

Editorials

Deaf Ears

The pope.

The vicar of Christ. The bishop of Rome. Spiritual leader of hundreds of millions of Roman Catholics. Historically, one of the most powerful persons on earth. Even today, perhaps the most respected.

John Paul II.

Intellectual. Seasoned under Godless oppression. Strategist. No Pollyanna.

This pope, John Paul II, travels to England. He begs for peace. He goes to Argentina. He pleads for reason. Annually, he beseeches the world to work for peace. He cements the appeal with an almost daily mortar of invocations for disarmament, for an end to nuclear stockpiling.

This pope gets involved. He deplores terrorism. He asks Israel to be magnanimous to her enemies. He pleads to men; he invokes the Deity.

Yet the nations of the world ignore him. Argentina won't yield. England bombs back. The PLO terrorizes. Israel bombs back. Neither side in Northern Ireland will give an inch. The arsenal of democracy would rather stockpile nuclear weaponry. The U.S.S.R. turns a deaf ear.

How can the nations of the world react so negatively? One reason may be that they can see the Holy Father's own flock doing the very same thing. The message which he brings to the secular world, which it ignores, he also brings to his own people, which they ignore.

Stalin once asked how many divisions does the pope command. That is a good question for many Catholics to ask themselves during this nuclear age.

Pope to U.N.

With this edition, the Courier-Journal concludes the publishing of the Holy Father's message to the special session of the United Nations on disarmament. It is a rich and moving statement, not only related to eternal

verities but also providing strong and immediate moral direction. It incorporates the thought of a succession of popes on the immorality of war in general and of nuclear armament in particular.

The pontiff drew heavily on the anti-weapon positions of his predecessors and also on his own deep knowledge of history, both remote and current. At one point, he quotes St. Augustine, "Slay war with the words of negotiations, but do not slay man with the sword."

The quotation, probably intended, brings to mind another: "He who takes the sword, will die by the sword."

John Paul II told the nations of the world, "Peace is a duty." He also stressed that "the world needs disarmament" and warns against those who indulge in "fiery and passionate language" on a "problem calling for sober and attentive examination."

Perhaps never before have Catholics and the world at large been given such unmistakable direction on an international issue of such magnitude.

and Opinions

Don't Forget POW/MIAs

Editor:

On national POW/MIA Day, July 9, we will honor former American prisoners of war and those who remain missing. This is a time to recognize the special debt we owe our fellow citizens who, in the act of serving our nation, relinquished their freedom that we might enjoy the blessings of peace and liberty.

As we honor those who did return, it is imperative that we reaffirm our dedication to those who remain missing, some whom may yet be captives of the Communists in Indochina. There is a continuing flow of credible eyewitness reports of Americans still in captivity. Further, substantiated intelligence data reveals the Vietnamese are withholding the remains of several hundred servicemen, waiting to use them as future bargaining chips.

Now is the time for the citizens of this country to speak out in behalf of the POW/MIAs. Write to the president and members of Congress. With this support of the American people, we are confident this tragic aftermath of the Vietnam War soon will be resolved.

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Is It Law Of Jungle?

Editor:

Years ago, some hard-working, peaceful Spanish-speaking people owned a house and took care of it with pride and diligence. Suddenly, one day, some English-speaking people came over and expelled them from this house. Since they were heavily armed, the Spanish-speaking had no choice but to surrender their home.

From the very next day, the head of the household went to the authorities but nothing happened. The old man died

and his son, and this son's son and the following generations kept claiming their home. The case went to different courts and finally, in 1965, it was ruled that both parties were to start negotiations to solve the question once and forever.

From the very same day of the home's occupation by the English people, the Spanish people not only complained but also taught their people that that house was theirs, that they should keep it in their minds and that no matter how long they had to wait, it belonged to them.

But in 1976, a report of the area was published and the English people were delighted to know that there was a lot of oil in the land surrounding the house, so they also decided to claim as theirs a number of homes in the old Spanish neighborhood. Of course, they were not going to return the house to its lawful owners.

But every human being's patience runs out and in 1982, the descendants of the first owners went to the house and expelled its occupants. Of course, many people reacted at once: who do these Spanish-speaking people think they are? How could they dare take the law into their hands? Who in its right mind would upset English-speaking people? Needless to say that English people reacted too and called the Spanish-speaking people "invaders" just because they decided to return home. Because they are powerful and English-speaking people rule town, the legal owners were expelled from their home once again.

The story will go on and on. We are not talking about Marketview Heights or similar areas or barrios in the United States where problems like this are somewhat frequent, but about Argentina, England and the Malvinas. How would an impartial judge rule a settlement like this? If you are English-speaking, the judge will favor your cause: that is the law of the jungle. Big countries rule and smaller ones have to wait until some day, justice rules this planet of ours.

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Why Gambling At Festivals?

Editor:

In the fury of festivals and carnivals during the month of June, I am compelled to write. The Catholic churches in Monroe County have had festivals for many years, bringing in money that they would not have otherwise. This is all well and good from a financial standpoint but I question some of our ethics as far as how we earn that money.

The gambling has gotten as out of hand. We need tents to house the games and players — many of whom are not of age! We also have to have the beer — heaven forbid we serve soft drinks to adults — and younger! And, oh yes, we really need all the rides from outside concerns, too. The Church itself gets very little money from these carnival people. The prices are such that to take a few children over to the festival is insanity. (If the Church was getting the money, it would be different.)

