

Editorials

Hate on Display

Racial bigotry has once again reared its ugly head. This time in a predominantly white section of Chicago and at a Catholic church, sad to relate.

Chicago's Democratic candidate, Harold Washington, and former Vice President Walter Mondale were invited to the church to explain their views on some local housing situations.

About 150 whites surrounded the two men and shouted epithets, forcing them to leave hurriedly. They shouted, "Epton, Epton," over and over. Bernard E. Epton is Washington's Republican opponent. "No more politics in church," also was a cry as was "Washington, you're a tax evader." The candidate was convicted on a charge of failing to file income tax returns in 1972.

But make no mistake that it was racism, cloaked by the other issue. The pastor, Father Frank Ciezadlo, sadly remarked, "I've been a priest for 36 years. Maybe I didn't get the message of love across."

And Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin expressed his sorrow as well. He said that he was "saddened that Christian courtesy and civility were not extended" to

the two men.

Washington called the incident a "dastardly thing that desecrated and defamed the church and embarrassed a fine priest on one of the holiest of days (Palm Sunday)."

Epton called the incident "unfortunate" and "appalling."

So once again, fearful bigots are at work, shouting down, insulting, and disgracing themselves. Father Ciezadlo makes the right implication; it is worse because they were Christians, more pointedly, Catholics, who were displaying their ignorance.

Not Censorship

Americans abhor censorship. American Catholics abhor censorship.

Therefore, at first blush, the call of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights for action against "Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You" may seem repugnant.

Many, including Archbishop John May of St. Louis,

feel that the off-Broadway play is viciously anti-Catholic. Even so, many believe it un-American to ban it.

But that's not what the Catholic League has in mind. It merely wants the state legislature to enact guidelines requiring the State Council on the Arts to withhold public funding from this play, or any others which are offensive to members of any religious, racial or ethnic minorities.

"We are familiar with the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech, and we realize that a religious bigot, like anyone else, is free to promote his janudiced views in our society," said Father Peter Stravinskias of the Catholic League. "But such promotion of anti-religious sentiment should not receive state sanction through the expenditure of public tax funds."

That is a reasonable point. The league has been in contact with the Arts Council for a year and a half but has gotten nowhere. Now it is turning to members of the state legislature to remedy the situation.

To make it clear, no one is trying to ban or censor the play. However, it is perfectly within reason to keep the state's Council on the Arts from subsidizing it.

and Opinions

Good Habit Recommended

Editor:

We should be grateful for our Catholic faith.

We have golden opportunities for assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, receiving the sacraments, especially reconciliation, as well as saying rosaries, Stations of the Cross.

What if we lived in some

countries where it is forbidden to practice the true faith? Faith is a gift from God; we should appreciate it fully.

This saying came to my attention a long time ago. Here it is. When I was a child my mother took me to church to make a visit "just for a minute."

Later on I went to school, played baseball, on the way home I stopped "just for a minute." It made me happy to let God know I made a homer. I had this good habit through college and work years, when

the few times I didn't stop "just for a minute" I felt guilty.

This is an excellent practice, on the way to or from school, work, shopping, appointments, etc.

Margaret Zanghi
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Key People Pointed Out

Editor:

Thank you for the article March 23, "Spiritual Direction a Listening Ministry."

Only my name, however, is mentioned in connection with the Spiritual Integration Center. Actually, the center, begun in mid-1981, is the work of several other people as well, all of whom were equally instrumental in its founding: Sister Margaret Mary Mattle, RSM, director of Mercy Prayer Center; Sister Mary Lynch, SSJ, Religious Education consultant to the diocese; Father Charles Mulligan, director of Social Ministries; Mary Behar Dombeck, on the U. of R. faculty, and Pastoral Counseling Center; and more recently, Brother Ronald Howe, CFC, coordinator of retreat ministry at Bishop Kearney High School. All have been substantial contributors to the ministry of the Spiritual Integration Center.

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'Thorn Birds' An Affront

Editor:

Despite its sugar coating and its characteristic Hollywood-style trappings, "The Thorn Birds" recently televised by ABC, represents a truly shallow, sacrilegious and distorted concept of the Catholic priesthood.

During the holiest of seasons, ABC, merchants and the other commercial interests hawked their wares for the millions of "pieces of silver" as they perpetrated a most heinous affront to Christ, His Church and mankind's

principles of morality and decency.

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'March' Works To Save Babies

Editor:

In 1983, the March of Dimes will mark 25 years since it took up its "new" cause. Having conquered polio, the voluntary health organization could have folded its tent. Instead, with a highly effective network of volunteers and professionals in place, the March of Dimes pinpointed a group of illnesses and disorders that together make up our nation's most serious child health problem: birth defects.

