

### Editorials

## Black Pastoral

Dick Dowd, national columnist, has hit on a good idea with his suggestion that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops write a pastoral on black Catholics. Dowd rightly says such "would be a fitting companion" to the Hispanic letter released last month.

Dowd shores up his suggestion with statistics -- a million black American Catholics, nine black bishops, 300 members of the National Black Seminarians Association. With other minorities such as the Hispanics and women proper subjects for pastorals, why not our blacks?

Dowd writes that the document could focus on the gifts of the black community to the Church, challenge blacks and others to respond to the presence of the million black Americans in the

Catholic Church, underline the need for all to understand black culture and focus on the needs, both material and psychological, of this minority, subject so sorely to bigotry without and within the Church.

## Hiding Place

Recently when the U.S. invaded the island of Grenada, the president of the freest nation in the world would not allow news coverage of the conflict.

The media, and rightly so, complained long and hard about this infringement on the free press. In addition, the obvious question arose as to what there was to hide.

It is to be admitted that the Church does not claim to be the "democracy" that the U.S.A. is supposed to be. Still when 240 bishops from the Americas

gather in Dallas, Texas, for a four-day study workshop on moral theology and a tight press lid is clamped on then once again the obvious worry is what is there to hide.

At the opening meeting, German-born Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, talked on limiting theological criticism -- but no direct reporting was allowed on his talk. And, according to National Catholic News Service, no interviews would be allowed during the four days.

It seems that Cardinal Ratzinger's quest to harness theological criticism has spilled over to an attempt to curb even disclosure of such limits.

The Vatican has long been enamored of secrecy and time and time again leaves itself open to criticism and doubts if not of its direction at least of its motives. Most of such problems would be avoided by openness and trust.

After all, what is there to hide?

### and Opinion

## Concerned About Seniors

EDITOR:

Our older citizens have enough problems without having to worry about reaching a mandatory retirement age or worrying if well-deserved Social Security income will be taxed.

To help on those fronts, I have submitted legislation that would eliminate mandatory retirement and a bill that would exclude any Social Security benefits from state and New York City income taxes.

The first proposal would prohibit age-based employment discrimination against persons aged 18 or older in both the public and private sectors. It parallels federal law, but goes even further by uncapping the upper age limit for retirement, except for the few cases where age is a legitimate occupational qualification for employment.

It does not seem fair for a person to have to stop working because he or she is judged "too old" because the person has reached a certain age. In many cases, it is the wisdom, experience and talent an older person possesses that makes him or her all the more valuable to a company.

My other proposal would exclude Social Security benefits from state and New York City income taxes.

Changes in federal laws to improve the solvency of the Social Security Trust Fund require certain taxpayers to include in federal taxable income up to half of Social Security benefits. Unless New York changes state and New York City tax laws, these amounts also will be included in state and city taxable incomes.

New York now has no comparable dedicated use for the revenue which would be generated by this increase. Since existing state tax policy

on retirement income includes a total exemption of state and local pensions and an exclusion of the first \$20,000 of other pension income, Social Security benefits would otherwise end up as the only retirement income subject to taxation. That would be an unfair burden.

If you share my feelings, I suggest you express your opinions to your local state legislators.

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## Well Done To Sisters

EDITOR:

The Jan. 20 D and C cartoon spoofing Catholics probably had mixed reviews. My first reaction was to the humor that I believe was there, and I had a good laugh.

But then memories began to come to me. I remembered the sisters I had in school. Yes, I learned faith in God at home first, but they nurtured that faith. They knew who they were and where they were going, and because they had direction, they could help to direct me. Teaching me was part of their vocation and that they did, untiringly. They did not hesitate to let me know they expected my best, but they gave me the example of their best.

They unequivocally loved God and Church, and how happy I am to have absorbed some of that. They were good and loving and holy, but they could laugh at themselves.

If there are any other there yet, I want to thank them -- yes, even for he few raps on the knuckles, because I probably deserved more.

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## The Danger Of Spraying

EDITOR:

Wherever there are great forests, modern chemical methods of insect control threaten the fishes inhabiting the streams in the shelter of the trees. One of the best-known examples of fish destruction in the U.S. took place in and near Yellowstone National Park as a result of spraying. By the Fall of that year, so many dead fish had been found in the Yellowstone River that sportsmen and Montana fish and game administrators became alarmed. About 90 miles of the river were affected. In one 300-yard length of shoreline, 600 dead fish were counted, including trout, whitefish and suckers. Stream insects, the natural food of trout, had disappeared.

Forest Service officers declared they had acted on advice that one pound of DDT to the acre was safe. But the results of the spraying should have been enough to convince anyone that the advice had been far from sound.