I am really disgusted with the whole thing lately and I think we should examine our goals for our festivals and begin to get back to a community affair to bring the parishes closer together. Have fun without the drinking and gambling and you will see more of the families at these affairs.

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Editor's Note: The writer points out that her parish, St. Joseph's, has no festival.

Ecology Threatened

Editor:

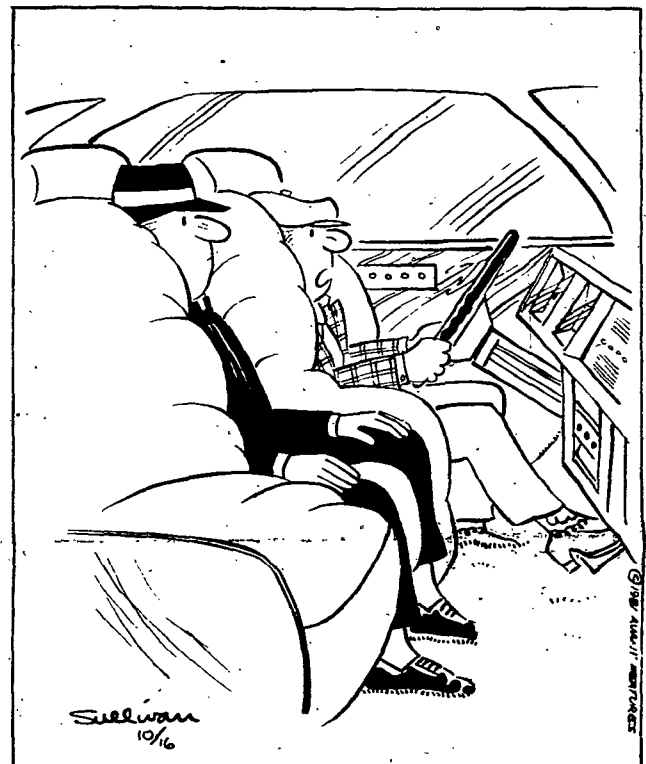
Charles Darwin wrote a book titled The Formation of Vegetable Mould. Through the Action of Worms, with Observations on Their Habits. In it he gave the world its first understanding of the fundamental role of earthworms as geologic agents for the transport of soil — a picture of surface rocks being gradually covered by fine soil brought up from below by the worms, in annual amounts running to many tons to the acre. At the same time, quantities of organic matter contained in leaves and grass (as much as

20 pounds to the square yard in six months) are drawn down into the burrows and incorporated in soil.

Darwin's calculations showed that the toil of earthworms might add a layer of soil an inch to an inch and a half thick in a 10-year period. Their burrows aerate the soil, keep it well drained, and aid the penetration of plant roots. The presence of earthworms increases the nitrifying powers of the soil bacteria and decreases putrefaction of the soil. Organic matter is broken down as it passes through the digestive tracts of the worms and the soil is enriched by their excretory products.

What happens to these incredibly numerous and vitally necessary inhabitants of the soil when poisonous chemicals are carried down into their world?

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"I'D APPRECIATE YOUR OPINION, FATHER. MY WIFE SAYS I SHOULD FEEL GUILTY ABOUT OWNING A LUXURY CAR..."

Fr. John Reedy

Looking for the Lord



When Bishops Speak on Public Issues

Last time this column dealt with the very delicate problem of whether bishops should be proclaiming moral judgment on specific issues of public policy.

I would like to add a couple more comments.

My basic conviction is that two different responsibilities need to be respected. The exercise of one should not infringe upon the other.

Bishops and other religious leaders in the United States have a legal right and a moral responsibility to address the religious and ethical issues involved in public policy.

And the individual citizen, whatever his or her religious affiliation, has the right and duty to formulate his own personal judgment on specific public policies, on specific candidates.

If the government's economic program is producing extraordinary human suffering for particular groups in our society, the religious leaders have the duty to call attention to that suffering, to remind their followers of their religious obligation to respond to the need of the neighbor who is suffering privation.

My bishop has a responsibility to remind me that I have a moral obligation to take that suffering into account as I formulate my own political judgment on an issue like the Reagan tax cuts.

But I don't believe for one minute that my bishop has the authority or the credentials to tell me that I, as a Catholic, am morally obliged to oppose those cuts. (In fact, I do oppose them, but simply as one more citizen.)

Bishops and other religious leaders have a responsibility to remind us of the horrible, increasing danger to humanity which is involved in the increasing stockpile of nuclear weapons. They have a right and duty to remind us of the

good that could be achieved through the resources we are pouring into those horrors.

But they don't have a right to tell me that, as a Christian, I am obliged to give my political support to unilateral nuclear disarmament, to a policy of a nuclear freeze. They can't even tell me that I am obliged to oppose the various absurd plans for the MX missile.

It needs to be said: A great many of the bishops are fully aware of the various contingencies, and they try to respect them.

In some instances, the bishop will say explicitly: "You have to form your own political judgment; for whatever help it might be to you in that effort, this is how I thought through the issues. You might agree or disagree with my estimate of the contingencies."

Many try to respect the distinctions, but not all. When the distinctions are not respected, it leads to the degradation of teaching authority. Thus we had Argentine and British bishops claiming simultaneously that their respective nation's military efforts were just.

I don't doubt the sincerity of any of these judgments, but I'm not about to accept either pronouncement as having religious authority over my own evaluation of what was going on in the South Atlantic.