

Editorials

Question on Death

"Death, where is thy sting?" is a rhetorical question from the Bible.

These days it is being answered in strange and realistic ways by such as Gary Gilmore, Steven Judy and, most recently, Frank Coppola. These men, convicted of capital crimes, all have chosen death over imprisonment.

And during this period when capital punishment seems about to come back into vogue in this country (though the trend is the opposite in other Western nations), it may be time to make a truthful admission.

The recent executions in this country have all been widely and deeply publicized. Yet, murders have persisted.

We have been killing people in retaliation for crimes since Day 1. Murders have more than kept pace.

To many criminals, death is preferable to life imprisonment.

Indeed, it seems obvious that the state has been reduced in many cases to being a conspirator in legal suicide.

Perhaps the biblical question should be rephrased as:

Death, where is thy deterrence?

And perhaps it is high time that those in favor of capital punishment should admit frankly that the deterrent factor is not pivotal. What is at issue is a more human passion — the desire for blood vengeance. Perhaps the debate over the death penalty will be made more fruitful if we all put our cards openly on the table.

Not So Odd

"Incredible" is how one gubernatorial candidate sized up Edward Koch's public statement that it's all right if an innocent person were victimized by the death penalty.

And at first, such a remark is stunning. But, given some reflection, it is not so incredible that a candidate for governor of New York State should be merely voicing what many feel in their hearts. Indeed, candidate Koch may have made political hay; he may be properly gauging the desire for vengeance that lies at the base of the popularity of capital punishment.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the deterrent argument is a coverup for the real motive of revenge.

Furthermore, in a society that accepts abortion as a birth control measure, how much can an innocent life matter?

and Opinions

Courier, Staff Criticized

Editor:

The layout on Page 6 of your Aug. 25 edition is a good example of a continuing concern about editorial policy for a diocesan Catholic newspaper. The lead article (accompanied by picture) was a story obviously issued by the press office of the Memorial Art Gallery, a matter of general interest, given equal publicity by every area newspaper. Appended to this article, like an afterthought, was a news item of specific concern to Catholics with reference to an Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament service at one of our parish churches. It was completely overshadowed by the lead article.

My concern is — do we need a diocesan Catholic newspaper, which is a draining expense on many parishes, to serve as a publicity agent for the Memorial Art Gallery? This kind of editorial policy has been in frequent evidence during summer month editions of the Courier-Journal. If there are not enough happenings in the diocese or in parishes or in the national and world Catholic Church to fill-up the pages of our diocesan newspaper, perhaps we should question the rationale for its existence! Or perhaps, even more to the point, we should question the professional ability of an editor and reporters to find such news and prioritize it accordingly!

Father John P. Norris
Assumption of Our Lady Church
20 East Ave.
Fairport, N.Y. 14450

Editor's Note: The 16-page Courier-Journal of Aug. 25 had just over 11½ pages of editorial space, contrasted with just under 4½ pages of advertising. In inches, the editorial whole amounted to 1,104. The Memorial Art Gallery story was not the lead story on Page 6. A story about an experimental parish in Colorado was. It told about a parish which was making ends meet by not spending on a new building or appointing a full-time pastor. The copy on this story took up 15 inches, compared to four for the art gallery story. The headline was 60-point caps, compared to 30-point upper and lower case on the art gallery piece, which incidentally concerned the first major exhibition of oriental art ever presented in

this country. Counting the headline and a 3-column photo, the piece took up 19 inches of the editorial budget of 1,104 inches. It should be kept in mind that some Catholics are interested in art. We believe that a Catholic newspaper is also part of the greater community. For that reason, in the same edition, we also printed a photo promoting an upcoming fair for residents of the Newark Developmental Center, which took up 13 inches. Frankly, we wish we had more space than 32 of 1,104 inches to devote to worthwhile community activities, even when not specifically Catholic. But actually there is an abundance of Catholic news to print, something which would not be evident to the layman.

The Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament piece was more of an announcement than a story. We print it monthly.

Subtracting the two stories "of general interest," the other 1,072 inches of editorial space was devoted to news of the Catholic Church locally, nationally and worldwide — which either did not appear in the secular press, or was printed without detail, or without the Catholic viewpoint. To wit:

- The lead in the paper concerned Bishop Clark's Thanks Giving Appeal (four photos, three stories), total of 78 inches;

- Also on Page 1 was a report on regionalism in the diocese and an obituary and photo of Father Sebastian Contegiacomo;

- Inside, there was a full page of news and photos of Catholic national and worldwide happenings;

- A story in which a Vatican bank official denied any wrongdoing in the recent Italian bank scandals (a different impression was left in secular newspapers) — 32 inches;

- A story and photo of Mother Teresa in Beirut — 23 inches;

- A story updating developments on anti-abortion bills in the Congress — 16 inches (an editorial complemented the story);

- A diocesan announcement on new education leaders — nine inches — following up on the previous week's special 16-page section on schools;

