

**Editorials**

**Coming of Age**

The Courier-Journal has editorialized in the past that the United States has some strange bedfellows in its espousal of capital punishment.

Most of the nations of Western Europe have long ago transcended into civilization by deciding not to behead, gas, hang, shoot, fry or poison their criminals.

Only five of their number still have capital punishment — Turkey, Greece, Ireland, Cyprus and Liechtenstein. But the Englands and Frances and Italys and Spains and Norways and Swedens are preparing a document for study which will be presented for the approval of this handful. Hopefully in a couple of months they will join the 20th Century before it is over.

As for the United States — how long, oh, Lord, how long?

**To the Point**

"Reproductive Freedom Day" never saw the light of day in San Francisco because Mayor Dianne Feinstein refused to sign a proclamation passed by the city's Board of Supervisors, 6-5.

Board members supporting such a proclamation had argued that it would celebrate a woman's right to choose when and if to have a child. More to the point, however, was Supervisor Lee Dolson, chairman of the board's Human Services Committee, who said of the idea, "Let's call it what it is ... abortion, the silent holocaust."

**and Opinions**

**The Pesticide Threat to Fish**

Editor:

The pesticide threat to fish may be divided into three parts.

One relates to the fishes of running streams in northern forests and to the single problem of forest spraying. It

is confined almost entirely to the effects of DDT.

Another is vast, sprawling and diffuse; it concerns the many different kinds of fishes — bass, sunfish, crappies, suckers and others that live in many kinds of waters, still or flowing, in many parts of the country.

It also concerns almost the entire gamut of insecticides

now in agricultural use, although a few principal offenders like toxophene, endrin, dieldrin and heptachlor, can easily be picked out.

Another problem has to do with the fishes of salt bays, marshes and estuaries. It was inevitable that serious destruction of fishes would follow the widespread use of the new organic pesticides. And when millions of tons of poisonous chemicals are applied to the surface of the land it's inevitable that some of them will find their way into the unending cycle of waters moving between land and sea.

Reports of fish kills, some of disastrous proportions, have become common.

This problem concerns many people. At least 25 million Americans look to fishing as a major source of recreation and another 15 million are at least casual anglers. These people spend \$3 billion a year for licenses, tackles, boats, camping equipment, gas and lodgings. Whatever deprives them of their sport will also reach out and affect a large number of economic interests.

The commercial fisheries represent such an interest, an essential source of food. Inland and coastal fisheries yield about three billion pounds a year. Yet the invasion of streams, ponds, rivers and bays by pesticides is now a threat to both recreational and commercial fishing.

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suffer and die in American research laboratories each year. Never before has there been such public uprising over laboratory animal abuse. People who just can't bear to let this incredible amount of suffering go on are risking their lives and facing jail sentences by breaking into laboratories and rescuing some of these unfortunate creatures. Pictures have been taken and the public is being shown just what really goes on behind the locked laboratory doors. Ridiculous and repetitious experiments, performed just to obtain government grants, are being brought to light.

For the first time in history a researcher has been convicted of cruelty to animals, his experimental monkeys taken away, and his government funding revoked.

The biggest undertaking, ever planned on behalf of animals is scheduled for April 24: "World Day for Laboratory Animals." Cities all across the world will stage massive simultaneous demonstrations at primate research centers.

Bills pending in the United States Congress would impose some regulations on painful experiments, open the laboratories to inspection, and provide money to find research methods which do not require the use of live animals. The law will not hamper scientific research, but rather will improve it, at the same time lessening animal suffering.

Attend the demonstration in your area. Contact your Congressman and your two U.S. Senators and ask them to support the bills to protect laboratory animals.

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Fr. Louis J. Hohman



The Open Window

**'Real' Homilies**

Dear Father Hohman,

I enjoy a "real" homily. I attended parochial school during an age when no questions were asked, that is, they weren't allowed.

I had difficulty with a lot of doctrinal teachings, but had to just set it aside and live as best I could. More than anything I enjoyed Scripture; it just seemed to speak to me so much more than the Baltimore Catechism and the rest of the teaching tools. My biggest question was how to put Scripture into my everyday life. Not as a tyrant or another book of rules but just as a part of me, on the inside or the outside. Most of my 12 years spent in parochial school seemed to convey life in a courtroom, and I could not see or understand qualities such as mercy, compassion, justice. In fact I didn't want to know what justice was; it wasn't too attractive from where I stood then.

There was no way out, you were guilty, and there was no evident clemency. It had one good effect on me if you can call it that. It made me want to know what these qualities were and in search of them I decided to be a nurse.

