

Editorials

Conservative?

In describing the new archbishop of Boston, Bernard F. Law, one of the major wire services called him a doctrinal conservative because, among other things, he opposes abortion.

Opposing abortion is not conservative Catholicism, it is Catholicism itself. As members of our faith, we believe that to espouse abortion deliberately is to separate oneself from God's plan, which is sinful. Catholics should resent being labeled anything because they oppose abortion.

Indeed, being against abortion and being for life may not even be "conservative" any more than working to rid the land of capital punishment is "liberal." Both are positive alternatives to negative ideas about God-given life and defy stereotyping.

Pro-abortionists have so colored the issue that even objective folks in the media, not to mention those who deliberately slant their reporting, thoughtlessly term a bishop who is anti-abortion as a "conservative." To be a leader of the Church and a pro-abortionist at the same time is a simple contradiction in terms. The two are mutually exclusive.

Sagan and the Pope

Carl Sagan, the noted scientist from Cornell University, has provided a new wrinkle concerning the anti-nuclear campaign being waged by many, including Pope John Paul II.

In Rome for, among other things, a meeting with the pontiff, Sagan told NC News Service correspondent Sister Mary Ann Walsh that the Vatican would not be so interested in such negative

possibilities as the "nuclear winter" if scientists had not discovered the long-range negative effects of even a limited nuclear war.

"A nuclear war using less than 1 percent of our present nuclear arsenals seems sufficient to trigger a nuclear winter," he said. "As bad as nuclear war seemed before, we now realize that the situation is much worse."

"Nuclear winter" is a phrase used to describe what would happen in the event of a nuclear attack when clouds of dust and smoke from the resultant fires would block out for months the sun's rays. Darkness and fridity would envelop the earth and, according to Sagan, "even a small nuclear war can create a 'nuclear winter.'"

As with many situations regarding the Church and science, the more that is learned the closer their positions become. Both seem agreed, one from the moral viewpoint and the other from a realistic stance, that nuclear war must be avoided in the name of God and/or sanity.

and Opinion

Neutron Bomb Objection

EDITOR:

On 7-24-82 and 1-10-84, the Democrat and Chronicle has written of evidence that neutron bombs are stored in our diocese at Seneca Army Depot.

In many countries throughout the world, U.S. policy has failed to win peoples' hearts and minds and has been based more on a concern for material goods and profit than human life. Now we have a bomb which has similar values. The neutron bomb will destroy life in a one-mile radius while sparing most of the buildings and valuable property. That is if it doesn't serve to touch off the whole "nuclear oven" which is on more of a hairtrigger than ever due to the new Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe.

In the July-August 1977

Catholic Worker, Robert Ellsberg wrote:

"The neutron bomb... is eminently practical. It is small, it is 'precise,' it doesn't put an area off limits for months. In other words, it serves to further blur the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons; it tempts the president with the possibility of using 'tactical nuclear weapons' without precipitating a general holocaust. It invites use."

"The Pentagon counters this pessimistic line of reasoning with the kind of logic which is its speciality: We are more likely to use a neutron bomb, therefore it is a more effective deterrent; that is, because we are more likely to use it, there is less likelihood of having to use it; that is, because we are more likely to use it, we are less likely to use it."

Our bishops echo some of Ellsberg's words in Para-

graph 190 of "The Challenge of Peace":

"We oppose some specific proposals in respect to our present deterrence posture: ... 3. Proposals which have the effect of lowering the nuclear threshold and blurring the difference between nuclear and conventional weapons."

Catholic opposition to the neutron bombs in our diocese will have to become as specific as the weapons themselves. Ambiguity and hesitation are not conscientiable. We are all responsible.

Mark Scibilia-Carver
St. Joseph's
House of Hospitality
402 South Ave.
Rochester, N.Y. 14603

Fr. Conboy Commended

EDITOR:

We are so proud of our pastor Father Michael Conboy of St. Patrick Parish in

Seneca Falls for joining the Right to Life marchers in Geneva in their weekly picketing of Geneva General Hospital and its abortion policy.

We need and want moral leadership on this atrocity especially from the bishops of our nation.

Bill and Flora Nowak
3290 Noble Road
Seneca Falls, N.Y. 13148

Marchers Thanked

EDITOR:

On Sunday, Jan. 22, pro-lifers left Rochester to participate in the 11th consecutive March for Life in Washington, D.C. -- united and 70,000 strong.

The June 1983 court and Senate actions clearly show that it is impossible to compromise pro-life principles or try to negotiate with abortionists who will not accept "even a little bit" of protection for pre-born babies. This stark experience has put pro-lifers back on track and the movement rises, guided by the life principles, without regard to any particular party, economic philosophy, religious persuasion or similar personal preference.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our host church, Guardian Angels, Father

Hart and the Queen of the Americas Guild members who generously gave of their time and contributed to making this an enormous success. Also a "special thanks" to Sister Barbara Kuhn, SSJ, who gave a sigh of relief when the buses finally rolled at 2:30 a.m.

Last, God bless all the

pro-lifers who marched. They are what keeps this pro-life movement moving.

Dee Dries
88 Beldon Drive
Rochester, N.Y.

Editor's Note: The letter also contained the names of Nick Hober, Dorothy Macaluso, Margaret Nolan and Milt Dries.

Fr. Louis J. Hohman



The Open Window

Fasting Has its Rewards

Dear Father Hohman, I don't know how the subject came up, but a group of friends were talking about fasting. Perhaps it was in connection with the idea of fasting for peace. In any case I was not able with any certainty to explain the position of the Catholic Church on the subject of fasting. It seems like such a long time since I've heard anything about the subject. Has it been abolished or what?

N.T.

Dear N.T., It is a strange phenomenon that at the present time more people are fasting in one way or another than at any time in history. Billions are being spent to help them do it, too. Of course I am referring semi-facetiously to the diet craze. We live in a land of such plenty that most of us overeat to the point where obesity is a national problem. It is obviously wise to fast for reasons of health because we have a moral obligation to take care of our health.

From a religious standpoint and motivation, fasting has a longstanding traditional place in the spiritual life. The entire Judeo-Christian tradition gives a substantive place to the need for fasting. The references to it in the Old Testament are numerous indeed.

In the New Testament, while Jesus indicates that his immediate disciples were not fasting like the disciples of John because the bridegroom was still with them, nevertheless, they would fast after he

was gone. Furthermore, he said in the Sermon on the Mount, "When you fast... indicating that fasting was still a very important religious practice despite the fact that the Scribes and Pharisees had done it as a way of showing off their piety. The Catholic Church, as you know, had a very extensive set of rules for when and how to fast, binding under pain of serious sin. Over the years, these regulations were followed blindly or ignored by many people, while very few, in my opinion, took them seriously as an important part of spiritual growth. Subsequently the Church abandoned all of these rules except for two days a year, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The idea was to lead people to make the choice on their own so it might have spiritual value and meaning. Unfortunately, that has been slow in coming. A hopeful sign, however, is the growing number of people who fast voluntarily for the cause of peace.

Why is fasting important to spiritual growth? It is important first of all because a strong will is cultivated only by practice. And fasting is one of the best methods. We have to achieve freedom from our basic instincts and appetites. That freedom is not given. A second reason I would give for fasting is the way it empties one out to make room for prayer and God. Nothing prepares the mind and heart for spiritual things like fasting.

There is little or no natural inclination to fast for spiritual reasons. But when one does take the step, the rewards are great. Try it. You'll like it.

Photo Editorial:



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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