A cooperative study was begun by the Montana Fish and Game Department the next year and two federal agencies. Spraying in Montana that year covered 900,000 acres, 800,000 acres also were treated the year after. So the biologists had no trouble finding areas for their study.

Always the pattern of death took a characteristic shape -- the smell of DDT over the forests, an oil film on the water surface, dead trout along the shoreline. All fish analyzed, whether taken dead or alive, had stored DDT in their tissues. As in eastern Canada, one of the most serious effects of the spraying was the severe reduction of food organisms. Once destroyed, populations of these insects, so essential to the survival of brown trout, take a long time to rebuild. Even by the end of the second summer after spraying, only tiny amounts of aquatic insects had re-established themselves.

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## Abortion Worry

EDITOR:

The Jan. 25 issue of the Courier had a front page article, "Sharing: Bishop, Legislators Air Mutual Concerns."

That article said the meet-

ing focused on three areas: housing, employment and prisons. All of these are called quality of life topics. Our religious "representatives" had a goodly number of legislative "representatives" in the same room and from all appearances never even mentioned the NUMBER ONE topic in quality of life -- ABORTION! The religious sure missed the boat by not getting that topic on the agenda to reinforce "issues that are important to us."

I am also disappointed that I found no "news" about the results of the recent Washington, D.C. anti-abortion demonstrations' effect on our representatives on Capitol Hill.

Buried over on Page 4 (same issue) I noted the "Bishops' Goals for N.Y. State." If that list of goals is prioritized, then I also ask why is "protection of LIFE (abortion?) THIRD in line?"

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**Editor's Note: Most of the bishop's meeting with the legislators was conducted in private. The goals of the state's bishops were not listed in a prioritized manner. However, with all respect to reader Messmer's correct concern about abortion, it is a bit ridiculous to question the abortion stance of our bishop in particular or our state's bishops or our nation's bishops in general. They have so often and for so long been on the record on abortion that there is no politician in the United States who has any doubt about their strong anti-abortion position. It serves no purpose to find fault with friends. The energy and the effort must be directed toward those who favor liberalized abortion.**

## Reverence For Christ

EDITOR:

Shortly after the turn of the century when I was starting in a Catholic parochial school, the subject of the Real Presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist was considered of great importance. It was emphasized how the fingers of the priest who took the Host in his hands were especially consecrated at this ordination. Today, everyone and his brother is allowed to dispense and receive the Sacred Host.

Did it ever occur to you that this familiarity might be a reason for the lessening of respect and reverence of the people for the Blessed Sacrament?



TRY TO MAKE HIM UNDERSTAND THAT ALTAR BOYS DON'T BREAK INTO COMPUTER BANKS.

Several months ago, returning from Communion, I saw a 'Host on the church floor. Could that person really believe it was Christ Himself who was desecrated? Unless we accept the belief that this is the Real Presence, there is no meaning to our religion and the falling away of so many of the faithful and the loss of vocations to the religious life gives evidence that this condition exists.

It is time our leaders gave this a little thought.

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## Celebrating His Birthday

EDITOR:

Some time after Christmas you ran a letter from a grandfather telling of his small grandchild wondering why no one baked Jesus a birthday cake for His special day.

Somebody did, little girl. If you had been at St. Mary's in Bath for Christmas, you would have seen a big birthday cake on a table in the sanctuary. One of the parishioners, at the request of Father, made this white, two-layer cake, 14 inches in diameter, with white frosting and gold trimming. Written in gold was the greeting "Happy Birthday, Jesus." After the homily at the Family Mass, the mighty organ played and the church full of people sang a magnificent "Happy Birthday to You" to the Child Jesus. All of Bath must have heard that beautiful music!

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## Abortion Linked To Injustice

EDITOR:

Thank you for your editorial remarks concerning the application of the label conservative to Boston's new Bishop Law. The previous bishop, Cardinal Medeiros, was a strong opponent of abortion and was vilified in the press for suggesting people of the Bay State vote for candidates who oppose abortion. The outcry was a tragic commentary on the secular mythology that believes our freedom of religion should be interpreted as freedom "from" religion.

The aim of all Christians, particularly of Catholics who revere the mystery of Mary's Immaculate Conception, should be to become religious humanists -- able to understand the error of abortion and willing to restore a moral conscience to our citizenry. The Lutheran scholar Deitrich Bonhoeffer (executed by the Nazis) clearly knew the horror of abortion was linked to economic injustice. See "The Martyred Christian" for the argument for life.

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## February Is Catholic Press Month

## 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 S., 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.