- A special report on a new

group of black area clergymen (including a diocesan representative) which will make pronouncements on such issues as abortion, birth control and strengthening the family — 36 inches;

- A report from the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Liberties on the role played by Catholic inner city schools which debunks the claims by some that such schools are havens for segregation — 18 inches;

- A story on Bishop Edwin Broderick leaving his post as director of Catholic Relief Services — 20 inches;

- A personal reflection by Father Hemrick on the increase in youth suicides and what the Center for Youth Development at Catholic University thinks of it all — 23 inches;

- A list of movie ratings, two movie reviews, a book review, an appraisal of TV programming, all provided by National Catholic News Service for the U.S. Catholic Conference, total of 95 inches;

- A list of Natural Family Planning instructors, nine inches;

- A schedule of Catholic Charismatic meetings — 40 inches.

- A story on upcoming Adult Education plans in the Northeast Region of the diocese — 23 inches;

- A picture and story about diocesan priests studying in Belgium — 16 inches;

- "At Your Parish," a weekly roundup of parish activities — 20 inches;

- Sundry other smaller items, all related directly to Catholic life;

- Regular features, such as columnists and cartoons;

- Reader Opinion — 44 inches.

All in one summer edition which would indicate that there is indeed quite a bit of Catholic news and events which needs promulgating.

Many Blessings For Pastors

Editor:

With a smile and a little sadness I read Father Cuddy's column on retirement. The article implies that Christ's priesthood can only be fulfilled in retirement.

Sure, there are many bills,



From National Right to Life News, Courtesy, Arizona Republic.

committees, demands today but there are also countless opportunities to bring God's love to all ages.

Normally, any leader receives criticism but I discover that people truly appreciate their parish priest, his celebrations and homilies, his classroom, home and hospital visits.

Today, especially, people wish to participate in their faith: I've never offered daily Mass alone and parishioners are willing to take on weekday work and weekend ministries.

In our parish of 800 families, some of my greatest joys are: classroom visits, family dinners (24) and blessing homes of new families (650) in eight years.

With some effort, prayer and determination, I find the life of a pastor today very happy and fruitful.

We appreciate Father Cuddy's concern for parish priests and our headaches but please realize our blessings are a hundredfold.

Father Elmer Schmidt
St. Margaret Mary
Apalachin, N.Y. 13732

'Loyal Dissent' Questioned

Editor:

Many of us are grateful for the gift of the "fear of God;" we dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell" for ourselves and others. We need exemplary holiness in the practice of Catholic faith by priests and nuns. However, we are continuously scourged by the many outrageous rationalizations and rejections of the Church magisterium. There are imposed upon us with primacy of faith in personal rather in a Church-

formed conscience. Rationalizations have made credence of the presumption that "loyal dissent" prevails over God's will, which is explicitly through His Church magisterium.

The feast of Our Blessed Mother's assumption into heaven should be an especially joyous day. However, it was one of those more outrageous (sickening) days in which rejection of faith in the Catholic Church is demonstrated on the altar, during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: the homily was delivered by the parish's pastoral assistant (lady).

Bishop Matthew H. Clark's pastoral letter "Fire in the Thornbush" supports the Church magisterium... only ordained persons should preach the homily (66). Blindly or hypocritically, the response to petitions which followed the homily was "to do God's will."

Is God no longer offended when the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is a frequent (sometimes daily) means by which to demonstrate rejection of faith in Our Lord as the invisible head of His Church? Is Our Almighty God no longer to be feared; no longer the Author of just anger which Jesus demonstrated?

Joseph J. Murray
38 Wyndover Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14616

Teens Need Guidance

Editor:

The Monroe County Health Department recently released statistics showing that teenage pregnancy has again increased. "We haven't made a dent in it" was the response of Barry Gruber who manages a program to reduce teenage pregnancy.

We doubt if a dent will ever be made in the teenage pregnancy rate as long as the environment young people live in remains the same. The teenager today lives in an environment that contains a greater amount of sexual content and permissive attitudes than the teenager of the past was ever exposed to. Movies, TV, ads, popular magazines, and songs all influence a young person's attitude regarding sex. The kind of sexuality that is most often conveyed is one that is divorced from values such as love, commitment, responsibility and morality. How many TV shows, movies and songs portray sex in the context of marriage? How often is the value of chastity extolled?

Along with this greater emphasis on sex in the teenagers' environment there is less and less said by parent, by churches, and by schools on the dignity of sex, the value of waiting until marriage and the importance of self-control. Our clergy should not be afraid to speak in the pulpit on the morality of sex and the value of chastity. Parents need to instill in their children a sense of respect for their bodies and a sense of modesty in dress and behavior. Schools need to reinforce these values or at least not undermine them by such questionable techniques as "values clarification."

I believe teenagers need solid moral guidance and absolutes when it comes to right and wrong. They need to hear about some of the traditional values that really did help build character and responsible behavior. Not only do teenagers need this, I believe they desperately want it.

Raymond N. Buonemani
38 Holcraft Road
Rochester, N.Y. 14612