

Editorials

Must We Wrap Ourselves in Nuclear Arms?

"Repent, ye sinners, the end of the world is near!" Certain sects and individuals have been intoning that message, it seems, forever. They have been predicting it so frequently and so wrongly that the rest of us tend to take a jocular, if not downright derisive, attitude toward them.

The zealot on the street corner shouts, "Repent, repent, the end is near!" and we stifle a smile or shout back jocularly. We muse that everyone knows the world won't last forever but its conclusion, we half-tell ourselves, lies in the dim future.

Then there are the sects who have "accurately" pinpointed the end of the world -- many times -- and are still coming up with new dates.

To be circumspect about this, we all know there is more than one end of the world. We each have our own personal departure time in addition to the grand finale. The Bible warns us when it speaks of "the thief in the night."

But even in the face of such certitude most of us

who are healthy go blithely about our daily routine unwarrantedly optimistic, kind of subconsciously feeling that if we last long enough they will come up with a cure. That is probably a healthy mental attitude, but if not handled properly, it could be spiritually disastrous.

We have been performing death-defying stunts all our lives and have gotten by. However, given the inexorable tide of the last three or four decades -- the period which may someday be remembered as the nuclear age if the world gets to look back -- the presence of death among us should be a far greater motivational force than it seems to be.

Right now, while some may be hacking their way through this jungle of words, there are people handling controls that could produce the end of the world. And these people are not just Americans or Russians -- the nuclear club is by no means exclusive. The number of nations possessing nuclear capabilities and thus the number of people with access to "the button" is a potent reason for a nuclear freeze.

So, dear readers, those who have been warning us about the end of the world may be finally right. The end is as near as many unknown hands are to nuclear bombs all over the world. It could come this weekend while we are in church, or at the farm market, or watching the Buffalo Bills, or cursing the weather or cooking Sunday dinner. It could come before the weekend while we are writing editorials, or arguing

with a salesclerk, or kissing a boyfriend good night or a baby good morning.

It came last month to 269 innocent men, women and children while they were lounging aboard a jetliner. Either by design or by mistake or by a combination of the two, the end of the world came to them. It is at hand for the rest of us right now -- either by design, by mistake or by a combination of the two.

Yes, the thief in the night still is making his rounds but there is another power extant in the land who is equal to 70,000 times 70,000 thieves in the night -- or day. Nuclear destruction meanly squats poised at the fingertips of, yes, even madmen. Yet we go on cheerily confident that nothing could possibly happen. It is almost as if we have made a deal with nuclear destruction and it will harbor us from all wrong... if we but snuggle ourselves into nuclear arms no harm will come to us this night.

Obviously, we must open our eyes to the real danger with we are flirting. We must push ourselves away. We must stand on our own feet and confront the danger. And end it.

Will we not fast for peace? Will we not pray for peace? Will we not rally for peace? Will we not work for nuclear disarmament? Have we defied death so long that we have become gradually and subtly suicidal?

Believe it or not, the end is at hand. In fact, it is at many hands.

and Opinions

Sisters Followed Jesus' Footsteps

EDITOR:

It is with great belief in the power of prayer and a profound respect for the mother of Jesus that I address Flora Novak's letter (C-J, 9-14-83) wherein she expresses "shame" at the appearance of Catholic Sisters at Romulus and "disgust" at your coverage of the same.

A brief look at the Gospels makes it clear that Jesus' life was one of prayerful action. Prior to every major act in His ministry, He prayed fervently to the Father; but He was a Doer. His prayer was always followed by action on what He discerned His Father's will to be. Indeed, on several occasions He condemned the Pharisees for empty prayer that was not coupled with meaningful action, whereas He responded favorably to those (the penitent woman, Zachaeus, etc.) who acted from the heart.

He seems to shun any quick solution to success in the Kingdom (Mt. 7: 13-14), commanding instead that we pick up our cross and follow Him with the two great commandments as our guide. If He offers any formula at all, it is clearly PRAYER plus ACTION (e.g., Mt. 7:21, 24; Lk. 8:21).

Our Blessed Lady herself was a prime example of the beauty of fearless action for God. I'm sure her appearance as a young teen pregnant out of wedlock caused more than one eyebrow to be raised, but it did not deter her from acting on the will of God, and thus she became the vessel for our salvation. I feel confident that our Sisters at Romulus were there in answer to Jesus' call and not without prayerful reflection. In fact, they prayed while they were there.

(As for the Sisters' lack of "religious attire" I ask, when did Christ ever judge a fellow human being by his/her garb?)

I beg you, therefore, Mrs. Novak, to prayerfully reconsider your position. After reading Jesus' words about shame in Mt. 5:11-12, Mk. 8:38, and Lk. 12:8, I assert that the only real shame involved is yours and mine --

not for being there with the Sisters at Romulus.

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DPC Members Disappointed

EDITOR:

We feel compelled to comment on the recent decision by the DPC not to support the Oct. 22 peace rally at Sampson State Park. We are members who voted in favor of endorsing the rally and we would like to address the spirit of this very important issue which could not be covered in John Dash's fine article (C-J, Sept. 21) on that complicated DPC meeting.

