

Editorials

The Year Of the Disabled

This week, the Courier-Journal is devoting a special section to the role of the disabled person in society.

The background for this endeavor was provided by the United Nations which declared 1981 the International Year of the Disabled Person. The idea has received wide acclaim, including warm endorsement by Pope John Paul II, whose statement is included in this edition along with a special message from-Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

Many religious associations, including the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, have long recognized the need for society to face openly the needs of the disabled persons in our midst. We have included the

bishops' statement as well — it is forceful, guiding and illuminating.

While we realize that such statements are essential in order to provide leadership to those who have not fully recognized their own parts in living side by side with the disabled, we have also focused on other factors.

We have listed many of the agencies established to assist the disabled to live full and dignified and useful lives — undoubtedly there are more; we will look forward to listing them in future editions. We have attempted to depict some of the facilities used by the disabled — from the Twin Tiers Rehabilitation Center in Elmira to Eastman Kodak near the shore of Lake Ontario.

Stories in this edition describe the work being performed by a wide array of dedicated people — therapists, medics, volunteers and others who work with the disabled.

Unfortunately, it is probably true that the word

"disabled" or even more, "handicapped," conjures up pictures of people not able to perform in the mainstream; of people who are "different," who are unable to take care of themselves or who do not contribute. In short, we may be guilty of the bias of seeing the disabled as inferior.

With that in mind, we have concentrated on just a few of the many disabled persons who have performed at a pace ahead of many of the "able." Their stories should erase any prejudice of distorted ideas; they should also prove that society is the stronger because of the efforts of many who may be considered "handicapped."

As we have implied, this edition will not be our complete focus; it will be the policy of this newspaper to include an article or photo every week for the remainder of 1981 as our service to the Year of the Disabled Person.

We invite opinions, ideas, thoughts and stories from all our readers as part of this ongoing coverage.

and Opinions

Pro-Lifers Voted Death

Editor:

I must comment on Marie Jessmer's Letter of Feb. 18. As I read the names of the state assemblymen she mentioned they had the curious ring of familiarity. Hadn't I seen them somewhere lately? Sure enough, when I checked the roll call vote on the recent death penalty bill I found that three of the five men, Tom Hanna, James Nagle and Roger Robach, who Mrs. Jessmer reported as having attended the pro-life Appreciation dinner of Jan. 16, had voted for the death penalty bill on Feb. 17.

There seems to me to be some serious contradiction in a position that is both anti-abortion and pro-death penalty. Is life more sacred in the embryonic child of the first trimester that it is in the man sitting on Death Row awaiting execution? In their November 1980 statement on capital punishment published in its entirety in the Courier-Journal the U.S. Bishops stated:

"Abolition (or the death penalty) is a manifestation of our belief in the unique worth and dignity of each person from the moment of conception to those who have failed, whose lives have been distorted by suffering or hatred, even in the case of those who by their actions, have failed to respect the dignity and the rights of others."

Mrs. Jessmer goes on to gently chide the Courier-Journal for giving "unwarranted front page coverage to the opinions of two unknowns on the El Salvador situation." She was referring, no doubt, to Sister Margaretta Navarro and Ivan Escobar, members of the El Salvador Human Rights Commission who spoke in Rochester on Jan. 26 (the night of the pro-life Appreciation dinner!).

That word "unknown" is such a relative term. One of the five mentioned by Mrs. Jessmer is not known to me. Does that make him "unknown"? Or does that make me ignorant? From her letter, Mrs. Jessmer is readily identified as a dedicated, enthusiastic, even exuberant pro-lifer. In Rochester, that is. If she were to go to El Salvador would she be "unknown"?

Last year in El Salvador,

10,000 people were killed violently in what has been characterized as a class struggle for basic human rights. In my value system they have a great deal in common with the unborn baby threatened with the violence of abortion and with the prisoner threatened with the violence of the electric chair. They were all created in the image and likeness of God our Father, who sent his dearly beloved Son to save them all. Can we do any less? Are we not called to the same concern for the man on Death Row, the broken people of El Salvador, as well as for the unborn child?

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Bishops To Blame

Editor:

In the name of the poor: Some bishops of Latin America, by their Marxist Christianity (a social gospel) are partly responsible for the revolution that is now taking place in Latin America.

God has picked two to walk among them and to preach the Gospel of Christ. I am referring to Pope John Paul II, who has spoken time and time again about the evil of Marxism. They do not heed his advice.

God's way is the way of Mother Teresa of India, who has wrought more than all those bishops, priests and sisters who have accepted the social gospel of Marxist Christianity.

Mother Teresa of India has not taken Marx for her companion but the Blessed Virgin and the message of Fatima (pray the rosary for the conversion of Marxist Communists).

God has chosen the Blessed Mother to convert the world, not Marx.

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Scriptural 'Salvation'

Editor:

We were dismayed by Father Louis Hohman's response to a reader's question concerning "being saved" (Courier-Journal, 1/28/81). The reader should have been

directed to the Bible, since "saved" is a scriptural term. In Ephesians 2:5 we learn that "he brought us to life with Christ when we were dead in sin. By this favor you were saved." Paul continues to stress the importance of this message in verse 8: "I repeat, it is owing to his favor that salvation is yours through faith. This is not your own doing, it is God's gift." (See also Romans 10:9-10, 13; Acts 4:12, 15:11, 16:31; and 1 Corinthians 10:33.) When we die to ourselves and choose to live in Christ we accept God's free gift of salvation, and we understand with St. Paul that this "being saved" is not at the end of our lives, nor at the end of the world, but "Now is the acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation!" (II Corinthians 6:2)

Though we have had 29 years each of Catholic training, education and "practicing the faith," it has only been one year since our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our minute-by-minute personal friend and Savior; and it has changed our lives! Testimony of family and friends, Christian literature, television and radio, were all instrumental in leading us to the Lord; but the real change came as we began to read the Bible daily and recognized it as God's Living Word to us right now! The next major change came through Romans 10:9-10, "For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, you will be saved. Faith in the heart leads to justification, confession on the lips to salvation." Memorizing short passages of scripture and repeating them aloud to ourselves and others is a verbal witness to Christ that goes beyond good example, and good deed, and exists outside the safe confines of home or church. Repeating scripture as it fits our daily life, we do as Jesus did. He responded to Satan's confrontation without wordy speech, but with potent passages of scripture. If God has already said it, which among us can say it better?