But anyhow, in a real homily, when the homilist is really sharing his own lived experience with the Word/Lord in his/her life, that enables me to plug into some of the experiences in my own life, my own daily living, and I can perhaps see where I've been in the same kind of circumstances and either blew it completely, or the Christ in me has risen to the occasion and loved. I cannot do that with pure intellectual instruction (which has always been more of a "how to"

manual-teaching to me), whereas shared living experiences are relate-able, contemporary, now. Perhaps that's why they are so threatening to some — I don't know.

I need to know how to integrate all that I see, hear, do. I want to love with God's love, and in order to do that I need to know God, not just about God. I also need to know me to discern the difference in me and to cooperate with the Holy Spirit's leadings. When all this is posed to me in intellectual terms only, I cannot plug in.

Another thing I've become more and more aware of is that women experience things, events, etc., differently from men. Men think differently from women; and, to me, I've just learned a lot better from women.

P.F.

Dear P.F.

Not much of an answer is required. I wanted to print your letter because I believe it says important things about what a homily really is and how many of the faithful feel about it, albeit there are some (or many) who do feel threatened by such direct application to their personal circumstances. I also believe it would be worthwhile for many priests to see how large numbers of the laity feel about their Sunday efforts.

One more thing — perhaps your experience in parochial schools was somewhat less than widespread. We can take it for what it's worth. I am certain not everyone who attended parochial schools feels quite the same way. Thank you for your letter. Maybe some more reflections on this will be forthcoming. What do the lay people want in Sunday sermons/homilies?

**Guidelines**

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writer's signature, full address and telephone number. They should be sent to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, no longer than 1 1/2 pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and the letters will reflect the writer's own style.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent elsewhere. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

**Jewish Heritage Alive Today**

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 9/28-36. (R1) Gen. 15/5-12, 17-18. (R2) Phil. 3/17 through 4/1.

Next Sunday's reading is difficult not only for some hapless lector who may read "a smoking brassiere" instead of "a smoking brazier," but also for the exegete.

The difficulty lies not in the language but in the imagery. In pagan mythology the gods were often likened to the fires of nature which come and go as they will and leave massive destruction behind them. In the Abraham story, God appears as fire, but not as a fire that destroys, to image Him as a merciful God.

The very word "covenant" means "to cut up." For covenants, or treaties, were ratified by cutting animals in two and walking between them (Jer. 34/18). The cut-up animals symbolized what would happen to the party who broke the covenant. The birds of prey symbolized the nations which would try to take away Abraham's divinely-given land.

However the event signifies how it all began with the covenant idea of God's choice of Abraham and the special relationship that would prevail between God and Abraham's descendants.

The Old Testament is the story of Abraham's descendants. There has never been on the face of the earth a more remarkable "family" than the Jews.

All peoples have their peculiar gifts, but it was given to the Jews to grasp the fundamental spiritual and moral principles that

govern human life on earth. They have, in doing so, for all time united man's earthly lot with the divine spirit, and that was a thousand times more important than Greek art, Roman law, German science or French wit. There can be no question that Judaism was the world's supremely conscious center of Monotheism. It thus became the religious foundation of all our Christian culture. Before the Temple was destroyed, it defended that monotheism against all its polytheistic neighbors with heroism, absolutely unique. The strength of faith and character then displayed has communicated itself to all that moral inheritance which for a millenia has held the Jews together.

Mark Twain once wrote that he spent \$25 to research his family background, and then \$50 to cover it up. That is not the case with the Jews. They proudly parade their heritage clear back to Abraham and announce to the world that they have a covenant with God and bask in the relationship of being a chosen people, blessed by God.

The American people owe more to the Jews than to any other people. What other group has made as profound an impact in all phases of life as this group?

The list is endless. If you're diabetic, thank a nameless Jew for insulin; if you have arthritis or a headache, thank a Jew named Bayer for aspirin; if you like FM music, thank Henrich Hertz from whom we get the term megahertz, who developed it. The next time you use a calculator or computer, you can thank Jewish mathematicians like Jacobi and Georg Cantor.

This list is only partial. Of course heading it are the two who have most influenced the world: Jesus of Nazareth and His mother Mary, descended from Abraham.

**Protect Lab Animals**

Editor:

At last there is hope for the 100 million animals who



"SHE STILL REMEMBERS YOU, FATHER, EVEN THOUGH SHE WAS JUST A PUP THE LAST TIME YOU DROPPED IN ON US."