

Editorials

The Challenge

National Catholic News Service notes, and probably correctly, that with the exception of *Humanae Vitae* no other Catholic document in recent history has stirred such debate, not only within the faith community but also among the American public in general, as "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response."

Just one year ago, after years of study and discussion, the bishops of the United States released the "peace pastoral." Since then, millions of words have been printed about it and the ensuing events, such as peace demonstrations, which it has influenced. In its brief history, and that should include its formative stages when preliminary drafts were released to provide the basis for Catholic grass roots involvement, this letter forced not only American Catholics but those across the world to stop and

seriously consider the international arms race -- this alone has slowed the rush to nuclear judgment.

And probably no other Church document, perhaps because its length discourages some from reading it through, has been so widely misunderstood. And probably no other part of the document was so misunderstood as that concerning disarmament. Many who see increased nuclear armament as a necessity in this fractious world often claimed, either deliberately or ignorantly, that the bishops urged unilateral disarmament. They did not. They etched their stand on this delicate issue very carefully -- supporting immediate, bilateral agreements to halt any further testing, production and deployment of nuclear arms, followed by deep cuts in existing arsenals of both superpowers.

Obviously, in reference are the United States and the Soviet Union. That is a reasonable starting point but if such a document can be amended, it should be changed to include all nations with nuclear capabilities.

Issuing such a "challenge" is one thing but it would have become just another dust-collecting curiosity piece without the continued and active support of the hierarchy and the people of the Church. From Seattle to Miami, special projects, programs, lecture series, demonstrations, etc., have coursed blood through the dry words. And the first year seems to be merely preface.

Certainly, under the leadership of Bishop Matthew H. Clark, this diocese takes a backseat to none in not only supporting this landmark position of the nation's bishops but also in using it as an educational tool on one of the crucial parts of the "seamless garment," in Cardinal Bernardin's phrase, of sanctity of life issues facing us today.

The "Challenge of Peace" is as alive as ever, sadly because the nations of the world in the past year have not made many strides either toward reducing the threat of war on so many fronts or in the enormous capability of destruction lying in wait to settle those problems -- once and for all time.

and Opinions

RR Strong Or an Actor

EDITOR:

Leo Rosten, author of many books, stories and articles, wrote, "It is the weak who are cruel. Gentleness can only be expected of the strong."

When we see Ronald Reagan on television, striding into a room or to a podium, waving a greeting, smiling, stepping tall and purposefully, we think, "There goes a strong man, a great man." Then we think again, more carefully this time, and say to ourselves, "There goes a great actor."

We hear Ronald Reagan's clear, resonant voice telling us how devoted our country is to democracy and how great, "standing tall," it is now and how much he cares for all of us, and we think, "This is a strong man, he is talking to us from his heart." But then, if we look at reality, we say, "This is a great actor reading beautiful lines."

Ronald Reagan recently said, "One problem that we've had even in the best of times . . . is the people who are sleeping on grates, the homeless who are homeless, you might say, by choice." And he has around him those who say that people are on breadlines or at soup kitchens not because they are hungry but because the food is free. It is the weak who are cruel.

Ronald Reagan has sent men, warships, military advisers, CIA agents, weapons and "security aid" to almost every corner of the globe and, among other

things, mines to Nicaragua. In every case, he substitutes violence for diplomacy. Imagine a strong president who would go to Castro and, in effect, say, "Look, let's quit the nonsense. First, you pull your military and weapons out of Central America and we'll pull ours out. Next, let's try to initiate a reasonable relationship, something the United States should have done in 1959. Then, let's see what we can work out between us to help the people of those countries." This would be a major step toward implementing the Cantadora group (Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama) proposal for a nonmilitary, negotiated approach to the core of the Central American problem. You say that's oversimplistic and naive. But is it? What would it cost a strong man?

Before November, we should all decide whether Ronald Reagan is a man of strength and compassion or a fine actor with clever script writers.

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Likes Column By Bishop

EDITOR:

I would like to comment on how much it really means to have the wonderful column by Bishop Clark in the Courier-Journal. It is like getting a letter from a friend. We should all be thankful for Along the Way by the bishop, my spiritual friend.

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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 St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, no longer than 1½ 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.

Support 'Life' Candidates

EDITOR:

As one of those who replied to Sister Mary Jean Smith as not speaking for the Southern Tier as a whole, I feel Susan Sleve (C-J, 4/4) misrepresents us.

She calls us to see the poverty around us. However unemployment has fallen since the last Democratic administration from 11 percent to about 8 percent. Our area is hit because business has left Elmira, which is not Reagan's fault -- we need more creative thinking, our leaders admit.

