

### Editorial

## Of Bishops And Politics

Seldom has an official Church document been more explicit and pertinent than the statement on support of human life issued by the bishops of New York State at their recent provincial meeting in Rochester.

While the document clearly put governmental office-holders and candidates on the spot regarding abortion and other "life" issues, it did so in a fair but firm manner. Indeed, the statement rightly lauds "those willing to shoulder responsibility in government and public service work under heavy pressures."

Thus, due praise is freely given but also, subliminally, the document recognizes that it is no easy task to be handling such issues as abortion, capital punishment and nuclear disarmament before the ever-critical public eye.

Given that, however, the bishops direct some stern advice at those who serve the public: "Legislators and other public officials, as well as all private citizens, should make their voting decisions and

initiate programs according to moral values. Even in circumstances where it is difficult they should be persons committed to living and acting by their moral principles."

That is a strong, albeit general, fiat. The bishops then apply it: "One of the most serious moral issues facing us today is that of legalized abortion."

They point that more than 15 million lives have been taken through legalized abortion -- Archbishop John J. O'Connor emphasized this at the attendant press conference when in mentioning other instances of governmental genocide, he vocally stressed "millions of people" have been exterminated in our own country. Obviously, history will cast stern judgment on a society which permits such enormity.

While the statement is the work of all the ordinaries of New York State, one portion seems to bear the personal imprint of Archbishop O'Connor -- "We fail to understand how office holders can escape their responsibility in this grave matter. Particularly, we fail to see the logic of those who contend: 'I am personally opposed to abortion, but I will not impose my personal views on others.'" This is not a new idea, by any means, but it is one that the new archbishop of New York City seems determined to promulgate.

It must also be noted that the bishops, while dramatically underlining the importance of the

abortion question, make it clear that there other issues on which politicians, and by extension all citizens, must form their consciences and act -- "disarmament, capital punishment, crime and the treatment of those who commit it, the economy, the environment, the plight of the Third World, welfare, housing..."

The bishops conclude by urging "all in public office and positions of authority to oppose legalized abortion by means of a constitutional amendment." That is a clear call to a specific audience but it also has its implications for the rest of the citizenry -- we must offer our support to our lawmakers when they face these difficult decisions.

Many feel that the reason so many politicians vacillate on the abortion question is that it is impossible to succeed in the political arena if you take the position of the unborn -- after all, they don't vote. However, our own Bishop Matthew H. Clark made an interesting point to the media on this question. He said that a campaigner who takes a consistent, clear position on all the life-death problems of our day -- abortion, capital punishment, nuclear disarmament, poverty -- would be a very attractive candidate indeed.

That is something for politicians to consider very seriously.

### and Opinions

#### Judgment Questioned

**EDITOR:**

Because the Democrat and Chronicle and the Times-Union practically ignored the installation exercises of Archbishop O'Connor of New York, many Rochester Roman Catholics, like myself, were anxiously waiting for the Courier-Journal to get a full and colorful account of this wonderful occasion. Since the archbishop surely will become our next cardinal of New York, this occasion was appropriately suited for front page coverage. However, like the secular press, the Catholic Courier's account appeared on the last page. No wonder that many Catholics I know have discontinued their subscriptions.

What was headlined on the front page? A boring account of the Diocesan Pastoral Council's meeting where almost every person who addressed the meeting expressed some dissatisfaction with elements of Catholicism and its practice. This type of dissension in Rochester is hardly a news item anymore..

By contrast, Archbishop O'Connor's love for the Church and its practices seems to have no bounds. His homily at the installation reflected his profound belief in the authentic teachings of the Church and the "absolute indispensable" authority of the pope, who is behind these elements of Catholicism so distasteful to the speakers of the DPC.

The question remains -- when will the thousands of Roman Catholics who are totally loyal to the teachings of the Church and the authority of the pope get equal time from the Courier-Journal?

Dorothy Prinzi  
36 Nile Drive  
Rochester, N.Y. 14622

#### TV Series Recommended

**EDITOR:**

Channel XXI deserves a loving cup for giving us "Bless Me, Father," an English-made but universally appealing situation comedy presented from 10-10:30 p.m., Sundays. Catholic viewers who have not yet discovered it are missing one of the gentlest and most hilarious series that television has ever aired.

The setting is in an English Catholic rectory in the 1950s. The basic cast comprises the shrewd and witty old pastor, his brand new but not naive assistant, a motherly housekeeper whose wit matches that of the pastor, an imperious mother superior who is given some of the funniest lines, and a bibulous Irish physician. Whoever writes the script has an inner tract.

Although a comedy, it is the most exact portrayal of rectory life that has even been filmed. Believe me. If your readers are looking for some side-splitting entertainment, they must not miss "Bless Me, Father."

Father Robert F. McNamara  
4536 St. Paul Blvd.  
Rochester, N.Y. 14617

#### Response Seen Vague

**Editor:**

In reference to Father Hohman's reply (Courier 3-14-84) to C.M. on Sex and Sin: C.M. was asking valid questions concerning the morality of certain sexual acts and deserved a valid straight-forward answer. But instead he received a vague, evasive runaround.

