

Editorials

Lillian Block

It is not often that an editor of a Catholic newspaper would owe so much to a Conservative Jew for professional assistance. But such is the case here at the Courier-Journal concerning Lillian R. Block, former director of Religious News Service, who died March 21.

Covering news events at the Vatican is a painful chore, even for accredited Catholic press representatives. Miss Block personally saw to it that at least some of the doors there were opened for Courier staffers at such events as the death of Paul VI, the canonization of St. John Neumann.

Miss Block, a thoroughly objective professional, was held in high esteem in many quarters. She became the first non-Catholic, the first woman and the first editor of an inter-religious news agency to win the Catholic Press Association's prestigious St. Francis de Sales award in 1976. She also served on the communications

advisory committee of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark, N.J.

Her memory will serve as a reminder that people of different persuasions can work together for the common good even in such a ticklish business as religious reporting. She will be missed.

El Salvador

World Press Review reports what newspapers around the world are writing about the U.S. intervention in El Salvador:

The Excelsior of Mexico City (moderate): "Reagan's help to El Salvador should go to the people, not to those who shoot them."

Yomiuri Shimbun of Tokyo (independent): "If the U.S. intervenes in Central America, Mexico may move closer to Cuba."

The Times of London (independent): "Europeans will join the Americans in condemning gross Soviet interference."

Le Monde of Paris (liberal): "This time — as in Vietnam — the U.S. is alone."

TV Hypocrisy

Candidate for hypocrite of the year award:

James Duffy, vice president, ABC-TV.

Joining the outcry against the marketing of sexually explicit shows on pay television, Duffy remarked, "We are very sensitive to the fact that we enter people's homes."

That comes from an executive of the network that has brought into our homes such fare as "Charlie's Angels," "Love Boat," "Fantasy Island," "Dynasty," "Vegas," "Bosom Buddies," and "Soap."

Just how "sensitive" can one get?

The pot, threatened with loss of revenue, has taken to condemning the kettle.

and Opinions

Murderers Like Cancer

Editor:

A recent letter in the Courier questioned how our lawmakers can vote against abortion and still vote for capital punishment.

Personally, I have no difficulty understanding how a person can be anti-abortion and pro-death penalty at the same time. First, I don't believe you should compare the killing of an innocent baby (who hasn't had a chance to take its first breath) with the death penalty for a murderer who has brutally killed a human being. Granted, we have all been created by God. But the way I look at it, a murderer is like a cancer or gangrene that attacks human cells that were created by God. Once a diagnosis has been made that a human limb is being destroyed by the cancer or gangrene — and there is danger of the disease spreading to other healthy cells of the body — none of us would refuse to have the limb surgically removed if that were the recommendation of the doctor. We agree to do away with the afflicted limb (also created by God) so that the remaining cells of the body will not be affected. So also with a murderer. When it has been determined that he (or she) willfully took the life of a human being and caused no telling how many hardships for the family of the victim, I believe we as human beings have the right to sentence the murderer to death — and insist that the sentence be carried out. This is the one way to prevent the person from destroying another human being who was created by God.

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Insists Death Is Deterrent

Editor:

Clare Regan, writing in the Feb. 11 Courier-Journal, remarked that results of Prof. Isaac Ehrlich's study on capital punishment were not confirmed by other investigators. (They were.)

As stated in my Jan. 28 letter, these results confirmed by "other investigators" indicated that "an additional execution per year between 1963-1969 may have resulted

on the average of seven or eight fewer murders."

Complimenting this study, Prof. Ernest Van Den Haag wrote, "It seems morally indefensible to let convicted murderers survive at the probable — even at the merely possible — expense of the lives of innocent victims had the murderers been executed."

This logic seems to have escaped opponents of capital punishment.

However, our penal system rests on the proposition that more severe penalties are more deterrent than less severe penalties.

In other words, a fifty-dollar fine for speeding is a greater deterrent than a twenty-five-dollar fine for speeding.

Unfortunately, capital punishment has been the outstanding exception of this logic.

Pope Pius XII commented wisely when he stated: "It is then reserved to the public power to deprive the condemned of the benefit of life when already, by his crime, he has dispossessed himself of the right to life."

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Editor's Note: Readers Bart and Bleier should be reminded that the bishops of the United States have officially opposed capital punishment. Vatican Radio in a recent broadcast stated that the death penalty is inconsistent with Church policy against abortion, euthanasia and "all forms of destruction of human life."

Steven Judy A Suicide?

