

Editorials

Easter Story

We have run this editorial during the Easter season in the past. We reprint it for Holy Week consideration.

Editor: Look, Steve, Jerry is out sick today so you'd better cover that crucifixion.

Steve: Come on, boss. I don't know anything about that beat and besides you promised me this afternoon off because I have to work Sunday.

Editor: Yeah, I know, but Jerry says this guy's different. Got a lot of followers, too. I just feel that we better have someone there.

Steve: But I'm bushed. I just finished that in-depth piece on the protests over Roman rule. And you know how long I planned for this afternoon off.

Editor: Well, maybe you're right. After all, they're crucifying a couple of thieves with him so maybe he's not that important.

Steve: If it were that other guy, Barabbas, I'd say let's go. He's really a story. But this guy is some sort of religious nut. They say he claims to be the son of God. Or God himself.

Editor: That might be just an act. He has a lot of followers and if I were the Romans, I'd think twice, too.

Steve: Sure, he's got some fans, but what happens when he's gone. They'll scatter to the winds and never be heard of again.

Editor: Okay, you win. Go on home. Have a nice weekend. Say hello to Miriam and don't forget — you're working Sunday.

The scene shifts to Sunday at the office.

Editor: Jerry, come in here. Do you know that they claim that guy Jesus is not in his tomb? That he rose from the dead?

Jerry: I heard it but who knows?

Editor: What's that supposed to mean?

Jerry: The way I look at it, a couple of things could have happened. Some of his pals stole him from the tomb or else he wasn't dead in the first place.

Editor: I got to believe he was dead. They really gave it to him, those Romans. And they're good at that stuff.

Jerry: But we really didn't see it for ourselves. I take one day off and we blow one. I told you this one might be different.

Editor: Let's not cry over that now. Go interview that woman, what's her name, Mary Magdalene, and

those others who found the empty tomb. Try to find out if anyone was hanging there over the weekend. I'll send Steve out to talk to the Romans for what they think.

Jerry: Isn't that a bit much? I mean we know he didn't rise from the dead. So what's the big story?

Editor: You reporters are all alike. Today is Sunday and I got to have something to fill the local page.

Later that day, Steve and Jerry in editor's office.

Jerry: Either he wasn't dead in the first place or somebody stole the body. They had motive to do something like that. But where in God's name could they be keeping it?

Steve: The soldiers swear they killed him. Said nobody could have survived it. And they should know. One of them is a real veteran of crucifixions.

Editor: All I care about is we're covered. We got a story and it's right out there on the front page.

Jerry: All right, so he's dead. But what about those guys who claim to have seen him since — Emmaus or someplace that way?

Editor: So who cares? Probably a couple of whackos. They always pop up over something like this. Try to run all of 'em down and we'll be doing nothing else. Forget it. He's dead and let's leave it at that.

Couldn't have happened? The greatest historical event of all time given such short shrift? The story is true. It happens every day.

and Opinions

Hypocrisy Claimed

Editor:

I must respond to the letter of April 1 on the death penalty. I cannot understand how anyone can believe in Our Lord, Jesus, go to church on Sunday and then approve capital punishment or a death penalty. That, it seems to me, is total hypocrisy.

Jesus teaches us to "love the sinner but hate the sin." He teaches us to "turn the other cheek." There are no qualifications or stipulations in these statements. Why then, if Jesus' life, death and resurrection means anything, should we as a Church and as individuals support the death penalty? Should we act as Our Lord would have us act and have compassion for such people? Wouldn't Jesus have compassion for David Berkowitz?

I don't believe justice is served by capital punishment since there would never be total equality in judgment and absolute certainty of the degree of punishment; death penalties should not be allowed as part of our government. Mistakes have been made about the guilt and punishment of individuals throughout the history of man. Jesus is good example of this. But the mistakes didn't stop there. There is only one all-perfect judge.

Some people say it is less expensive to put to death a murderer than to lock him or her up for the rest of his or her life. If that is true, then it is too expensive to be a Christian. Several of the people that have been put to death recently actually sought it in preference to the only other prospect: spending the rest of life in jail. Doesn't it sound more logical that if our law was life imprisonment without possibility of parole there would be less murder? This is supported by the attitude of those who are facing execution. They prefer it (execution) to what they consider a far worse punishment — life in prison, no parole.

It all boils down to this: human life is priceless. Therefore we need to appreciate it in everyone. What is there in this world more valuable than a human being?

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Prayer OK In Foxholes

Editor:

Re: Sergeants Found Guilty by Court (3-11).

I am at the antipodes of the Baptist view, but I am an old veteran. If a man fights in uniform why can't he pray in uniform? Has the army of today been so brainwashed as to interfere with one's spiritual observances?

