

Editorials

Something's Wrong

Because the Catholic Church adamantly opposes abortion, it is designated as "conservative" in some quarters.

Because the Courier-Journal likewise is obstinate in its stand against the decimation of unborn, it, too, is classified as "conservative" by some.

Thus it is obvious that such organizations would be disturbed at the fact that in 1981, the most recent year that statistics are available, 158,698 abortions were performed in the Empire State, with nearly 40,000 of them, or about one fourth, performed on teenagers.

While it is plain that this newspaper would be chagrined by such disclosure, it may be enlightening to see the reaction of an Albany secular newspaper which is opposed to making abortions illegal and thus would be considered "liberal" by many.

"Whether one opposes abortions or not," the editorial begins, "the recent rise in the number of such operations has got to be seen as alarming."

"Something's wrong," the editorial continues. "In this day and age when sex education is taught in the classroom and on the radio and on the tube and

just about anywhere else where the organs of mass communication reach -- an age, in brief, when ignorance can hardly be the principal cause of unwanted pregnancies -- not only are teens having more abortions but half of those having them have had at least one before."

The editorial goes on to imply that "the problem has gotten out of hand" although it expresses the unwillingness to "do away with those devices that rescue people from their own excesses and irresponsibility." It does, however, offer one hope -- "the family, an institution that over the years has gradually had its responsibilities arrogated by other agencies and now finds itself pushed around much like a shuttlecock in a badminton game." Admitting that such pursuits as legalized abortion have brought about "an age of permissiveness," this remarkable and honest editorial concludes: "If we are going to buck the tide, restoring the family will likely be the place to start."

The statistical release, "Induced Abortions Recorded in New York State 1981 with Five Year Summary 1977-1981," is frightening in other aspects, particularly in its 1984ish tone with such phrases as "the median age of women terminating their pregnancies" . . . "induced abortions varied with the age of the mother" . . . "suction and curettage was

the most common procedure." The word "death" is mentioned in only one paragraph of the 81-page report and that only in regard to "fetal death certificate." The language is sterile, brittle and non-human. Words such as babies, infants, even embryo and fetus are avoided.

Even more chilling, however, are the statistics. Some 3,000 persons undergoing abortions had done so four or more times before, including 24 in Monroe County.

Non-white people had 56,111 abortions as compared with 58,432 live births, an almost equal number. Among whites, however, there were 99,571 abortions and 243,385 live births, a far different set of figures. Now is this helping the poor or is it societal genocide promoted by "in" groups which boast about improving the quality of life on our planet.

Conservative and liberal are unfair terms; they are often misused with guile. The Courier-Journal happens to believe that there is nothing liberal about abortion; nor is it conservative, in the best sense of the word. Rather it is a reactionary, violent and, for some, self-serving, answer to problems.

Hopefully, more and more sincere human beings, whether liberal or conservative in leaning, will see its folly and work to correct its damages.

and Opinion

Jesus Is Number One

EDITOR:

I read with mixed emotions Father Cuddy's column of Aug. 10 about the Moonies and Mother Teresa's Missionary Sisters. Although most of the column was interesting, one thing

bothered me. When Father Cuddy offered the book, "The Lord of the Second Coming," to a sister, she said she had to check with her superior. Father Cuddy said, "Let's go see Number One." The Sister laughed and said, "Oh, no, Father. Our Lady is Number One. The superior is Number Two." Immediately I wondered

where Our Savior, Jesus Christ, came in -- Number Three?

Any Christian who reads the Bible, as all Christians should, cannot understand why Jesus, who died for us, is oftentimes downplayed. Romans 5:8 reads, "It is precisely in this that God proves His love for us: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus Himself gave us the roadmap to heaven with His own words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me" (John 14:6). In Luke 12:27, 28, "As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, 'Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you!' Jesus replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!'"

Let us all put Jesus Christ in His rightful place -- Number One -- in the center of our lives. It is His command to us.

John Koza
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Kolbe Article Questioned

EDITOR:

I read with interest the brief capsule history, Courier-Journal Aug. 10, of the Polish saint, Maximilian Kolbe, who voluntarily took the place of a married man sentenced to death in a Nazi concentration camp. An important fact was omitted from the history which I find curiously interesting.

At the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa in south-central Poland is another shrine, one to Father Maximilian Kolbe. A portrait of Kolbe hangs over the black onyx altar and depicts Kolbe as a middle-aged Polish male, wearing the black and white striped uniform of an Auschwitz prisoner. In the portrait Kolbe wears on the arm of his prison uniform a pink triangle, the symbol the Nazis used to identify homosexuals. Over one quarter of a million gay men were tortured or worked to death in the camps. These gay men were not in the camps by accident, but because of the fear and

hatred of them by German society and the Nazi government.

The pink triangle may not be evidence of Kolbe's sexual orientation, but the depiction of it in the painting does indicate that the Nazis at Auschwitz thought so, or that Kolbe wished to share this stigma of the most despised and outcast prisoners in the camps.

