

Opinions

Church Tax On S. Africa

EDITOR:

It is becoming increasingly imperative that the Vatican, and particularly the Church in America, begin consistently to address the critical nature of the situation in South Afrika. Clearly, the most glaring example of blatant racism and human injustice in the world, the Church must assume with other religious and social institutions, major responsibility in condemning the ideology of apartheid and begin advocating liberty for the 20 million Black people under control of the South Afrikan government.

Patriotic forces of South Afrika are intensifying their efforts to free the land. This method, in all its tragic circumstances, may be the only recourse left as all other nonviolent attempts to mediate for liberty and justice have failed.

The Vatican's silence on the South Afrikan question is baffling, and its silence must end with direct involvement by the Vatican with perhaps the lead being assumed by the Catholic Church in America and other progressive communions. The evil of apartheid and the unbelievable suffering of the people under its heel would dramatize to the world, and especially to Americans, that beyond Poland, Latin and Central America, there is "trouble in the land."

The most constructive way to oppose the South Afrikan government is to call for the full and immediate withdrawal of all American and foreign investments from that country. It would appear at this point that any other approach would be too late.

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Word for Sunday

Freedom For Service

Sunday's Readings:
(R3) Lk. 9/51-62. (R1) Kgs. 19/16, 19-21. (R2) Gal. 5/1, 13-18.

Two passages that used to puzzle me are the two that constitute the first and the third readings of next Sunday's liturgy.

The great prophet Elijah calls Elisha, when he is at work plowing, to become a prophet. Elisha asks permission to say goodbye to his family, and permission is granted. Yet in the gospel Jesus says, "Whoever puts his hand to the plow but keeps looking back is unfit for the reign of God." Jesus contradicts Elijah.

Actually, this statement of Jesus is only part of a theme that St. Luke repeats again and again; namely, that Jesus is not Elijah come back to life.

John the Baptist spoke of Jesus as one like Elijah. "He will baptize in fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand...the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out." Later on, when John is in prison, he sends a messenger to Jesus to ask if He is the one who is to come. John expected a thundering Messiah who would clean house. Jesus made it very clear that He is no Elijah. He carries no axe nor winnowing-fan. He burns no chaff. Instead, He cures, heals, frees, raises from the dead, and preaches the good news to the poor.

In Sunday's gospel James and John betray they still have the Elijah concept of the Messiah. Elijah had sent fire down from heaven to destroy one hundred soldiers of King Ahaziah (2 Kgs. 1/1-18). James and John would have Jesus call down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans who had rejected Him. Jesus' rebuke is one more reminder that He is no Elijah. Rather, He is doing something absolutely

new. So in contrast to Elijah, Jesus demands that His followers make an unconditional commitment to Himself, unlike Elisha's.

"You have been called to live in freedom," wrote Paul. But freedom is not license, the green light to do as one pleases. Rather it is a freedom for service in love. Once a man came to a taxi driver and asked, "Are you free, sir?" The taxi driver said, "Yes." Instead of getting into the taxi, the man walked down the street shouting, "Hurrah for freedom." Edging on insanity? Of course. For freedom from should be freedom for. We have labor-saving devices to free people to do other and better things, not just to idle them. Idleness is the devil's workshop. So is a freedom that is interpreted simply as freeing one from and not for.

Our freedom in Christ is from sin, not from loving relationships, especially family ones. Freedom from sin is freedom for loving service. To interpret freedom as a release from all obligations will lead only to a "biting, tearing one another to pieces...and will end up in mutual destruction."

And what is the truth that frees? It is the giving of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is what marks off the New Testament from the Old. The Old gave only the Law — something outside one. The New gives the Holy Spirit — Someone inside one, who changes hearts, and causes one to set one's heart on the things of the Spirit that issues in the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity. It was for these works that Christ freed us. So, Paul urged, "Stand firm and do not take on yourselves the yoke of slavery a second time!"

How to Up Vocations

EDITOR:

In a May Courier-Journal article, Bishop Clark recalled some of the many blessings of his priestly vocation. During that same month, however, he expressed deep concern, in a Democrat and Chronicle interview, over the current vocations crisis. Many others have expressed similar concern and some blame the crisis on the selfishness of today's young. As a young adult Catholic Christian, I take offense at this view. Furthermore, I attribute the crisis to the impact of a renewed, post-Vatican II spirituality and the Church's failure to recognize personal conscience.

Prior to Vatican II, the Catholic faith, for many, was but a cultural expression rooted in a "works-oriented" spirituality. This faith led many into vocations either to placate cultural expectations or to "save their souls." But through the bishops at Vatican II, the Lord laid the foundation for a renewal in the Holy Spirit through gifts not prevalent since the 1st century. This renewal is transforming the Catholic faith into a full, personal relationship with Christ rooted in each individual's free, conscientious decision. As a result, few today enter vocations for cultural reasons or to "merit salvation." This leaves us with a scarce few who enter vocations out of their full free conscience.

But many more who are called cannot enter a vocation because certain Church-imposed disciplines obstruct their very consciences that were so paramount in their decisions to follow Christ. One of these disciplines, celibacy, was defined at Vatican II as being solely of ecclesiastical origin. The council further praised the many married priests of the Eastern Church. But the West clings stubbornly to celibacy despite the refusal of many to forsake the possible gift of a spouse — who might greatly enhance their ministry.

A second problem of conscience concerns the vow of obedience. While more a part of a vocation's nature than celibacy, many bishops and superiors use obedience to subjugate an individual's conscience. This is done mostly by assigning individuals with little regard for their gifts or needs. Such "high-handedness" further deters vocations.

