

Editorial

Comic Relief

Amid the discouraging news of wars and rumors of wars, the dreariness of a long winter, the general malaise of a troubled society, it might be wise to pause over some almost downright hilarious material being provided by certain nameless people around the country.

As reported in last week's Courier-Journal, some imaginative comedy writers have been producing public posters which, in mock-serious tone, declare that "People, Newsweek, TIME, LIFE magazines are secretly owned by the Vatican." Shades of Saturday Night Live!

In smaller print but greater understatement, the writers note that the Vatican "also" happens to own

a few minor media outlets, such as NBC, CBS and ABC.

It gets funnier with the news that the Roman Catholic Church also is the proud owner of the Hearst newspapers, the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times. The report of ownership of the latter newspaper comes as timely humor since that very week, the new archbishop of New York City was engaged in verbal tiffs with the editorial writers of the Times. Probably subterfuge to hide the real facts.

The poster, in case anyone hasn't seen it, ends up with the sage admonition, "Watch Out!!"

Well done. But the writers may be somewhat reprehensible in poking fun at the sick minds abroad in this nation who perceive such satire as factual. Impossible? Not so. One Tony Alamo, head of the fundamentalist Tony and Susan Alamo Christian Foundation, when questioned by NC News Service, was bashful about taking credit for the posters but

owned that he agreed with the material -- seriously, it seems, unless he is in fact the comedy writer behind the whole thing.

"I applaud these posters for this tremendous breakthrough. It explains why People magazine did a six-page smear on me." Seems this magazine termed the Alamo foundation "a dangerous and secretive religious group accused of everything from assault to slavery and creating zombies." From this viewpoint, it is difficult to judge the validity of People Magazine's claims (a call to the Vatican shed no light on the matter). But it is indeed hard to believe that anyone with the possible comic genius of Tony Alamo would engage in anything as serious as "creating zombies."

What if Tony Alamo is not the comic behind the posters? What if he, in fact, believes such parody as true? It is unbearable to even think of that -- it would the whole joke.

and Opinions

Basic Guides For Voting

EDITOR:

How should the Christian citizen approach his responsibility to vote? It seems that Christian values should be paramount. If we are to practice the basic value of love of neighbor, we must work for peace and justice as our priority in obedience to that commandment.

For economic justice, our guide should be the teaching contained in the four papal social encyclicals. They include the last one by Pope John Paul II, "On Human Work" in which he supports labor unions and also declares that "workers should be assured the right to strike without being subjected to personal penal sanctions for taking part in a strike."

This Christian principle is violated by the Taylor Law which penalizes workers who strike; by President Reagan when he fired the striking flight controllers and by the Mercy Rehabilitation Center in Auburn, when it threatened to fire any employee who dared to strike.

Our guide for peace should be the bishops' peace pastoral as well as the many anti-war statements by the popes.

It is to be regretted that these guides for peace and justice by Church authority are rejected by conservatives, such as William Buckley Jr., and some self-styled proliferators who think morality should be confined to the four walls of church and bedroom and that philanthropy can be substituted for justice.

Conservatives don't want to hear it, but we need homilies on peace and justice if we expect people to be guided by Christian values.

In the political sphere, peace is approached through foreign policy legislation and justice through economic legislation. Since 90 percent of the laws debated and voted upon in Congress are on foreign policy and economic issues, how the candidates vote on these most important issues should determine our preference.

To ignore a candidate's 400 or more votes on these issues and judge him on a single social issue such as ERA or abortion is a failure to see the forest because of a tree. Let us use the bishops' peace pastoral and the papal letters on justice, as our political guide.

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'Thornbush' Dissenter

EDITOR:

"Fire in the Thornbush" was prepared by a task force of some 40 individuals connected with the diocesan office. These individuals referred to other pastoral letters by American bishops. One pastoral letter by Bishops Lucker and Balke mentioned Rosemary Reuther, Rachel Walberg and Leonard Swidler as sources of information. These writers dissent publicly and abrasively from various doctrines of the Catholic Church; Reuther has even boasted that she has honored pagan goddesses in prefer-

ence to the Blessed Virgin, and that she would like to repeal Christianity as "patriarchal." What except a destructive and dissenting attitude to the Church can be built on such "sources" of information?

