

Editorials

Leader's Admission: 'We Have Sinned'

Certainly, knowing the mercurial nature of Central American politics, a wait-see attitude is required. Still, a shining light of hope was provided last week by Guatemalan President Efraim Rios Montt when he announced to his country and the world, "We have sinned."

He used national television for the admission and added sinew to the words by announcing amnesty for guerrillas and promising to ease the state of siege in his country.

What prompted such turnabout? The president's message came just six days after Pope John Paul II sharply criticized violence and repression during his March 7 visit to Guatemala. And, according to the Vatican, during his visit to that nation, the pope

privately discussed with Rios Montt six earlier executions of men by the government.

"We know and understand that we have sinned, that we have abused power and we want to reconcile ourselves with the people," Rios Montt said.

It is difficult to gauge which is the most important fact in this. Is it a human being's recognition of self-guilt and the desire to reconcile himself to others? Or is it that the pope is still a force for good or even more progressively that good is still a force in politics?

Cardinal Ploy

Congratulations to Cardinal Terence Cooke who deftly handled the terrorists who kidnaped this year's St. Patrick's parade in New York City.

By not appearing on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral as Michael Flannery, the grand marshal and avowed IRA supporter, passed, the cardinal showed his disdain for those who espouse violence. By later

joining in the participation, he revealed his support for those who see the parade as a celebration of the Irish contributions to American life and to the venerable saint himself.

The boys have had their fling and gotten away with it. Let us hope that the City Fathers will be more on guard next year and restore the parade to its former majesty.

No to Paisley

While passing out kudos on the Irish question, reserve some for the U.S. State Department which refused a request by the Rev. Ian Paisley for a visa to enter this country. This bloodthirsty militant, who has abused the title of clergyman, is in reality a hate-monger who will use any means to squash the minority Catholic populace in Northern Ireland.

The State Department rightly refused his request because he has a record of "inflammatory statements which we regarded as contrary to the U.S. interest in the achievement of a peaceful settlement in Northern Ireland."

and Opinions

Bishop Clark Commended

Editor:

I wish to express my personal gratitude to Bishop Clark and the Courier-Journal for sharing with your readers his address at the recent retreat for the priests of the diocese. The four components of his talk on "Growth in Ministry" are so relevant to all people that I am going to do my best to have our whole family reflect on it as an organized and constructive approach to our individual Lenten renewal (three of our children are in college and one in high school).

The night before the public announcement of the appointment of Bishop Clark, I was at a meeting when one of the priests received a phone call and told us we had our new bishop. Vividly, I recall how my "interior" radar did an unexpected flip of joy, although I knew nothing of our new bishop-to-be. Just recently, I recognized this tall man with the big stride ahead of me at our local mall and nothing would do but to speak to him; he was like a magnet. After I'd interrupted him (he was very gracious), I felt remorse at having invaded some of his limited private moments.

Reading this summary of his thinking on his approach to his own ministry, I can clearly see why my "radar flipped" and why he has such magnetism. His humility and sincerity are excellent examples for us all, as well as his awareness of the roles of prayer, emotion, health and intellect have in the living of

our lives, whatever our vocations.

From this hilltop in the Southern Tier, Bishop Clark seems well on his way to being that hinge person he strives to be.

Betty Lou Crowley
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Seminar Praised

Editor:

Several months ago I wrote a rather disgruntled letter to the Courier complaining that the Seminar for Parents of Teens was available in the Rochester area only — and that we in the Southern Tier could use some help also. I was promptly informed that Ron and Judy Platten would be happy to bring the program to our area if we could arrange an interested group.

It required months of effort on the part of a small core group but the first seminar was held at St. John's in Elmira on March 5 and 6. It seemed the unanimous opinion of the 28 parents participating that the weekend was well worth the commitment of time and money. We all gained valuable insights into the workings of our teens — and of ourselves.

Thank you to Celia Volbrecht of the Office of Social Ministry for serving as a catalyst, to the local parishes for their promotion, and to Father David Gramke and Father Joseph Gaynor for all their support.

My hope is that this initial

program was only the first of several and that many more parents in this area will be able to take advantage of the program in the future. It is worth the effort involved.

Mrs. Barney Daugherty
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There's a Friend In Your Church

Editor:

I was pondering how lonely it gets when your children grow up into adulthood, get married and have families of their own.

Their visits to us are not too often. They are busy with the business of living. Their time is pretty well taken up with their own occupations. They are not thinking that their parents are lonely.

I attend a lovely church in the suburbs, St. Pius the Tenth. Traffic is heavy and constant in our main street. Right off it lies our wonderful Catholic church. Very few stop to visit our dear friend, Jesus. It only takes from 30 seconds to a minute to park your car and walk into church and visit our dearest friend.

