

Editorial

Marking Land

As J. Alam Davitt of the State Catholic Conference said, "The Catholic Church is not anti-preservation, is not abandoning its historical role as a leader in the construction and preservation of some of the world's finest architectural treasures, and is not seeking to destroy arbitrarily its own traditions which are symbolized by its Church structures."

Why does Davitt feel it necessary to reiterate such a Church position? Because the State Catholic Conference is supporting a bill which would provide for the consent of a religious group, parish, congregation, temple, before a building owned by that corporation is landmarked.

Once a building or district is landmarked, it is virtually impossible for the owner to change the character of the property or to demolish it altogether. The proposed law would not only give the owner the right to make changes, it also would remove present landmarking strictures on such properties.

Admittedly, it may seem shallow to discuss

landmarking in a world which seems to be dangerously burdened with weightier problems. Yet it is important, witness the other side in the controversy bringing in Jacqueline Onassis Kennedy to argue before the State Legislature against the bill.

Why then, if the Church has no traditional position against landmarking and such concerned citizens as Mrs. Kennedy are opposed to the bill, is the State Catholic Conference taking a strong stand in favor of it?

As the state conference points out, once an area or building is landmarked nothing may be done to it without permission. Some examples:

1. Requiring a Brooklyn Hispanic congregation to build a church that had to look like a four-story brownstone.
2. Requiring a Catholic church to redo its leaky roof in copper at tremendous expense.
3. Insisting an old, unused janitor's cottage on a Buffalo church site not be torn down because it was in an historic district.

To soothe fears, Davitt points out that the legislation would not destroy the "architectural integrity" of local communities but would afford

sufficient relief for religious groups to "maintain architectural assets" without governmental interference. "It returns to religious groups the right to determine how and where their ministry will be carried out."

At present, landmark legislation permits commissions to designate any building older than 30 years as a landmark. The owner's consent is not required, and yet all costs of maintaining and preserving the landmarked building must be borne by the owner. Further, the owner cannot sell or make any changes including even routine repair and maintenance work without government permission which usually takes months.

The Catholic group is not alone; the State Council of Churches, the New York Board of Rabbis and several individual clergymen and private citizens have spoken in favor of the legislation, which by the way, is Assembly Bill 7942-A and Senate Bill 6684-A.

Anyone wishing a copy of an interreligious pamphlet explaining the issue, "Ministry or Mortar?" may obtain one by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the New York State Catholic Conference, 11 N. Pearl St., Albany, N.Y. 12207. Ask for "The Landmark Pamphlet."

and Opinions

We Need an Abraham Lincoln To End 'Slavery of the Womb'

By Norbert H. Schickel III
President, Ithaca Coalition for Life

As we have recently passed the 11th anniversary of Jan. 22, 1973, the day the Supreme Court legalized killing babies in the mothers' wombs, it would be wise to ponder some historical parallels.

Recall the Dred Scott decision by the Supreme Court in 1857, which held blacks were slaves, with no rights and no choice. Well, for 11 years now babies residing in their mothers' wombs have been like slaves -- with no rights and no choice. Wombs are now like slave territory; babies are now like slaves.

In Nazi Germany, Jews were "legally" burned to death in ovens; here babies are "legally" burned to death by saline poison or cut to a bloody pulp limb by limb -- one every 20 seconds, 15 million in 11 years. Did someone say the Holocaust ended with Nazism?

In part, the slaughter in Germany occurred because "good people" refused to believe anything so awful was actually happening, the media didn't fully publish it and people said, "Well, gee, I better not get involved. You know, I don't want to get hurt. You understand, don't you? Anyway, I'm too busy now, maybe later." A silence that kills.

So, too, many whites refused to believe slavery was that bad until "Uncle Tom's Cabin" made them raise their voices. In fact, some even said blacks were better off slave than free. The modern version of this school of thought says babies are better off when killed than living.

It is difficult to imagine a "quality of life" lower than slavery. Yet, thank God, the black women of that era did not abort their babies because the quality of life wasn't what it should have been; otherwise most of the blacks in our nation would not be here today.