It is distressing to hear Bishop Clark say that "I wish to join my voice" to bishops who appear unaware they have relied on anti-Catholic sources in their pastoral letter.

The diocese was fortunate to have a learned layman, deeply concerned with the catechetical, liturgical and social orientations in this diocese, who prepared a penetrating analysis of "Fire in the Thornbush." This man was Robert Knille, founder and president of the Chesterton Society of Rochester until his untimely death a few months ago.

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Protest Magazines

EDITOR:

Suppose a sick friend or relative died before we had a chance to send them a letter expressing our feelings. Would we not be filled with guilt for having put off writing?

What about letter writing to live, healthy people, regarding unhealthy literature. Do we think about writing letters of protest but somehow put them off? Unpleasant literature surrounds us but we tend to look the other way and hope they disappear. Don't we?

I personally have reached

the point where I can no longer "wish I'd written a letter." I now write those letters, and follow up on them if the party doesn't respond. I have found, however, that one individual letter does not succeed in removing indecent literature.

I recently corresponded with the Consumer Affairs Department of a leading supermarket chain regarding its offering of Forum magazine. Forum is a sexually-oriented magazine which promotes sexual activities that dehumanize the God/Creator intentions of human sexuality in marriage. A consumer affairs representative responded that the magazine has been offered without complaint for quite a while. They reasoned that the magazine was offered for the same reason that sports, fashion, food, etc., magazines are offered. The store does offer a wide variety of the named topics, in several different magazines. However, Forum was the only sexually-oriented magazine offered.

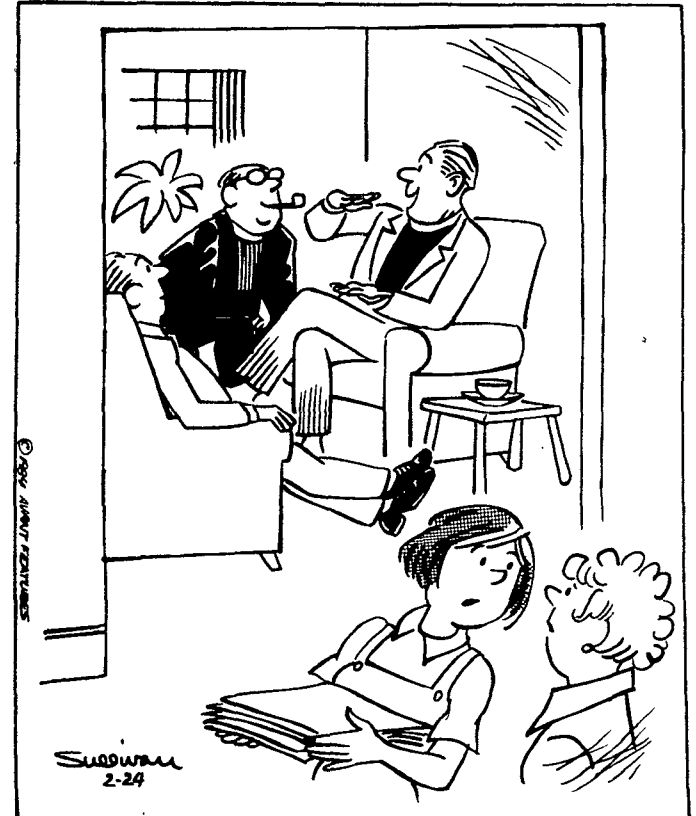
Take a look at your store. What magazines are offered? Are you offended? If so, write the management of the store. If it is a large chain, write the Consumer Affairs Department. Don't put it off. Our community is sick. You wouldn't want to see it die before you had a chance to write, would you?

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Health By Death?