We are also not in Ivory Towers as "haves" opposed to "have nots." It is with a song in my heart that I embrace Lady Poverty -- I am poor, growing old, and disabled. I fall into all the eligible categories of those who represent "the poor," but those who propose to represent me must want babies to live.

That is the whole issue in a way. Poor is poor and yet you are alive and hope for a better day. The babies, 15 million of them, are dead. Too much of our Human Development money and social services funds goes to support the wrong emphasis. When Hugh Carey was governor, so much money in the Southern Tier was being spent for work against the death penalty I became angry and checked with Albany to determine how many people were on Death Row. Only one was scheduled to be executed (after numerous appeals) and I was assured Governor Carey would commute the sentence to life imprisonment as was his custom. The pro-life people were, at this time, begging for funds but received none from official church sources. One wag, exasperated, saw a Human Development poster saying "Stop the Death Penalty," and wrote underneath "End Abortion."

The food bank and clothes program, Christmas giving and genuine desire to help the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry deserve all our praise and support. And it is true that the bishops' fight for life encompasses many aspects. But as, I believe, a representative of the poor because I am one, I maintain no Catholic has to support abortion because he is poor and wants economic gain. Murder is unsupportable. Our parents went through the Great Depression, or our grandparents, without killing one child and we are not to that point yet. Let us take new heart and courage and oppose this evil by loving and

supporting "life" candidates.

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NTID Joins Campaign

EDITOR:

May is Better Hearing and Speech Month, a time to celebrate with the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have overcome hearing, speech and language disorders.

Comedienne Phyllis Diller, who overcame a hearing problem herself, is leading this year's Better Hearing and Speech Month campaign, "Spreading Laughter Through Hearing and Speech." She and poster child, Mary Frances Silverstri, are reminding everyone that help is available for the 22 million Americans who have communication disorders.

Through the aid of medical and surgical assistance, hearing, speech and language rehabilitation, and the use of hearing aids, thousands of Americans are overcoming communication disabilities.

Once again this year, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology is playing a major role in spreading this message of hope through its involvement in the council for Better Hearing and Speech Month. This group of national organizations is working together to encourage people of all ages to seek help for hearing, speech and language disorders.

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Pray for Peace In Ireland

EDITOR:

On behalf of the members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians of New York State, I extend wishes for a holy and happy Easter season, when we commemorate the Resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, Who was crucified, died and was buried for the sins of mankind. His Resurrection signifies the triumph over death and sin with which He redeemed mankind.

At this time also, the Irish people commemorate the rise of a new nation. Out of the Rising of 1916, when Padraic Pearse read the proclamation stating that Ireland was a nation once and would forever be a nation, the Republic of Ireland was born.



Ireland, that country that once was gloriously hailed as "The land of Saints and Scholars," is still not free. There is still much grief and anguish in the northeast section of that country of our forefathers.

In the name of Hibernians everywhere, I ask the people of your diocese to join the Hibernians in praying for peace in Ireland during this holy Eastertide.

Yours in friendship, unity and Christian charity.

Michael P. Heslin
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Don't Reward Pro-Abortion

EDITOR:

We are horrified that the Soviet Union may have awarded its highest medal to one of its pilots for destroying 269 lives by shooting down an unarmed plane over its territory.

The Gannett Editorial Board viewed with approval those New York senators who voted 28-27 to use public monies to destroy more than 40,000 unborn children of the poor in New York State this year. Their editorial, "A Matter of Justice," claims such use of monies "ought to be a matter for satisfaction."

We also engage in the same underlying culpability as the Soviet Union and the Gannett press when we award our highest honors to those who would destroy innocent human lives by their reelection with our votes.

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Many Worked For Homeless

EDITOR:

When Our Lord was asked what must we do to gain eternal life, he replied, "Come you who are blessed and take up your inheritance. For I was hungry you gave me food and when I was homeless you gave me shelter."

Volunteers from the Southeast area of the diocese accepted this challenge and over the last few months have faithfully served the Shelter Program for the Homeless. Their acts of charity were continuous and straight from the heart. The program was very well-coordinated by Mr. and Mrs. John Byrnes. Special thank also goes to the Blessed Sacrament parish staff.

Night after night, the homeless were provided with food, clothing and shelter through the winter. All these hours were donated by the generous people of the area. Without the help of everyone who supported this important work, the Blessed Sacrament shelter program never would have been so successful.

As the program is coming to a close soon, I hope we all will continue to care for the needy. "For whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do unto me."

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