. Isn't that the main goal we have for our children? Isn't it what we had in mind when we had them baptized into the Church? We have the BEST to give them — we wouldn't settle for less in sports, fashion, etc. Who else could care more for our children?

However, Planned Parenthood claims that we aren't doing a good job so they have to take over. They are also of the opinion that we parents had no sexuality when we were growing up (COME ON!!!) and that it is unrealistic to depend on the strength of grace through the sacraments to help our teens through those difficult years. If we believe that, then we have lost our own Faith. Their only answer is contraception. No wonder it is so important that every parish work closely with parents in order to provide our children with the teachings of the Catholic Church!

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Death Penalty Endorsed

Editor:

The Dec. 31 article, "Bishops decry capital punishment," made reference to the value of dignity of human life.

However, it should be pointed out that proponents of capital punishment see this value and dignity threatened by the murderer in our society.

The bishops, while acknowledging "the fact that Catholic teaching has accepted that the state has the right to take the life of a person guilty of an extremely serious crime," nevertheless oppose capital punishment.

Their reason seems to rest with their statement "that crime is both a manifestation of the great mysteries of evil and human freedom and an aspect of the very complex reality that is contemporary society."

But isn't that unnecessarily complicating the problem of crime? Crime is crime whether in the Dark Ages or in the dark age of our immoral contemporary society.

For years, the movie industry has glamorized and portrayed the criminal as a basically decent person who was framed or got a bad break in life.

Even Father Flanagan via Spencer Tracy would remark, "There's no such thing as a bad boy." But tell that to an elderly couple who were robbed and beat up for their welfare or pension check money. Or tell that to the wife of a cop with four kids who was murdered by some kid who should never have been released from jail.

Crime statistics in the New York City area reveal that only one of every 23 persons arrested goes to jail. Also, a person committing a felony in the Borough of Brooklyn has only one chance in 148 of ever going to state prison.

And yet there is evidence to indicate that realistic penalties deter crime. One study conducted by Prof. Isaac Ehrlich indicated that an additional execution per year between 1933-1969 "may have resulted on the average of seven or eight fewer murders." These tentative results were confirmed by other investigators.

Despite such evidence, a number of our religious and secular leaders dogmatically maintain their opposition to the death penalty.

While the death penalty and other realistic penalties will not completely deter crime, it will force the criminal to carefully consider the implications of criminal acts.

Our Lord once said he chastises those he loves. Shouldn't we act in a similar manner by chastising the criminal?

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Fr. Louis J. Hohman

The Open Window



Being Saved

Dear Father Hohman,

There's a friend of mine at work who asked me the other day if I were "saved." Frankly, I didn't know what to say to him. I know that we were taught in school that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us but I didn't know what he meant by being saved. Could you help me to understand what he is trying to say? He gave me the very definite impression that he was saved and that I wasn't and I probably should do something about it. If there is something I should do, what is it?

(signed) T.R.

Dear T.R.

I am not all that certain that I understand exactly what your friend means either. If he means that because Jesus died on the cross for him and he has made a deliberate single act of accepting Jesus as his savior and from then on nothing else matters, then I don't think I could accept what he is saying.

Perhaps the best way to approach this is to list a series of truths which hopefully will fit together and show you where you could or should be at. These truths are: (1) From our very origins we are a flawed people; that is, we are not what we could and should be and we are also incapable of becoming what we could or should be on our own. (2) Jesus Christ, Son of God, Word made flesh, entered totally into our human nature and became one of us so that by his perfect obedience he might take away the flaw which we suffer. (3) Jesus offers us a

share in his victory; that is, his saving power, if we will it. Even if willing it is a gift. (4) We accept Jesus as our Savior when we allow his will to take over ours and we become incorporated into him. It is then that he empowers us to be what and who we are called to be; that is, children of God. (5) That acceptance, however, is not a one-time thing. My acceptance of Jesus and his saving power is ongoing in the sense that I conceivably could reject it and turn away from it and place myself outside of his saving power. Even then, we could return to him in the sacrament of Penance, be forgiven and place ourselves under his saving influence once again.

One of the problems I see with this business of "being saved" is the danger of eliminating the salvific will of God in that we claim salvation for ourselves and others who have literally and explicitly accepted it, and eliminate salvation for those who have not explicitly accepted it. That is contrary to Christian belief and unacceptable to us as Catholics. The second problem I would have is the danger of eliminating a specific kind of responsibility for our actions once this saving event takes place. Perhaps many of the people who declare themselves to be saved do not feel this way about it, but for those who do feel that way, there is definitely a problem. We should see our relationship with God in the same light as a marriage relationship in which our love binds us together and guarantees a happy outcome which we see as salvation. But all the problems which can beset a marriage can also beset a relationship with the Lord. And that is why it cannot be a one-time event any more than a marriage can be a one-time event.

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writer's signature, full address and telephone number. They should be sent to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, no longer than 1 1/2 pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and the letters will reflect the writer's own style.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent elsewhere. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.

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