

Editorials

Whose Liberties?

The American Civil Liberties Union has become what the King of Siam would call "a puzzlement."

Most of us would applaud the idea of an organization set up to protect the rights of all individuals, especially when threatened by society itself. And the ACLU has performed needed service for many minority groups in our nation.

But of late years, it seems confused as to whose liberties it is protecting. And in a recent letter seeking financial contributions this organization resorts to the kind of smear language it would find intolerable in court.

The letter signed by Norman Dorsen, president, opens with: "The Moral Majority" ... "The New Right" ... "The Right to Life Movement" ... "Pro

Family' ... Whatever name it's called, the Extreme Right is raising unprecedented money, recruiting unprecedented numbers of people and posing an unprecedented threat to individual rights in America today."

Doesn't the ACLU realize that a great many people who consider themselves "pro family" and proudly so would have nothing to do with the Moral Majority? Doesn't it realize that it is the most foul kind of abuse of rights to lump together the right-to-life movement and those wishing to defend the family against threatening intrusion with the Moral Majority and the New Right without any kind delineation?

Why would the ACLU capitalize the common title, the extreme right, as it does in the second paragraph — ignorance of the rules of capitalization or a subtle attempt to magnify and make ominous other Americans who take a different view of societal problems than the leaders of the ACLU?

Mr. Dorsen, after extolling the strength of the ACLU — "... the organization which millions of Americans depend upon" — does a quick about-face on the very next page of the letter to bemoan the fact "... right now, the going is especially rough' for the

ACLU. It is not strong enough to provide the protection we need."

Perhaps the ACLU had better begin looking to its own tattered credentials before it tries to blame outsiders for its plight. This is the same ACLU that lost nearly one third of its members in Illinois when it defended in court the right of Nazis to march in a Jewish suburb of Chicago. This is the same ACLU which just recently intervened in the case of a man charged with driving to endanger death as a result of a car accident in Rhode Island in which the nine-month-old fetus of the other driver was stillborn as a result of the accident. The ACLU contends that an unborn child cannot be covered by the state's reckless driving laws.

This is nothing unusual — the ACLU has never recognized the rights of the unborn, despite constantly increasing scientific evidence that fetuses are indeed human beings.

The ACLU would classify this newspaper as a member of the Moral Majority or the extreme right because of our consistent pro-life, pro-family views. So be it. Such smear tactics usually end up diminishing their perpetrators.

and Opinions

Sadlier Texts Found Wanting

Editor:

Recent letters have expressed parental concerns about the inadequacies of some sex education materials. May I share some information on "Look at Life" (Sadlier, 1977) for grades 1-8. Mrs. Barbara Willke of the National Right to Life Committee released an evaluation of this series last month. She praised it in some areas, but listed some very serious problem areas:

• Of the many families pictured all are one- or two-child families with few exceptions. All the white families pictured have only one or two children, except when a third child is added by adoption (Grade Two) and one three-child family (Grade 3). The other exceptions are all minority families — black and Asian.

Mrs. Willke comments, "The message in the series is quite clear — the ideal family is one or two children, and only minority families are still having more. This theme is not an accidental occurrence. It is the 'gospel' of the anti-family movement."

• No handicapped children are pictured in the first seven

books, and no elderly who are in need of our help until the later grades, and then in only two scenes. "Children need to be introduced in a Respect Life series earlier to the love, care and respect of handicapped children, and older, incapacitated people," Mrs Willke points out.

• The most serious problem is the Grade Eight book, which makes the case for abortion and euthanasia.

The book states, "The question of when the embryo actually becomes a person has never been, and probably cannot be decided finally either by science or theology."

Mrs. Willke explains that this is essentially what the pro-abortion decision of the Supreme Court in 1973 was, and is scientifically in error. In addition, if we do not recognize the unborn as a "person" in the legal sense, then we do not protect his life. That one loophole — "it really isn't a baby yet" — is the only excuse the pro-abortionist may need to sway the indecisive, immature young person to accept abortion.

Concerning euthanasia, the book states, "Now make your choice by circling the seven (of 11) who will remain on the boat," planting the idea that we mortals can choose who will live and who must die.

Mrs. Willke says of the lifeboat game, "This is an exercise in preparation for euthanasia. What should be taught in a respect life program is that we can give our life for another, but we cannot take someone's life."

She concludes, "The parts quoted on abortion and euthanasia are totally unacceptable. No eighth grade textbooks should be purchased."

Why would Sadlier, Inc., sell a "pro-life" series that is very attractive and generally innocuous, with the noted exceptions, in the lower seven grades, but turns out to be pro-abortion and pro-euthanasia in the crucial Grade Eight book? Let us hope that parents and educators are not fooled by such bait-and-switch tactics, but look elsewhere for family life resources.

Kathleen Maher RD 1 Skaneateles, N.Y. 13152

Editor's Note: A spokesperson for the diocesan Division of Education last week said the Sadlier "Look at Life" series has been approved for use in diocesan schools and is in use in four schools.