Thanks to the March of Dimes, we've had 25 years of progress in this field. Some examples: Intensive care units for the critically ill newborns save thousands of babies a year born too small or too soon. Doctors can diagnose and treat some birth defects while the baby is still in the mother's womb. Vaccination programs have spared unborn babies from the devastating effects of infection in the womb. Educational efforts have alerted the public to preventable birth defects caused by smoking, drinking, unprescribed drugs or poor nutrition.

Despite these advances, many shocking facts remain: millions of Americans live today with the handicapping effect of birth defects, and each year some 250,000 babies are born with mental or physical disorders.

Some feel nothing can be done to change those statistics. But the past 25 years have shown there is. By supporting the March of Dimes, we are helping to change the future for America's next generations.

Become a part of the fight against birth defects, and help the March of Dimes save more babies in the years ahead.

Nancy C. Benson
Chairperson
Genesee Valley/Finger Lakes

Fr. Louis J. Hohman



The Open Window

Can Military Learn to Wage Peace?

Once we have taken a stand on the morality of war and especially of nuclear war, we might be asked, "Well, if war is not morally right, what do you propose to do about it?"

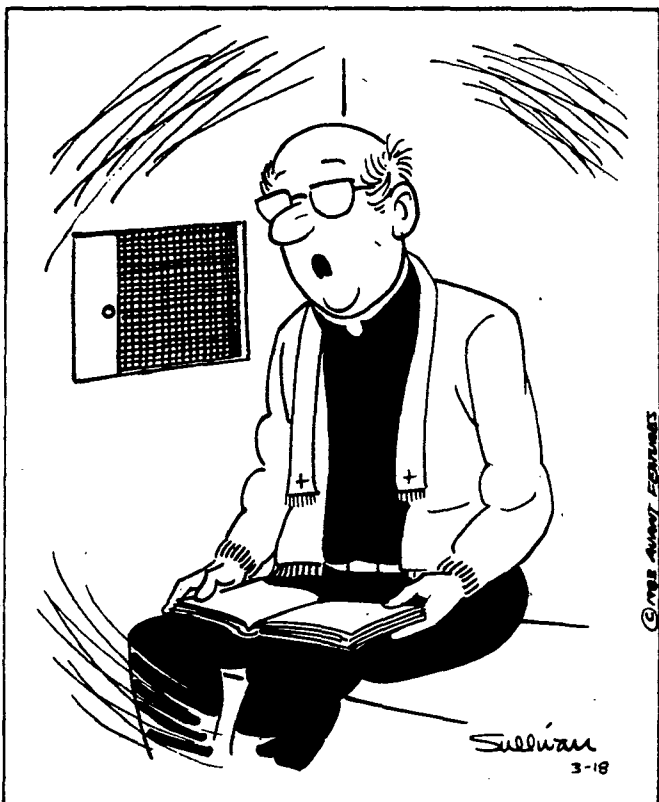
I would beg your indulgence however, while I go through a fantasy which I had some time ago and which people have told me since is not exactly a new one.

It goes something like this. Practically every nation has a military establishment which it considers necessary for its defense. That military establishment has a core of professional soldiers who make a career of the military. They become very proficient in such things as the use of weapons and the knowledge of military strategies. As they get along in their careers it might occur to them that they are not using any of these skills which they have worked so hard to obtain. It might seem that their career is going to be a waste, going down the drain. Subconsciously they find themselves leading the political forum into a sense of a need for war somewhere on the face of the earth and eventually the war happens without anyone really knowing why it does, or at least being able to give a good reason for it. It seems to me that to a very large extent that's what's happening now in Central America, as it did in Vietnam.

What can be done about this? I think it would be very wise on our part if we would give to people who are making their careers in the military a "reason for being"

which goes beyond the making of war. Therefore I would highly recommend that when one enters the military he or she spend one day a week learning military crafts, and the other four days of the week learning or doing something useful for the entire society. It seems to me that whatever military skills need to be learned could be learned in one day a week. That means that 80 percent of the military person's life would be seen to have a very meaningful outcome and the idea of maintaining peace would be four times as important as making war. This is not to say that military people are responsible for every war that we have had. No doubt the politicians have their own axes to grind and find reasons for being aggressive vis-a-vis another nation or nations. But I think that if the military had a sense of their importance in the arena of peace as over and against the arena of war, then they might be less inclined to agree with the politicians on the necessity of fighting.

We are constantly regaled with the statement that nobody wants war and yet we have engaged in some kind of war every single generation since our country was founded 200 years ago. It seems to me that there haven't been quite that many reasons for war to be a necessity. I suppose it could be said that in one or two instances that was unavoidable, but it's very hard for me to believe that all of our wars had a meaning or rationale deserving consideration by intelligent human beings. Obviously this plan is not a panacea, but if it could reduce the volume of war by 20 percent per century, that would be a significant gain in the annals of humankind.



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.