We sophisticates of the modern era would do well to remember that the fundamental premise of our country is that our value does not depend upon whether we are wanted or unwanted by someone else, rather we have inherent value because we were made by our Creator. The Declaration of Independence says "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights and among these are life..."

History demonstrates that wherever the philosophy of inherent human worth is undermined then horrors rear their heads. Today, some advocate an elitist school of

thought called utilitarianism or quality of life. It manifests itself in a dehumanization through language. For example, it used to be a pregnant woman was referred to as being "with child." Today, some refer to the baby in the womb as "tissue," "parasite," "abscess," "fetus," "product of conception," "potential life," all of which avoid and block out the human reality present. In the slave era, blacks were stripped of their humanity by being called "animals," "an owner's property," "nigger," a "3/5 person," and "subhuman." Victor Frankl in "Man's Search of Meaning" points out that Jews in Germany were dehumanized by being called "swine," "pigs," "animals" or "a number." The reason for this dehumanization, of course, is to make people less squeamish about what they are doing.

In the Lincoln-Douglas debates, Douglas said people should be free to choose whether they wanted slavery and thus he claimed to be "pro-choice"; but history teaches he was "pro-slavery."

On the other hand, Lincoln said no one is free to choose to enslave another; so, too, no one is free to choose to kill a baby in a womb. Babies today, like blacks then, have no choice.

Even if a majority supports such slavery or killing, it is still wrong because the inalienable right to life derives from our Creator and cannot be taken by humans. Anti-slavery candidate Lincoln was elected in 1860 with less than 39 percent of the popular vote, narrowly beating "pro-choice" candidate Douglas and two others. Just three years later, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the blacks from slavery. A minority of one imposed his morality on a majority. Thank goodness! If only someone had more quickly imposed morality on the slave owners, Nazis, KKK and segregationists.

By the way, what special evidence or proof did Lincoln have that others did not have that demonstrated to him the humanity of the blacks? None! and none was needed for the Declaration of Independence says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident..."

We need an Emancipation Proclamation to free the babies and abolish the womb as slave territory. We need to speak up, to overturn the Supreme Court decision as Lincoln overturned the Dred Scott decision.

(The Ithaca Coalition for Life can be reached at PO Box 6884, Ithaca, N.Y. 14851.)

Look Closely At Reagan

EDITOR:

Mr. Reagan, in his State of the Union message and his address to some 4,000 religious broadcasters, started his campaign for re-election by wooing some of the vital constituencies he relied on in 1980 and who form a critical link to the powerful political right. He pictured himself as an advocate for the pro-life group, the religious fundamentalists and those who favor government financial help for children in private schools. He obviously expects to gain strong political credits with these groups by his avowed support for their causes.

On the other hand, he

knows there is little chance of Congress passing enabling legislation on these issues and therefore he is not apt to build any strong discredits with opposing groups because, after all, nothing will have happened. Never forget that Mr. Reagan and his advisers are extremely astute politicians.

I hope that, when the time comes, those who would vote for Mr. Reagan because he says he is against legalized abortion or says he favors prayer in public schools or says he supports tuition tax credits will examine the sincerity of his statements, evaluate his ability to carry through his promises and take a good, hard look at his overall credibility.

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New Page 'Gratifying'

EDITOR:

I'd like to express my pleasure at seeing the "Expressly Elementary" page in the Feb. 8 Courier-Journal.

As a parent and public relations volunteer for Holy Trinity School in Webster, I've become aware of the exciting things going on in our elementary schools. I feel that this page can be an excellent opportunity for each school to tell its unique story to the people of the diocese. It could also become an avenue through which our individual schools become closer as they share with each other through their contributions to this page.