Editor:

"Four guards led a blindfolded Judy from his special cell a few paces northeast to the electric chair. The guards stepped back and two surges of electricity coursed through Judy's body. He was pronounced dead at 12:12 a.m." (Associated Press)

We are saddened by this violent act on the part of the people of the State of Indiana. Yes, Steven Judy admitted to his act of murder, which we do not condone; but in no way can we support the action of

the state, which is just as vicious.

Steven Judy asked to die. Was his death really an act of suicide which the State of Indiana helped him carry out? Very possibly.

Supporters of capital punishment cite the protection of society, deterrence of major crime, and the need for re-establishment of order as arguments for the death penalty. Have these been achieved as a result of Steven Judy's death? It remains to be proven.

On March 31, two more Americans, Timothy Baldwin and Robert Wayne Williams, are scheduled to be murdered within minutes of each other by the State of Louisiana. These two death row executions will be the first and second in 20 years in Louisiana.

How many more people will we violently kill in our attempt to stop the increasing rate of major crimes in our society? Have we become so hardened by our objectivity that we have lost all respect for life?

There are more than 700 people on death row in the United States. They are powerless and waiting to die. They are human beings who experience, just like us, fear, anger, love, hatred, frustration, bewilderment, rejection and hope. Are we to have no compassion?

What can you do? Make your opinions known to your legislative representatives — both state and federal. The Assembly has passed a bill to reinstate the death penalty in New York State; so has the Senate. Gov. Carey said he will veto any death penalty legislation; however, the Legislature may have enough votes to override the veto. Write to your legislators, in particular your Assembly representative, and express opposition to capital punishment.

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Politics Complex

Editor:

Following the events in Central and South America

and reading statements from the religious there and here gives rise to some deep felt concerns about these statements. It's sad that the rank and file of the people living there are the sufferers and truly the concerns of the religious for these people are valid.

But the politics of ruling government today is most complex. Many truly concerned politicians are in government to try to correct wrongs in their countries, even in our own country, but there are times when the stability of a country needs strong leadership. We are concerned with human rights including the right of religious freedom. Not to be omitted is the right of political freedom.

Obviously the needy peoples south of us need food, clothing and shelter. They will accept these gratefully from whoever offers them, not realizing that at that point they are vulnerable to the takeover of their minds, bodies, beliefs and their politics. Repression is an evil and not to be condoned but consider some events revolving around the subject. Is every suppressed human innocent on all counts? Is it possible that in many cases the invoking of punishment and discipline is interpreted as repression? It is if one delves in semantics. Are we letting our quest for human rights act as blinders? Will we be sacrificing what we have become comfortable with, like free speech, freedom of religion? As these people, these governments, is there any assurance that what comes in will guarantee human rights?

Godless communism, disguised in many ways, is there extolling the virtues of shaming among the workers, rights, etc., etc., using the unhappy to further weaken a country and then move in slyly as a concerned benefactor. Review the track record in Cuba, Afghanistan, Hungary, Africa, etc. Where are the religious who were helping out in those countries: the priests, the sisters, the ministers? Are human rights honored in those countries?

Our religious should consider the entire picture, not just the local picture. The anti-Christian elements are playing a waiting game just as animals do when looking for prey. Many of us innocently play into their hands, gradually, and without detecting the intent, just as we have gradually become accustomed to sexual overtones on TV and in rag print. Let's



EMILY, I REALLY AND TRULY, THINK WE'RE IN THE WRONG WORKSHOP.

not become so wrapped up in our desire to be do-gooders that we lose our side vision and fall into worse situations tomorrow.

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Perversion Unacceptable

Editor:

"Council Endorses Gay Civil Rights." If the word gay still meant happy and Catholics were defending the civil rights of everyone in general, I would not have this nauseous reaction to the preceding headline from last week's Courier-Journal. It is no more right to endorse gay rights than it is to endorse adultery. Perversion has not suddenly become acceptable conduct in the eyes of Almighty God. His commandments remain the same through the centuries and will not change.

The 119th Psalm gives honor and praise to the law of God. Verse 92 states, "If Thy law has not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction."

Every quote from the Bible distinctly speaks to God's people, therefore I pass on His Word as I reflect on its purpose. Isaiah 55:11, "My Word shall not return to be empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose."

Corinthians 6:19-20, "Do

you know that your body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own, you were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body."

Galatians 5:16, "Walk by the spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh."

I Corinthians 6:9, "Do you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Neither the immoral, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts will inherit the Kingdom of God."

Romans 1:18-32, "Women exchanged natural relations for unnatural and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another (this full chapter in Romans reveals the position that Our Lord takes).

II Timothy 4:3, "The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths."

Divisions stem from confusion seeded by Satan and nurtured by his followers but, the Church can remain holy if the people are rooted in faith and united to the truth and light revealed through Jesus Christ.

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