Frankly, we are disappointed that half of the members present and voting chose to dissent. Technicalities of Roberts Rules of Order and whether the missiles are first strike weapons obscured the true issue. We believe that the DPC missed an important chance to support our American bishops, including our own bishop, who have made their courageous stands of Christian commitment. We are called to love our enemies whoever we judge them to be. It is difficult for us to accept the dissenting arguments when it seems clear that an escalation of the nuclear arms race is taking place right in our own diocese. The stockpiling at the Seneca Depot represents an increase in our nuclear armament capability, and is in direct contradiction to the letter and spirit of the pastoral on peace. Our consciences call us to give full support to this peaceful, legal demonstration of our moral outrage and to stand firmly behind Bishop Clark in his decision to speak at the rally.

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Faults Article On 2 Counts

EDITOR:

Having contributed to the bishop's public speakout on the peace pastoral in April, before its adoption, and having appeared before the

Diocesan Pastoral Council on the subject of Fatima, I feel strongly obliged to comment on two misuses of the informal teaching forum represented by Msgr. Shannon's Perspectives article on the pastoral and Fatima (C-J, 8/31). The first misuse is to suggest, by transfer from higher authority, the notion that we laity cannot accept "deterrence" without also accepting the bishops' version of nuclear freeze. The diocese now owes a public correction of this false notion that the bishops' position on their freeze (i.e. immediate, total) is morally binding.

Indeed, the bishops weaken their claim to discern truth by demanding immediacy and totality (testing, production and deployment) in their freeze, ignoring current realities acknowledged even by the pope. While I take risks for the sake of peace by my own written opposition to the MX, I and countless others still see prudence in steps less than immediate and total, given the existing secular/religious world-context. Trust in God means at least this: we seek support for eventual freeze without misleading consciences on what is binding!

The second misuse, that of misrepresenting the Fatima perspective, is personally very hard to bear on three counts. If, as Msgr. Shannon implies, it isn't the bishops' business to acknowledge the reason why the public miracle at Fatima was performed -- not even their business while the flocks face nuclear war -- then we need new bishops! Secondly, Msgr. Shannon should read Father Fox's article showing that key Fatima supports, like Father Fox and John Paul II, know well the link between the rosary for peace and the need for work and study to promote social justice. Thirdly, Msgr. Shannon tries to provide a rationale for keeping Fatima suppressed as part of our education on peace in this diocese. His thrust in the end is clear: Fatima is wholly contained in Church theology and therefore needs no special attention. But his claim is only a partial truth! The Lord says to all ages on serious matters: "My thoughts are not your thoughts."

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Shannon Piece Spirit-Lifting

EDITOR:

Msgr. Shannon's article in the Aug. 31 Courier-Journal entitled "War, Peace and Women" ought to have sent all of our spirits soaring to the heights (men and women). I know mine did.

I believe his article does not mitigate the power of men to make peace at all, but so far the men with earthly power to make peace have not answered that call but have rallied humanity for more war. Msgr. Shannon's historical explanation of the "just war" was extremely helpful to me in understanding why the war makers have rallied so hard for it. To me it is an illusion.

I know Msgr. Shannon to be a prayerful and prudent person and not an opportunist who, at the drop of a hat, seeks to rally throngs of "blind" believers around him for his own glorification like the Rev. Moon; as some who ought to know better have recently written.

Let us all follow Jesus' words, "I am (we are), in the world, but not of it."

Msgr. Shannon's article is still another call to all of us to enact these words, not just to women. His prayerful point on the feminine aspect of our humanity needs to be expressed; especially now. I as woman can testify that many times have I attempted to share my prayerful insight (wisdom) with men on many topics, not only war and peace, but so far many of these men have brushed me off as one who does not know what she is talking about since I couldn't possibly have any of the "wisdom" they possess.

Thank God for the wise Msgr. Shannon.

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Unpriestly Reference

EDITOR:

During recent years there have been many changes in



"NO, DEAR, DADDY WON'T BE ON THAT'S INCREDIBLE JUST BECAUSE HE'S GOING BACK TO CHURCH."

lay Catholics' expectations of the clergy. We are learning to be more accepting of their humanity, with its consequent frailty! Nevertheless, I was utterly shocked by Father Cuddy's remarks regarding Msgr. Shannon. To publicly impute duplicity to any brother priest appears irresponsible, to say the least. When such a remark is made in reference to an individual of Msgr. Shannon's widely known integrity, it is incomprehensible!

I read Msgr. Shannon's article and found it lucid, open and certainly Christian. Why do we continue to produce nuclear weapons, when we possess the ability for world annihilation? I do not feel "protected" by this production. Man has never continued to develop and perfect anything for non-use. The use of nuclear weapons could only result in total destruction of the world. This world, which has been given to us, that we might "cultivate and care for" it.

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Msgr. Shannon Piece Praised

EDITOR:

I want to thank you for printing Msgr. Shannon's speech on peace and disarmament. I admit I had been puzzled and indeed repulsed by the women's peace encampment, and some, or most of the photographs. But monsignor's placing of the movement in a theological context was very enlightening.

This is really what I look for when I pick up the Courier-Journal. We need theologians to help us to apply Christian principles when making decisions about today's realities. And in our democratic society, we have to make these decisions, especially in the voting booth.

So I commend you, and of course monsignor, for this excellent article, and look forward to more of its kind.

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