

Editorials

1st Thanksgiving Really Wasn't

You can bet your turnip that the Puritans didn't know it but when they celebrated that first Thanksgiving with the Indians, they were taking part in a pagan ritual -- at least if J. Ingersoll, professor of anthropology at Catholic University, is correct in his theory.

And if the prof is on target, that wasn't, by far, the first Thanksgiving. He says the feast actually originated thousands of years ago in the Mediterranean area.

He explains: Primitive people inhabiting that region associated a spiritual essence with their major food crop. Following each harvest, a festival of "thanksgiving" was celebrated to venerate the "grain goddess" for her bounty and goodness.

As with all good ideas, the custom spread, eventually reaching the Siberians who crossed the Bering Strait into the New World via Alaska and who are ethnically related to our own Indians. Local deities were integrated into the harvest worship.

Thus, according to Ingersoll's theory, it was "marvelous irony" that the Puritans unknowingly took part in ritual they would have shunned if only they had known. It was not the first or last time that the righteous have been taught by those they hold in short esteem.

But, as Ingersoll points out, "if the Pilgrims had known what they were doing, Thanksgiving, as we know it today, might never have evolved."

But that isn't all. The Puritans did not hold with prescribed holy days so despite the success of the celebration, it still had to be re-proclaimed annually.

Obviously, the Pilgrims had learned other things from the Indians, such as farming the rocky Massachusetts soil, the bountiful results of which gave impetus to that "first" Thanksgiving. In fact, the Indian chief and his followers who showed up believed it was in veneration of the corn goddess. The celebration lasted four days.

How was the whole thing eventually resolved? Just as with many of our other Christian holidays, the Puritans translated the pagan celebrations into their own beliefs.

There is something eerie to the thought that when we sit down to table tomorrow in the year of our Lord 1983 and dutifully thank the Deity for the

harvest that we may well be participants in a tradition dating back to primitive times, all part of the eternal now.

Remembrance

And while we take the day to celebrate our blessings, it is always well to remember that not everyone is invited to the party.

Such cynical observations as that of Mark Twain often color our views of the Puritans -- "First they fell upon their knees, then they fell upon the aborigines." We read at times to see these early fugitives from European intolerance as overly self-righteous with narrow vision and sparse love. Yet they did share that early banquet with those they could have easily shunned -- something we more modern pilgrims often have failed to do.

To be sure, there will be many not invited to the feast tomorrow. Some are victims of economic problems, others of circumstance and many of injustice -- yes, even on the part of the revelers.

So with the heartfelt thanks should go prayers for remembrance of the poor, the hungry, the disenfranchised, the lonely, that they may share in the fruits of a future thanksgiving and that the rest of us work to help them toward that end.

and Opinion

Governor Makes Pledge

EDITOR:

I would like to thank all New Yorkers who voted in support of the Rebuild New York bond issue last week.

With the bond issue's passage comes both opportunity and responsibility. We have the opportunity to begin rebuilding our roads, highways, bridges and railways; the opportunity to start making our transportation facilities safer.

Yet, we are also faced with responsibility -- the responsibility to be true to our word as we expressed it during the campaign. And with this obligation comes an additional opportunity -- the chance to increase the credibility of those who serve in state government.

In the coming months and years, everyone will, I am sure, be watching and monitoring, comparing our stated intentions with our actions. And, in that process, I believe, we have the opportunity to give New Yorkers more confidence in their government.

We signed an agreement and said that specific projects would be financed by the bond issue -- and they will be. We said that 52 percent of the funds in the bond issue will go to Upstate New York and they will. We said that the bond issue will be part of a

total \$7.4 billion rehabilitation program and will not divert funds we would have normally spent on transportation toward other purposes -- and we will be true to that pledge as well. We said none of the money in the bond issue will be used for Westway -- and none of it will be used for Westway. We said to people that we will do everything we can administratively to see that women and minorities are given a fair opportunity to participate in this work -- and we're going to do just that.

As governor, I pledge to those who voted for the bond issue and those who, for whatever reasons, found themselves unable to support it, that we take seriously our obligation to uphold your trust.

As we administer the bond funds, we intend to show that we are a government not just of compassion, but also of credibility; that the family of New York can be both a caring family and a trusting one as well.

Mario Cuomo
Governor
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Make Actions God-Like

EDITOR:

On Nov. 9 the Gay Alliance met in the City Council

chamber in order to seek approval by the council of its program for "Gay Rights."