EDITOR:

Being the mother of a



"THEY LOVE THEIR COLLECTION BASKET STORIES, DON'T THEY?"

precious child who has Cystic Fibrosis which is a genetically related disease, I feel compelled to address a March 8 article by Edward Edelson of the New York Daily News, "Consultant says that legal abortion saved 1,500," which appeared in the Reading Eagle.

For some time, I have been monitoring medical research in relation to problem diseases so I am not in the least shocked by the philosophy of Dr. Christopher Tietze, Senior Consultant with the Population Council who states, "a pregnancy can be terminated if a fetus is found to have a major physical or mental defect." It was this identical rationale which was used by Hitler in 1939 when he authorized the initiation

of an euthanasia program for all "incurable" patients and deformed children.

The "health by death" ethic seems to be an extremely popular solution for getting rid of a disease. In my estimation, it is truly a barbaric and cowardly alternative and I hope that Dr. Tietze and his colleagues will come to realize that lives can be protected and diseases can be treated without having to kill the unborn child; unless this happens, we cannot expect to find effective treatment or cures for Cystic Fibrosis or the numerous other life-threatening diseases.

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Fr. Louis J. Hohman



The Open Window

Stations Still Part Of Lent Rites

Dear Father Hohman, For the last couple of years our parish has not had the Stations of the Cross during Lent. My memories of childhood are so strong about the prominence of Stations in the Lenten program that I truly miss them. Have you any idea why they are left out? Have they been abandoned as a devo-

tion approved and encouraged by the Church? S.S.

Dear S.S., The Stations of the Cross have definitely not been eliminated from the Church's list of approved devotions and the reason for leaving them out of parish Lenten devotions has to be an individual or staff decision. Part of the reason may be an emphasis upon the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) in the season of Lent, perhaps not leaving room for the traditional devotions.

As far as I am concerned, the Stations of the Cross is one of the more beautiful devotions we have in the Church. It represents the specific ways in which we identify with Christ's cross and therefore become His disciples. It shows us concrete instances in which we are called to deny ourselves and carry that cross. By walking with Him to Calvary, we indicate our willingness to walk that way in our everyday lives.

The origin of the Stations of the Cross was very simple. At the time of the crusades, many people wanted to go to the Holy Land and follow in the footsteps of Jesus to Calvary, but were simply not able to for one reason or another. Someone came up with the idea of erecting stations along the way

which would represent that trek to Calvary. The devotion became popular and has been under the protection of the Franciscan order ever since.

The story made the rounds some years ago that a particular person complained that he found the Stations of the Cross difficult and therefore did not like to make them, and someone replied that Jesus didn't particularly like them either. That may sound a bit heavy and over-pious, but there is a grain of truth therein which I would like to point out.

By walking the way with Jesus we remind ourselves of what is required of the Christian life. We are reminded that we must take up our cross, the burdens of our work and our life itself each day, and we should do

that generously as Jesus did. We are reminded that we will most certainly fall because of the top heaviness of our human nature, and that we must get up again no matter how many times that happens. We are reminded that sometimes we must lead others as Jesus led Mary along that difficult path of the cross. We learn from the Stations that we must be ready to help a neighbor in need as Simon did, and even under difficult circumstances as Veronica did. We learn that it is precisely in the helping that we become like Jesus, cast in His image.

The Stations of the Cross tell us that we must be detached as Jesus was detached from His clothes, that we must be committed as Jesus was committed to

the cross with nails, that we must extend our arms totally in love as He did on the cross, and thus, having died to self, we can rise with Him to a new a better life.

It seems to me that this devotion brings us face to face with the most central fact of our faith, namely, the death-to-life cycle which all of us must live in order to find Christ and to share in His victory.

I sincerely hope that you will find a way to make the Stations of the Cross not only during Lent but throughout the year. To me it is a shame that this devotion is confined to the six weeks of Lent, and relegated to Limbo for the rest of the year. It is the story of the Christian life and therefore it should be before us at all times.