The omission of this fact from the capsule history is yet another example of the history of gay and Lesbian people being ignored, denied or suppressed. It is important for all people to be aware of and remember this history, for it is from history that we learn. The gay men who were persecuted and died in the camps will not have died in vain if we can share this history and teach others that homophobia (fear and hatred of homosexuals) is as serious and destructive a prejudice as racism or sexism. This is particularly true because of the parallels between Germany of the 1930s and America in the 1980s when some fundamentalist Christians are calling for government execution of homosexuals.

Kolbe's life, and more important, his death, brings to light the homophobia which existed then and still exists. Kolbe's sainthood has special meaning for gay and Lesbian Catholics. He should also have a meaning for others, that love and social justice for all people, including gay and Lesbian persons, is the Gospel imperative to which we are all called.

Tim Sally
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Literature For Missions

EDITOR:

Readers may like to mail their used Catholic pamphlets and magazines direct to the foreign missions.

If those who wish to do so will please send me self-addressed envelopes, I will give them the addresses of missionary priests and nuns who need Catholic literature.

Mary Conway
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Cork, Ireland

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

Use Your God-given Abilities

Sunday's Readings:
(R3)Lk. 14/25-33. (R1) Wis. 9/13-18. (R2) Phlm. 1/9-10; 12-17.

Monday is Labor Day. It is interesting that the Second Reading is about a runaway slave, named Onesimus. Paul converts Onesimus to Christianity and asks his Christian master, Philemon, to take him back and give him a second chance. In his request, Paul uses a clever pun. Onesimus means "useful." Paul writes, "He who formerly was useless to you is now useful indeed both to you and to me."

When Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State, he had the annoying habit of over-using the word "useful." When coming home from an important diplomatic conference, he invariably would answer the news people's question regarding the outcome with, "The talks were very useful." I am sure more than one news person wanted to scream in frustration, "What do you mean 'useful'?" The word was a smokescreen. So was Paul's pun on Onesimus -- useful!

Usefulness at first glance might not seem much of a virtue. Philosophers have argued long and hard over the usefulness of useful. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill were the first to philosophize on usefulness. They wound up with a philosophy of Utilitarianism -- what is useful is good, what is not is bad. And the usefulness of an action was determined by its contribution to the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

This philosophy spilled over into Calvinism and Puritanism. We see it in

their work ethic. Sunday schools taught children such songs as "two little hands to work for Jesus." Adults were told "an idle mind is the devil's workshop." In essence, one should not only be good, one should be good for something. Make yourself useful!

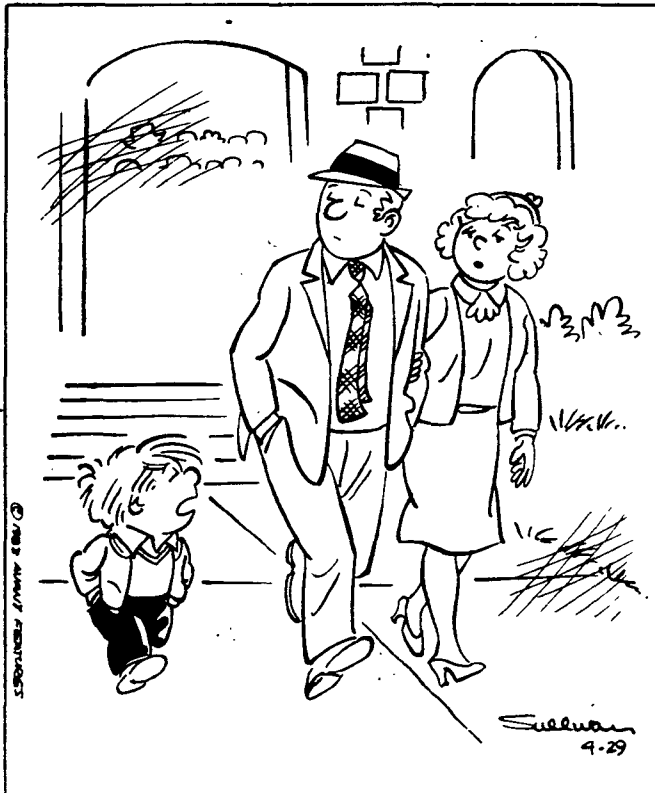
Of course this does not mean a person's value or worth is tied to his or her productivity. That may work in industry, but not in the Church.

What Jesus asked of us was not to bury our talents. Rather to use them or lose them. A talent, an ability, mental power will wither and waste away if not used. It is the Law of Atrophy: we lose what we do not use.

A picture magazine shows a plain bar of iron worth \$5. If that same bar were made into horseshoes, it would be worth double -- \$10.50. If fashioned into needles, it would be worth \$5,000. If into balance springs for watches, it would actually be worth \$250,000. The secret is in how it is used.

So it is with us. What we are is what God has given us. What we become is what we give to God. What we become is determined by how we use our time, talent and our treasures.

Young William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, once took a friend to a Quaker meeting in London. After they had sat an hour in silence, the friend whispered to Penn, "When does the service begin?" Penn's answer was, "The service begins when the meeting ends." And so after every Mass, the priest after having first fortified us with word and sacrament sends us on our way to service, "The Mass is ended. Now go in peace to love and serve the Lord" -- make yourself useful!



"ALL THAT TALK ABOUT PAC MAN EATING UP QUARTERS MADE ME HUNGRY!"

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.