Support For Gays

Editor:

This is in response to Barbara Fischer's letter entitled "Perversion Unacceptable" (CJ 4/1/81), opposing the Diocesan Sisters Council endorsement of civil rights for gay and lesbian Americans. She implied God has no new light to shed on our understanding of gay people, or of the Bible, and enjoys the protection of her civil rights while our children's rights go unprotected by law. We do not feel this is a loving God's intent.

As parents, relatives and friends of gays, we're deeply offended by others calling our loved ones "perverse." We resent the comparison of our gay loved ones to adulterers, murderers and thieves because we realize that being homosexual, like being heterosexual, cannot be defined simply as acts or a conscious choice — it is an orientation and a constitutional part of one's being. Gay people, like non-gays, deeply love their partners.

However, because of their orientation, their rights are currently undefined by law, making them vulnerable to unfair discrimination practices.

The American Catholic Bishops have stated that homosexual people, like everyone else, "should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights ... and have a right to respect, friendship and justice." (To Live in Christ Jesus, Nov. 11, 1976) We realize, as does the Diocesan Sisters Council, that endorsing the civil rights of gay persons recognizes the fundamental right to respect and dignity of all people and is not an endorsement of the morality of such persons.

We and our gay loved ones

have been isolated and hurt by the negative opinions of others based on myths and fear and we are committed to dialogue with other parents, friends and family members of gay persons. We believe there is much we all have to learn about human sexuality, and homosexuality in particular, and are committed to new pathways of understanding. As a source of information, comfort and reassurance to those with a gay loved one, we most earnestly invite the friendship of others with a sincere desire to understand to call us at 232-6521 and join us for our monthly meetings.

Timothy Sally Co-Coordinator, Families and Friends of Gays of Rochester 693 Park Avenue No. 8 Rochester, N.Y. 14607

Need for Literature

Editor:

Readers may like to mail their used Catholic pamphlets and magazines direct to the foreign missions.

If those who wish to do so will please send me self-addressed envelopes, I will give them the addresses of missionary priests and nuns who need Catholic literature.

Write direct to:

Mary Conway 14 Castle Street Cork Ireland

More Opinions on page 10.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

Life's Storms Can Be Signs For Us of God

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mt. 14:22-23. (R1) 1 Kgs. 19:9, 11-13. (R2) Rom. 9:1-5.

In this week's readings we have a couple of stormy scriptures. First Kings speaks of strong and heavy winds rending mountains and crushing rocks, earthquake and fire; and the gospel tells of a storm at sea — a boat tossed about in waves raised by strong headwinds. Both readings are linked as a theophany — a manifestation of God's presence.

We might ask ourselves how do we respond to the cataclysms of life and how does God appear in the midst of crises and upheavals.

John W. Hanly, chairman and president of Monsanto Chemical Company, relates the shock he had when he arrived at his oldest son's first little league baseball game. "I arrived a bit late, just as his team was coming back to the dugout. I asked him, 'What's the score?'"

"He said, 'Twenty-eight to nothing.'"

"Whose favor?"

His son shrugged. "Who knows? We haven't been to bat yet."

Adversities and the storms of life may seem at times to be winning in an overwhelming way. But do we realize that the game isn't over with the initial onslaught, that our response hasn't come yet — with God, it can make all the difference?

Charles A. Tindley (1856-1933) was a prominent lawyer in Chicago when he lost everything in a fire. Two years later, he put his wife and children on a ship to Europe while he stayed behind to try to recover some of his fortune.

Six days later their ship broke apart in a violent North Atlantic storm. Mrs. Tindley was pulled from the water, unconscious; but all of the children were lost. From Wales Mrs. Tindley cabled her husband, "Saved, but alone."

When Tindley received this tragic cable, he sat down and wrote the words which were later put to a hymn by Daniel L. Ridout:

When the storms of life are raging, Stand by me;

When the storms of life are raging, Stand by me; When the world is tossing me Like a ship upon the sea, Thou who rulest wind and water, Stand by me.

Judge Harold R. Medina, who presided at the trial of 11 communist leaders in 1949, tells how during the trial he came to a point where he was beaten, his nerves frayed by telephone calls, vituperation, threats against his life and the lives of members of his family. He says, "One day I felt I had to leave the courtroom. And I'll be frank about it, when I left I was certain I could never go back. I had stood as much as I could. I had to give up.

"But suddenly there in my room I found myself like a frightened child calling to his father in the dark. I asked God to take charge of things and that His will be done. I cannot report anything mysterious or supernatural. All I know is that as I lay on the couch some new kind of strength flowed into me. That brief period of communion with my Maker saved not only the trial but my sanity as well."

As the cataclysm of nature can be both malefactor and benefactor, so the crisis storms of life can be viewed as a means of strengthening us and alerting us to the presence of God, not through the storm or upheaval, but through the still small voice or in the quiet appearance of Christ upon the waters.



"YOU'D BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND ANOTHER NEIGHBORHOOD WITH STRONGER FEELINGS ABOUT GOOD AND EVIL."