Jesus is no different from any parent. He awaits us eagerly; he misses us. He is lonely for us the way we are for our children. We must pass this same church 10 or 12 times a week but never venture to stop in to say hello to Him.

During Lent, swing into the parking lot. There's a friend waiting for you. Instead of giving up something concrete for Lent, give up some of your time. Keep coming to see Him after Lent is over. It only takes a few minutes and your best friend is waiting for you. Jesus is His name.

Jeanette DiLorenzo
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Heed Mary For Peace

Editor:

Much is written these days about nuclear war and the fear it is putting in the hearts of men. Victor Hugo once said, "Nothing in the world is so powerful as an idea whose time has come."

I read somewhere that the only thing the Communists

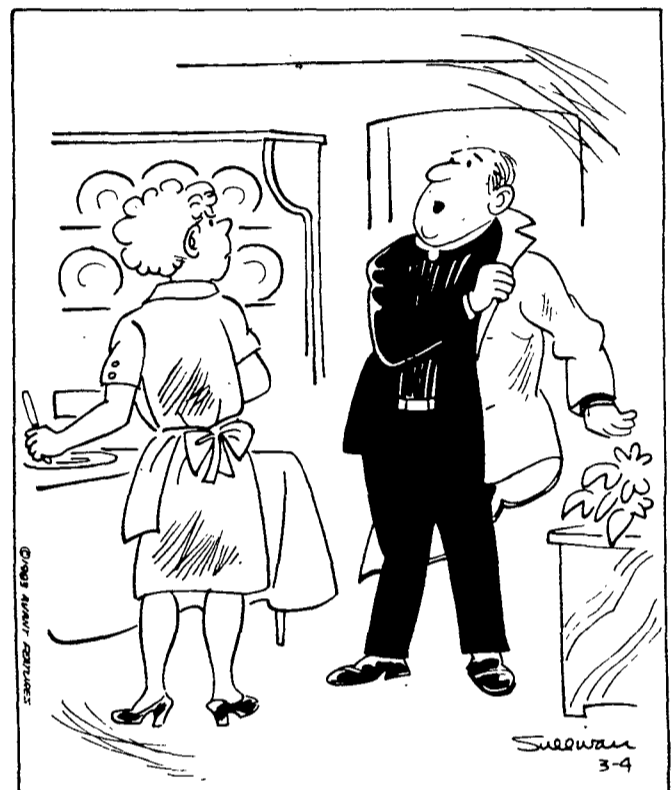
are truly afraid of is the Blue Army.

The Blue Army is an organization dedicated to spreading devotion to our Blessed Mother, especially under the title of Our Lady of Fatima. If enough people answer Our Lady's requests at Fatima there will be no war with Russia.

Our Blessed Mother loves us all — yes, even the Communists. At Fatima, she didn't say Russia would be overcome by military force. She said that Russia would be converted and there would be peace if we answer her requests.

One of her requests was to say the rosary every day to make reparation to her Immaculate Heart and for the conversion of Russia. It takes about 10 minutes to say the rosary. The rewards will be great.

Peggy McCarthy
Loveland, Ohio



"TELL YOU WHAT, MRS. MURPHY, LET'S WAIT TILL AFTER SUPPER TO DISCUSS HOW THE NEW CODE OF CANON LAW DEALS WITH WOMEN."

Fr. Louis J. Hohman



The Open Window

Responsive Chords

Dear Father Hohman,

The letter you printed from the woman reflecting on the response to homilies touched a responsive chord in me. I share her preferences. One who preaches as a witness enables me to reflect on my own experiencing and responding to God's love.

My experience with parochial education was somewhat different, though equally desolate spiritually. I looked upon the ones who taught me, nuns and priests, as the holy ones — they seemed to be "in" with God. I was "out," having had no personal experience of this God they were so fervent about. The frustration of the situation for me was in the fact that nobody could or would give me a handle on how to open the door. All I got was "shoulds," and try as I might, all I ended up with was "I can't." Result — good old-fashioned Catholic guilt trip.

I can write these things in

Dear S.B.,

Thank you for your beautiful and helpful sharing. I hope it will be an encouragement to all those called to preach the Gospel. But it says a great deal more than that.

It says that we who are members of the Church can minister to each other in marvelous ways, whether we are in the ordained ministry, religious life or not. You may and should give spiritual direction as you have allowed the Holy Spirit who resides in you by Baptism to work through you.

One more thing. I've received evidence that more than a few Catholics had a dim view of their parochial school education. While there is probably some foundation for complaint, I think one of the reasons for being critical was not the system or the teachers, but the fact that you were at another stage in your faith journey — you were a child and were taught at that level.

Since then you have grown up not just physically but in the knowledge and appreciation of your faith. You have come a long way on the journey. The parochial schools did their part. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit you have done the rest.

S.B.

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 S., 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.