Would these sergeants be guilty if they were caught praying for peace in a foxhole while machineguns were rattling bullets overhead? Isn't it enough that we have a Supreme Court afflicted with the same weird syndrome? Where are we going from here?

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Fr. Berrigan Deceiving

Editor:

We who have survived the terrors and near-genocide of the Communist takeover in our country must raise our voices to warn the Catholics of Rochester about the Rev. Daniel Berrigan.

Many of us know that while we were in a struggle for survival in South Vietnam we had the help of the U.S.A. However, in the States there were forces which followed the false prophets of appeasement and not-to-win. Voices of those like Berrigan laughed at the Domino Theory. This was not a theory but a fact. This fact is now a reality in terms of suffering "boat people" and in terms of

more areas that are completely deprived of all rights which you have declared in your Declaration of Independence are derived from the Supreme Being and Creator.

We realize that a radical resistance group in this country made it impossible for the Americans to bring about our liberation. Even in the struggle for survival many of us learned that the Rev. Daniel Berrigan and Philip Berrigan played a role which undermined the war effort. He visited Hanoi as a "friend." We knew of this to our great concern.

It gives us cause for much grievance that two churches should be so deceived. The great Polish Pope is not deceived. We hope such churches will return to their former honor, which your Pope has never abandoned.

Truong Quang Si, Chairman
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U.S Hurting Human Rights

Editor:

Where does President Reagan stand on human rights? Let us consider some appointments and foreign policy expressions.

Ernest Lefever, appointee-designate as assistant secretary of state for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, is the man who in 1979 congressional testimony regarding arms sales and monetary and military aid, said, "The United States should remove from the statute books all clauses that establish a human rights standard that must be met by another sovereign government," who advocates "strong ties" between the United States and the government of South Africa; whose "The Ethics and Public Policy Center" recently accepted a \$25,000 gift from Nestle.

Jeanne Kilpatrick, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, says that friendly

"moderately repressive autocratic governments" should be acceptable. Does "moderately repressive" mean that we must limit the number of people a regime may imprison, torture, murder? Say, up to 1,000? 5,000?

And, on the top of the list, Secretary of State Alexander Haig, who says, in effect, all we need to do for human rights is to end terrorism... A few days ago, Haig told the House Foreign Relations Committee that aid to the military junta in El Salvador was justified by the Soviet Union's intention to take over all Central America, and that Nicaragua had already gone over. Next day, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he modified his story. But he is constant in one regard: he sees a communist behind every tree. In fact, all the administration's support of oppressive rightwing regimes comes under the guise of thwarting the encroachment of communism. And under the same heading comes the president's dangerous, saber-rattling talk of blockading Cuba. The pitiful thing is we are not thwarting communism. We are thwarting the poor and driving them into the arms of the communists.

This is a situation which no Christian should shrug off lightly. A substantial number of Christian voices reaching the president, Secretary Haig and our legislators can reverse the trend; and that is what it will take. If we permit this paranoid fear of the Soviets to overshadow our respect for the rights of people, our country will be in truly serious trouble.

Should not each of our bishops, individually, tell his people what is going on and suggest ways to combat it?

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Self-Defense A Moral Duty

Editor:

No person who uses God-given intelligence can claim that we could eliminate crime



"I TRY TO KEEP TABS ON ALL THE PEOPLE IN MY PARISH."

by abolishing the police. It is the obligation of civilized people to take the necessary means, including force; to protect us from criminals. It takes two sides to make peace but only one to make war. It is ridiculous for us to renounce military strength when the Soviet Union demonstrates its predilection for armed conquest toward a Soviet world.

Self-defense against criminals whether breaking and entering your home or planning aggression within the Kremlin is an inalienable right recognized by Scripture, Christian theology and Catholic doctrine. A single clergyman may abjure his right of self-defense and "turn the other cheek" to aggressors. Men who have families have no such right; they have a solemn moral responsibility to defend life against an unjust aggressor (Catholic Encyclopedia, article on self-defense). The New Catholic Encyclopedia (1967) confirms this with great clarity. The "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," Vatican II, reaffirmed the right of self-defense in detail concluding with, "Rulers and others sharing the

responsibility have the duty of looking to the safety of those in their charge."

We cannot ignore the first teaching of the Church on this subject which began in St. Luke's Gospel and quotes Christ, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace..." (11:21)

There is an important new book by Bishop John J. O'Connor, vicar general of the U.S. Military Vicariate, who examines statements by activists and points out the current articles and statements which are in conflict with official Church teaching. A complimentary copy, I believe, has been sent to every bishop in the United States. It is "In Defense of Life" and may be purchased at any Daughters of St. Paul bookstore. It costs \$30.

The Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation is making available a free copy of a resume of Bishop O'Connor's book. On request, with a stamped addressed No. 10 envelope, it will be forwarded.

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