The trouble with articles like Fr. Hohman's on sex and sin is that they don't really say anything, and yet in their nothingness they do great damage. The casual reader will walk away thinking, "well, he didn't say no, so it must be okay." Because Fr. Hohman failed to take a positive stand, the average person will conclude that these sins really aren't too serious. The great danger with evasive, ambiguous statements is that they tend to lead to the development of a doubtful, confused conscience. A constant diet of such spiritual junk food could permanently impair one's spiritual judgment.

Unfortunately many priests today appear reticent to speak the truth about moral issues. They can't seem to comprehend the fact that knowing the truth, gives strength. And yet knowing with certitude that an act is seriously wrong, really does give us the power and the courage to try to combat sin. Somehow priests must begin to realize that vague answers, confusing statements, situation ethics, and wishy-washy opinions (whether from the pulpit, confessional, or press) merely debilitate our wills and undermine our faith. These ambiguities leave us bewildered, confused and most of all weak. Where there is doubt or confusion about morality, man is inclined to take the road of least resistance.

Christ was very precise in His teachings about morality. His words are often called "hard sayings." And yet those "hard sayings" carry with them a spiritual power to overcome. Priests betray our trust when they fail to follow Christ's example in proclaiming certain "hard sayings." They cheat us of God's enlightenment when they fail to proclaim the truth about the Church's official teachings regarding faith and

morals. Evading honest answers in matters of morality, deprives us of the light of God's grace to combat sin. Whether a priest agrees or not with the Church's official position is not the point. When a person asks questions concerning the morality of an act, he expects and deserves the true Catholic position. He expects and deserves a straight honest Catholic answer. Priests do us no favors by being vague, evasive or ambiguous, they simply rob us of our spiritual goods, thus leading us away from God, rather than towards Him and eternal life.

For Catholics who are really seeking honest straight answers, I would recommend a magazine called the "Homiletic And Pastoral Review". This magazine was written primarily or priests, but more and more intelligent Catholics are subscribing to it because it is informative and reliable. In HPR one will find up-to-date articles on moral, theological and liturgical questions. Each month pertinent questions concerning faith and morals are answered clearly, concisely and in accordance with the Church.

Mrs. Edward P. Schwenkler  
1710 West Church Street  
Elmira, N. Y. 14905

#### Closer Unity With Jesus

**EDITOR:**

I have three answers to objections by Robert S. Lambino:

1) **Vatican II.** The Church has spoken clearly in the decree, the Church, Chapter VII. Anyone unsure of Mary's role in God's plan of salvation must read this. Filled with references to sacred Scripture and the Church Fathers, it clearly states: "The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first born among many brethren (Rom. 8:29) that is, the faithful, in whose generation and formation she cooperates with a mother's love." (Vat. II, #63, The Church).

2) **The Papacy.** As Catholics we have been given a sure guide in the interpretation of Scriptures. We need someone with the discernment to tell when the Spirit is speaking to us. Jesus did not leave us orphans:



"I DON'T KNOW, CARL. SOMEHOW I FEEL I'VE MADE THE RIGHT DECISION."

"Whoever hears you, hears me...Tend my sheep...Teach them to carry out all I have commanded you...Thou art Peter and on this rock I will build my Church."

3) **St. Paul.** As St. Paul referred to himself in Gal. 4:19 -- "You are my children, and you put me back in labor pains until Christ is formed in you." Can we deny to Our Blessed Mother what St. Paul claimed for himself?

If we really believe we are the body of Christ, then we stand with Mary at the foot of the cross and offer our Savior, Jesus Christ, to the Father for our sins. United with him, at every Eucharistic celebration, the "whole Church, in heaven and on earth, offers this sacrifice for all her members living and dead, since all of them are called to share in the redemption and salvation acquired through the Body and Blood of Christ." (Vat. II, #55, Sacred Liturgy).

Our role, as Christians, is not to doubt but to believe all that the Church teaches. We will never completely understand all the mysteries of God. His plan is greater than anything we can ever know. But this we do know, to be united to Mary is to be more closely united to Jesus.

Joan M. Rand  
453 North Dr.  
Rochester, N.Y. 14612

#### Posters Just Student Prank

**EDITOR:**

At first glance, the 3-21-84 caption "Anti-Catholic Posters Popping Up. Would You Believe: Vatican Owns 3 Major TV Networks?" is shocking indeed.

But putting some factors together amount to probable Spring flings of college students and their pranks.

All of the cities mentioned have universities.

Florida, the usual area of bashes on the beaches, had orange crops freezing on the trees and also prolonged rains.

After high school graduation, students choose various colleges but often keep in touch.

What more electrifying headlines could they create than with the posters?

Parents of that age group understand the exuberance of the young, hence their lack of concern.

Keep cool, it is only Spring fever.

Ethel S. Abbott  
64 Knollbrook Road  
Rochester, N.Y. 14610

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### 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.