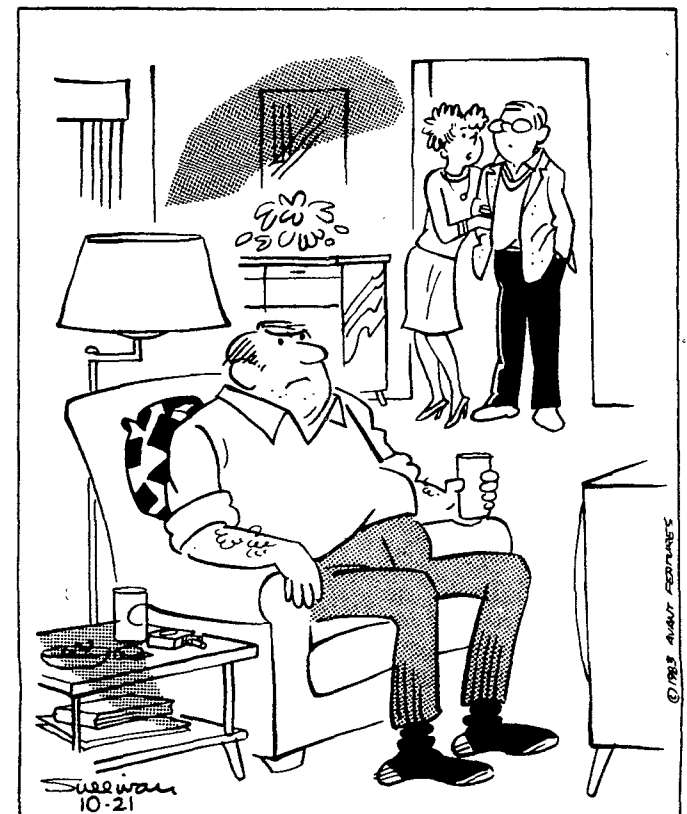
It was gratifying to see the variety of articles on this first "Expressly Elementary" page. I hope that each elementary school in the diocese takes advantage of this opportunity by continuing to send regular articles for "our" page.

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Help Clear Confusion

EDITOR:

To clear up some confused thinking, I would like to offer some thoughts concerning the following laws, especially laws in the Catholic Church. I am concerned especially about pro-



"IT'S OKAY TO TALK ABOUT POLITICS AND RELIGION, BUT DON'T MENTION LEO BUSCAGLIA."

blems that result when conscientious persons are accused of "legalism."

Our blessed mother Mary (who never committed sins) followed both the "spirit of the law" and the "letter of the law" when possible. She and St. Joseph traveled more than 70 miles to Bethlehem to obey the law concerning the census taken by Caesar Augustus. Mary's obedience to law as resulted in a tremendous reward.

Sometimes it seems necessary to follow only the "spirit of the law" and not the "letter of the law." A parent might send a son to a particular grocery store to buy chocolate ice cream. When the boy gets there, he only finds vanilla ice cream and buys it, when he knows that the parent likes vanilla just as well. He knows that the parent would worry about him if he took too much time, and if he went to another store to see if it would have chocolate.

According to my way of thinking, a person would be careless and disobedient if he sometimes excused himself from obeying the "letter of the law" when it was possible to do so. A 25-year-old Catholic person who is selecting food on a Friday during lent should not say, "Well, although I can have boiled eggs, I'll eat some meat because it is my favorite food. I give up dessert instead for penance. Nobody is going to accuse me of being legalistic!"

The last person mentioned should realize that an act which is against God's will is being committed. If through no fault of his own, somebody in authority had confused the person's thinking, and he didn't realize that, eating meat would not be a formal sin. However, if he had realized that he must follow the "letter of the law" in this particular incident, and that the obligation was serious, he must confess the sin.

Alas I think that average Catholics need more guidelines than they are getting. That's one reason societies are too permissive and are rapidly going "down the drain." The reason why priests sometimes falsely accuse conscientious persons who ask for guidelines when priests miss the point. However, priests and others can justifiably be accused of "sewing cushions under sins," for examples: giving approval to homosexual acts, to consenting to impure thoughts, or to missing Sunday Mass without a sufficient reason for not attending.

One remedy for confusion within the Church is for all Catholics to pray for guidance to the Holy Spirit instead of being led astray by the false attractions of the world, the flesh and evil spirits who encourage rebellion in a subtle way.

Miss Teresea Vallone
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