As to the danger Father Hohman refers to in eliminating a specific kind of responsibility for our actions once this "saving event takes place," we note that "being saved" does not offer license to do as we please, but freedom and commitment to try and do as God pleases (John 8:36). Thankfully, no one need hang his hat on us imperfect humans who claim salvation, but on the perfect Jesus who tells us how to be saved. In love we offer to share more about this with anyone wishing to contact us personally.

Finally, as for Father

Hohman's referral to "this business of being saved," isn't that precisely the business for which Jesus became man, and isn't that precisely the business in which all of us should be employed?

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Curran's Best: Washing Pots?

Editor:

The recent criticism of Rev. Curran's invitation to speak in the diocese and his (theological) peripateticism seems deserving of a few additional observations.

I seriously doubt that the majority of members of the larger religious communities cited as sponsors (SSJs and RSMs) approved of the invitation. The high regard in which these two dedicated and wonderful orders of women are held by thousands of Catholics in this diocese is and has been more than justified by scores of years of loyal service to the diocese and the Church. In addition to so many years of selfless service, the beautiful women of these orders have known and still know the tremendous inner strength and peace which derive from serving the Lord in a spirit of humility, joy and acceptance.

Intellectual brilliance can be a very heavy burden when one is searching for eternal truths, particularly if one chooses to rely solely on one's own mental capacity. To be a sound Catholic theologian requires more than intellectual brilliance. The sanctity and true greatness of St. Thomas Aquinas can be largely attributed to his boundless love for Jesus in the Eucharist, his devotion to our Blessed Virgin Mary and his genuine humility and obedience.

Most Catholics would not question Rev. Curran's sincerity and/or intentions but it is possible to be sincerely in error. The really operative words in the Curran vs. Rome disaccordance are humility and obedience. Until and unless Rev. Curran is prepared to make the symbolic trip to Canossa originally made by Emperor Henry IV in 1077 AD, a rapprochement seems unlikely. Yes, there is an ongoing need to examine, re-examine and debate the theological underpinnings of our Catholic Faith, but this must be done in the proper spirit and intent. Theological opinions and pronouncements

spoken or published in a spirit of defiance and intellectual snobism are counter-productive to the work of the Church. Most Catholics recognize that they belong to the Mystical Body of Christ, whose leader is Pope John Paul II, the Vicar of Christ, as opposed to an "American" Catholic Church "doing its own thing." There is one magisterium. The rejection of orthodoxy and the "academic freedom" copout from obedience do not lead to the eternal truths.

However well-intentioned or sincere any dissident Catholic theologian might be, his/her work cannot succeed without a generous infusion of faith, hope and love. Implicit in particular in love is the spirit of humility and

obedience, two virtues unfortunately considered passe by many "progressives" in the post-conciliar Church.

It is probably safe to assume that until a change of heart and mind is evidenced in his spoken and written theological opinions, Rev. Curran's most significant contribution to the work of the Church may well be remembered as that work he performed as a seminarian in the early 1950s — namely, washing dishes and scrubbing pots and pans at Camp Stella Maris... how that's humility!

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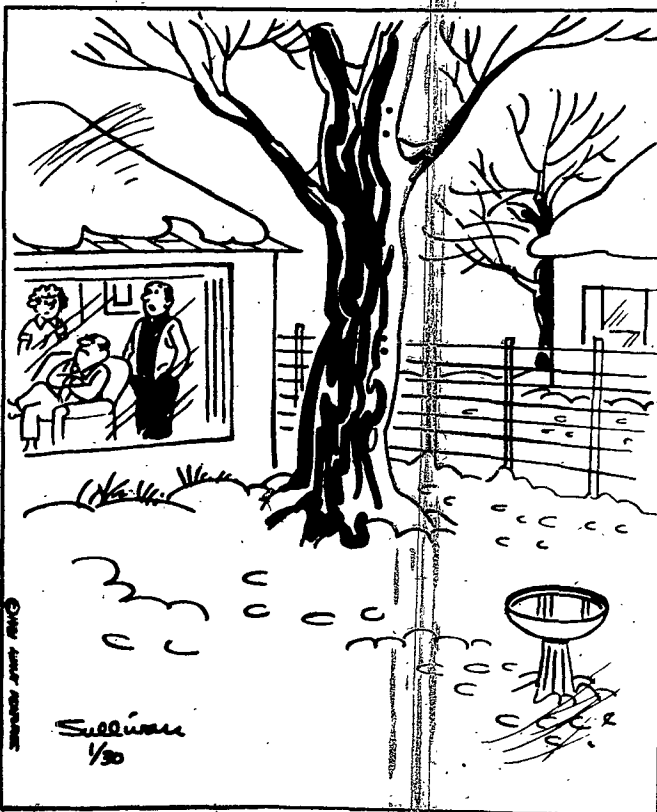
Guidelines

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.



"SURE, 'GOOD FENCES MAKE GOOD NEIGHBORS,' MR. WALDHAM, BUT NOT WHEN THEY'RE ELECTRIC."

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