It is sad that a nun would appear there to support such a demand. Sympathy for people enmeshed in the tragedy of homosexuality should not blind anyone who ought to be familiar with the teachings of Holy Mother Church -- supported by Holy Scripture -- to such an extent as to accept as an obligation for society to further the Gay Alliance.

Particularly sad it is to find a professed religious supporting such people when a number of them shook with laughter when condemnation of homosexual behavior in passages from Holy Scripture were read at the meeting. I hope that the laughter on the part of these gays was a manifestation of nervousness rather than contempt for the Word of God.

Homosexuality is a perversion. Nature itself rebels against such violation, as can be seen in the terrible venereal diseases and psychological aberrations which result. God forbids such activities because they are harmful to man.

Nuns should -- as people publicly professing their adherence to Christianity -- promote the Word of God in what they say and what they do. They and all Christians are obliged to practice the virtues of modesty and chastity. Chastity is incumbent upon all, in all states of life. There is such a thing as chastity even in wedded life, and all the more so among the unmarried. But that concept and the salutary virtue of the fear of God are unpopular today because misunderstood. It is not possible to free the world from its slavery to sin unless sin is recognized for what it is. Then it is necessary to seek the help of God to help us in our struggle to do what is right.

If we are to be of any help to those caught up in sins of concupiscence, we have to teach them to resist beginnings and to pray much. They need to do spiritual reading in order to fill their minds and imaginations with inspirational and devotional thoughts. Sensuality -- especially in terms of sexual excess -- captures the whole of its victim. It leads to the

victim by degrees to grave degradation.

We are all made to give glory to God, to be His instruments in this life. We are made to the image and likeness of God. In walking this earth, we are -- with the help of God -- to be other Christs. It is commonly heard that we are a priestly people. Such dignity imposes a true responsibility upon each of us. We must not degrade ourselves. Each of us is made to be the temple of God. To be worthy of such a destiny requires the help of grace. We lose grace by turning away from God.

One more point we need to remember -- we share in the guilt of the sins of others if we encourage them in their sins. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit to enlighten us so that we know clearly what we must do or must omit in order to live holy lives, with the indispensable help of Almighty God. For Catholics, devotion to the Holy Mother of God is essential, as in truth it is for all who wish to please God.

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Respect Is Lacking

EDITOR:

I am upset that the Courier-Journal gave such a place of honor (the front page) on Nov. 2 to "Digging In...And Crawling for Peace."

Face it, these people were breaking the law and that's just what it comes down to. Digging under anyone's fence, the government's or mine, is trespassing and wrong -- no matter what the reason! I'm a little tired of these "do-gooders" who think if they make fools out of themselves and teach our children the wrong way of doing things that we people will make them out to be saints!

What ever happened to prayer and the rosary and the Christian way of pleading for anything -- even peace?

We were brought up to honor and respect the religious. I find it hard to respect these people when they do not demand my



"IF IT WASN'T SUNDAY MORNING... FASTER... I'D SAY LET'S STOP AND SEE WHAT HE WANTS."

respect. The Sisters or any other religious who still do demand respect. My dearest friend is a Sister of St. Joseph and I thank God for her dedication and sensitivity. (You know who you are!)

Margaret Czerwicz
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Rochester, N.Y. 14617

Do not think that I like the issue of nuclear arms any more than the next person, but let's work in an intelligent matter and stop this nonsense in public.

I'll take a line to thank those religious who still do demand respect. My dearest friend is a Sister of St. Joseph and I thank God for her dedication and sensitivity. (You know who you are!)

Church, Booze Don't Mix

EDITOR:

Why do we serve alcoholic beverages at our church functions when liquor is a drug the same as many other drugs that people smoke or inject into themselves?

It just doesn't seem right and especially at a church get-together that we should need to serve liquor.

As Christians, we have the

love of Jesus in our hearts and shouldn't need to have a drug to relax ourselves to better socialize with other people.

And now we have a state law whereby those that serve alcoholic beverages to people that drive and are involved in accidents are as liable as the intoxicated driver.

It is sad that a law had to be enacted to wake us up the fact that so-called social drinking is certainly not very Christ-like and should never have been tolerated to begin with.

Bill Rottkamp
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Editor's Note: Reader Rottkamp's observations are meritorious and obviously stem from sincere concern for others. Yet, at the risk of over-generalizing, it should be remembered that Jesus Himself took part in the celebration of the wedding feast of Cana. And wine was served at other gatherings He had with his apostles and others. As with most things, moderation should be the rule. Unfortunately, it often is not and therein lies the danger troubling reader Rottkamp.

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.

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