

Editorials

Our Challenge

The challenge laid down to the Knights of Columbus at their Supreme Convention by Archbishop John Roach, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, actually applies to all Catholics.

He told the Knights that they cannot remain aloof from the political scene and "merely be spectators." He said the Church must be involved in action that determines "the norms by which people must live out their lives."

The Congress reconvenes next week and several of these "life" issues are on the agenda.

For instance, the Senate Judiciary Committee has already reported a bill to standardize procedures for capital punishment. The bill supposedly intends to meet Supreme Court standards for fair application of capital punishment. The bishops of the U.S. are on record as strongly opposed to the establishment of the death penalty, and this bill, which may be commendable in one respect, nonetheless further legitimizes the death penalty.

The same Senate committee will begin hearings on a bill that would define human life as beginning at conception and also will hold hearings on a human life amendment in September and October. Both are of vital interest to all who believe in protecting the rights of the unborn.

Religious groups also will be lobbying for certain provisions in the Foreign Assistance Act, particularly concerning aid to El Salvador, Argentina and Chile. The idea is to assure that human rights are not being violated before any American aid is sent to these countries.

The American bishops have taken the lead in opposing aid to oppressive governments in El Salvador and other religious leaders have followed suit.

In addition to these issues, is the continuing Washington policy of cutting back on public assistance programs and beefing up "defense" expenditures.

At a meeting here last April, Bishop Matthew H. Clark urged caution in considering such policies because "the poor will suffer."

Bishop Clark said, "A powerful nation cannot be great unless its leadership understands and responds to the needs and the hopes of the humblest citizen." He asked Congress to examine the 20 percent increase in military spending in light of cuts in social programs.

And Catholic Charities adopted a resolution which described such assistance cutbacks as "in conflict with Church teaching, social thought and Catholic Charities' essential values of protecting the poor, the marginal, the needy."

So these and other issues soon will be confronted. Church position is clear. We must let our congressmen know where we stand.

Mary's Birthday

Sept. 8, the birthday of Our Blessed Mother, provides the perfect occasion for everybody who still has earth-bound mothers to do something extra-special for her.

If Mother lives far off, give her a telephone call or send a long letter or give her a gift and let her know that she is loved, appreciated and holds a revered position.

As for Mary herself, Margaret and Bern Foley of Queensland, Australia, have a suggestion. As part of their fifth annual worldwide Rosary Bouquet they ask all to pray a special rosary or any Marian prayer as a birthday gift to the Blessed Virgin.

Not a bad idea.

and Opinions

Church Invites Family Camp All to Fete

Editor:

We the community of Corpus Christi and our neighbors on Parsells and Webster Avenues, wish to thank everyone in the Rochester Diocese for their prayers, labor and contributions, all of which helped complete the Corpus Christi Center Building. We invite everyone in the Rochester community to come and celebrate the opening of the center from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 12, at a block party on Parsells Avenue between Webster Avenue and Baldwin Street.

The rehabilitation of this building is a beacon of hope for the neighborhood and has already inspired other members of the community to invest in this area. Come and celebrate!

Dominic A. Aquila
Director
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Family Camp Special Time

Editor:

We were glad to read the letter from Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Madonia about Christian Family Renewal (Aug. 12). We have attended "Family Camp" (its familiar name) for the last six years. Our one-week vacation has always been a special time for our family also. We agree with the Madonias in suggesting family camp as a vacation for those families who would like to do something special together for a week during the summer. (All ages have enjoyed the week — the age span over the years goes from two weeks old to senior citizen.)

How good it is to have something like this for families offered right here in our own diocese! The address for more information is: Christian Family Renewal, PO Box 32, Webster, N.Y. 14580.

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Mother Teresa Speaks Out

Editor:

Re Courier-Journal letter of Aug. 19, "Mother Teresa Must Speak Out."

After Paul Harper admits to Mother Teresa's work of love and compassion, he writes that she should not be afraid to speak out for 300 million Catholic women who are denied access to the priesthood, and therefore to God. There is an assumption here that 300 million women pursue, or at least support the goal of priesthood for women. However, from discussions I have witnessed this is an inaccurate determination.