The Church could use a lesson from St. Augustine

who, when asked about a matter of Church discipline, the necessity of confessing to a priest, said, "All may, some should, none must." The Church must heed his wisdom and debate the question it long has avoided: that Church-imposed disciplines are obstructing the consciences of many gifted people and preventing them from realizing their calling in Christ. Confronting this issue will take courage and great change will likely follow. But until this is done, the vocations crisis will continue.

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TV Series Commended

EDITOR:

Those interested in obtaining a sufficient background of Irish history to understand the Troubles in northeast Ireland will find the current series on Channel 21 of interest (Tuesdays at 10 p.m., repeated Sundays at 3 p.m.). It gives a far better picture than the lopsided presentations of CBS' "Sixty Minutes."

An example of a much-needed corrective is provided by the treatment of the potato famines of 1848-1850. Both in this series, as well as in his book, "The Green Flag," Robert Kee shows clearly that, contrary to the common myth, the Irish did not die merely because of the potato famines. Instead, the English, with their Herrenvolk attitude toward Indians, Amerindians, Irish and American colonists, actively starved the Irish by exporting to England, all during the potato failure period, oats, wheat, butter, eggs, sheep and pigs on a considerable scale. (I thank God that my great-grandfather left Ireland for Canada before this period.)

Since the British Broadcasting Corporation, which produced "Ireland, a Television History," is congenitally incapable of presenting an objective view of Ireland, additional information is necessary. A group of Irish-American scholars have prepared a 13-part critique which fills in the lacunae and notes Kee's biases. Originally published by the Irish Echo, it is available, for \$8 postpaid, from the American Irish Unity Committee, 175 Fifth Ave., Suite 1101, New York, N.Y. 10010.

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Editorials



Mother Teresa

Some time today, it would be appropriate if each and every reader stops to say a prayer for Mother Teresa who is hospitalized in Rome. She has literally given herself to her charges to the point that she is exhausted. Hopefully, she will recover fully, not just for her sake, but because the world needs her.

Incentive

The latest Supreme Court decision reaffirming its previous legalization of abortion makes one thing clear: Those interested in securing the basic rights for unborn persons had better intensify their efforts for a constitutional amendment. Obviously, no help is forthcoming from the judicial department.

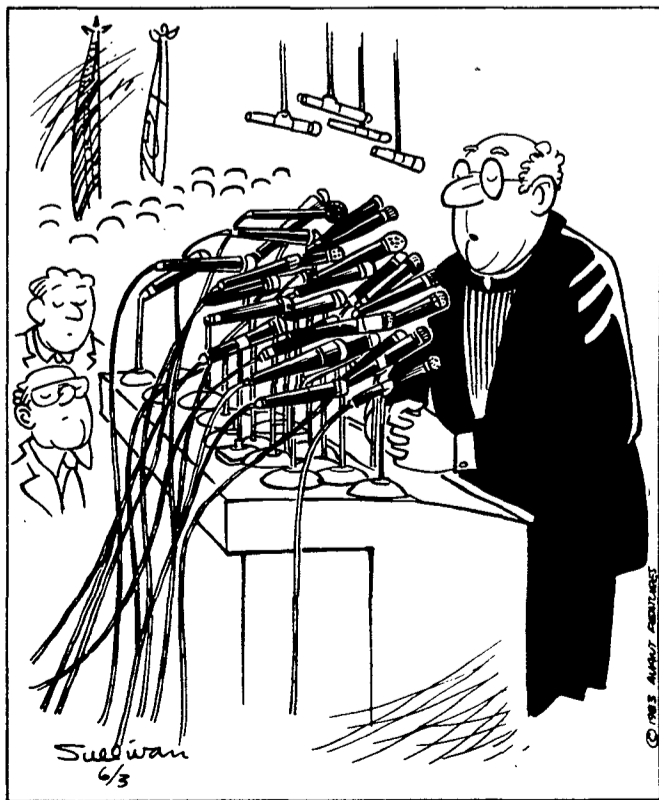
The Hatch-Eagleton Amendment which will go a long way toward securing the right to life for unborn babies, is due for debate any day now on the Senate floor. Pro-lifers should write to their senators indicating their support for the amendment. Now, more than ever.

Reacting to the latest high court villainy, Cardinal Terence Cooke said the decision "provides people of every faith and background with a new incentive to unite in an urgent and ongoing plea to their elected representatives in Congress to remedy this evil in our land by a constitutional amendment which will guarantee the right to live to all in the human family, especially to the most helpless — the unborn."

Little hope was provided by the leading judicial body of the land — except perhaps by the dissenters, Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Byron White and William Rehnquist. It was fitting that the minority opinion was written by the nation's first woman Supreme Court justice.

But irony often plays a role in such setbacks. Perhaps this latest affront to simple decency by the high court will so spur people that they will be more stubbornly committed to overturning the 1973 — and now the 1983 — Supreme Court decisions.

Father Edward M. Bryce, director of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' pro-life committee, put the situation in perspective: "The rulings provide confirmation that a constitutional amendment is necessary to deny a constitutional 'right' of abortion and allow protection of the unborn." He urged quick debate on the Hatch-Eagleton Amendment in the Senate. The Courier-Journal understands Father Bryce's feelings but hopefully there might be just a little more time now to give people the opportunity to contact their senators.



"TEACH US, O LORD, TO BE SIMPLE..."