But this letter is not to boost pros or cons but rather simply to try to express the sorrow of the man who sees this controversy as a wedge of divisiveness in a time when our Church struggles for unity. God has used many means of unfolding His will for us. Could we not, with open minds and hearts, commit this issue to prayer as we lovingly seek His intention in silence? Of course, if there

is skepticism regarding revelations (even of those approved by the Church in which Our Blessed Mother was the messenger), papal authority, and the thinking that Sacred Scripture is not meant to be flexed to conform with our life style, then the dilemma becomes clearer — but more intricate.

As for Mother Teresa's fears, one can easily conclude from her words and deeds that fear is not one of her qualities. Also, apparently it has not been considered that Mother Teresa's silence in some instances may be due to an unbiased love which includes those with whom she may find herself in disagreement. The message of her altruism is eloquent. Her deeds which require her all are performed with constancy and joy, and her speech is ever of giving-loving service to God wherever we find ourselves because this is a true test of our faith as well as a means to our salvation.

The scope of this controversy has brought it to the attention of all. It has caused feelings of hostility where none should exist and misunderstandings where there should be only har-



mony. We trust it will not swell to a degree which distracts us from achieving our intended work. Perhaps it would be wise to heed the words that Mother Teresa has spoken — and busy ourselves where we are. She is the epitome of humility and selflessness who seems to know what it means to share

Christ's peace in the midst of trials. And we many may find that consuming our resentments in actions of good will may become a source from which we can draw our own serenity.

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Word for Sunday

Niceness Is Special To Christians

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mt. 18:15-20, (R1) Ex. 33:7-9, (R2) Rom. 13:8-10.

A comic strip has a small boy standing before a mirror, straightening his tie and combing his hair and protesting, "Why do I have to go to Sunday School?"

His mother replies, "So

you can learn how to be a nice boy."

"Mother," the boy answers, "I already know how to be a nicer boy than I want to be."

Sunday's readings are about being nice. Being nice means being responsible (R1 and R3); and caring (R2).

Matthew was a tax-gatherer. He had all the exactitude of a collector. He filed things neatly into classes. Thus he gathered Jesus' teaching into one

sermon on the mount; he lumped seven parables together (Ch. 13). And in Sunday's gospel he reveals another device used to arrange various sayings of Jesus together: by using words common in many sayings — catchwords. Sunday's gospel is a cluster of "two or three" sayings of Jesus linked together by the catchwords "two or three."

In the second reading St. Paul uses the same device. The second half of his letter to the Romans is a section of advice and exhortation. When one first reads it, it seems like a hodge-podge, a jumping from topic to topic. However there is method in the seeming madness. As in a freight train each car is linked to the other, but the cargo of each differs, so Paul's diverse thoughts are linked together by a catchword or phrase. As Paul

finishes one topic, a closing word or phrase will suggest another totally different topic. For instance, in the sentence before Sunday's second reading, Paul talks about paying taxes — "Pay each one his due: taxes to whom taxes are due." In the Greek, the word "due" also means "owe." So taxes led Paul right into love. "Owe no debt to anyone" — what is owed the government reminded Paul of what Christians "owe" to others, namely love.

It is significant that Paul in Sunday's second reading used the word "neighbor" twice. The first time — "he who loves his neighbor (heteron) has fulfilled the Law" — he used the Greek word meaning "another," "a stranger."

The second time — "you shall love your neighbor

(plesion) as yourself" — he is quoting from Leviticus. The Greek word used there means "fellow countryman." Paul is saying that only by extending our love to those beyond our friends do we fulfill the Law. Loving one's neighbor means loving another even though no friend.

I am sure all of us remember the prayer the little girl prayed: "Dear God, make all the bad people good and all the good people nice." All good people are not necessarily nice. The Pharisees were good, but not so nice. That was why Jesus said, "Listen to their teachings, but don't do what they do."

Christ called people to relationships, not rules. So did Paul. His most famous passage on being nice to others (1 Cor. 13) pounded

home the thought that religion or goodness meant nothing if love were lacking.

In the reading to the Romans, Paul's appeal is to be nice.

In the gospel according to Leo Durouher, "Nice guys finish last." Modern man seems to be buying that gospel more and more. Witness how discourteous people are becoming toward other people, especially to store clerks.

Being nice isn't easy. It just doesn't come, else why world Jesus and Paul have talked about it so much? Like all virtue, it has to be cultivated. We start by being open, receptive, trust worthy. We take someone seriously and offer what gifts we have of caring and loving and believing. With Jesus, "Nice guys finish first."