

Editorials

Different And Indifferent

Much has been said, written and guessed at concerning the current relationship between the Vatican and the Catholic Church in the United States. It is difficult to judge whether there is basis to the conjecture that there is at least some common ground between the two. Surely certain actions taken by the Vatican would indicate that all is not rosy. But American bishops who have officially visited Rome have downplayed the seriousness of any disagreements.

Yet, there is one area where there is an obvious breach in attitude between Rome and the Church in the U.S. Concerned is a vital humanitarian and social issue. One arm of the Church frequently and liberally addresses the matter, and not just in the abstract but as very real situations arise. While in the same Church, from a different locus, much less is said and done.

The issue is racism, particularly regarding blacks. Respect for their essential worth, their culture, the Church's need of them, and their situation readily flows from one geographical jurisdiction. While from the other, the concern is downplayed and very little is done either to erase bigotry within the Church or to work for remedying the racial injustices of the society at large. The historical record is poor and the promise thin.

In short, it is to be hoped that the Catholic Church

in the United States begin to follow the enlightened position of the Church in Rome. Recent popes, notably Paul VI, and even more forcefully, John Paul II, have called for change of heart regarding the white Church's assessment of blacks. Paul increased black membership in the hierarchy. He visited Uganda to canonize black saints. John Paul II speaks frequently about the evil of racism and on behalf of the embattled blacks in South Africa. Most recently, he condemned apartheid and its root cause, racism. "Every form of discrimination based on race, whether occasional or systematically practiced and whether it is aimed at individuals or whole racial groups, is absolutely unacceptable," the pope said.

When this pope speaks, the world listens -- with the possible exception of his Catholic brothers and sisters in the United States. True, there has been a slight increase in the number of blacks being named to bishoprics here but there, too, Rome probably played the major role.

The cynic may say that the Vatican is only recognizing the value in the number of blacks in the world. Possibly. But in a Church charged with evangelism what is so wrong about that? However, anyone reading Paul and John Paul on racism, anyone following their actions, anyone listening to their reactions to specific realities would realize they are speaking from the heart as well as the mind.

The fact is that after a couple of hundred of years in the United States, the Catholic Church still seems to reflect our national sickness of racism rather than the love of God which is at the heart of the Vatican pronouncements. True, it may be largely a passive racism, a sin of omission and indifference. But the Bible tells us of what Christ thought of weak-hearted followers and of hypocrites.

And in laying this form of racism at the white Church's doorstep, it should be understood that not only are our bishops, but our priests, Religious and, perhaps most sadly, the laity, often referred to as "the people of God."

Will we ever change? Or must it require an edict from Rome or action by an even higher authority to produce respect, if love be impossible, for all our brothers and sisters in God?

Bombings: No

Abortion is to be condemned. It is the ultimate deprivation of human rights. It is state-sanctioned killing. It is to be feared.

But those who protest this abomination by bombing or torching abortion clinics only stoop to the level of those who profit from such institutions.

No one is impressed, except negatively. Those who practice abortion become more entrenched in their views. Those who are unsure on the issue are affected negatively and are nudged, pushed or catapulted into pro-abortion sympathy. And those who are firmly, but sanely pro-life, are left with a tangential blemish to explain.

Whether intended or not, such bombings and the like are not pro-life, indeed they are threatening of life and limb.

Pro-abortionists, such as Planned Parenthood, make hay of such misadventures, openly or subtly linking them to pro-lifers who are generally above reproach, such as religious leaders.

Pro-life is a must. Anti-abortion is a must. But we can never use evil means to reach an honorable end.

and Opinion

Experiencing A 'Re-Birth'

EDITOR:

This letter is in response to a letter from Anne B. Christoff, C-J, 5/30/84. Although I disagreed with a number of her statements, I have only room to address a couple of them.

The second issue she spoke about, and where it seemed to me she had the most difficulty, was concerning Catholics who had become "born again." I wasn't sure whether she was referring to those who had remained with the Church or had left it, or both. Her opinions were given in broad, sweeping generalizations of what all "born again" Catholics do, most likely based on her personal, unhappy experiences with a few.

Speaking for myself, as one of "those" Catholics who has experienced a spiritual "re-birth" in Christ, I thank God for His mercy and grace in giving me that gift, grace, privilege. Because I'm still "becoming" in a sense, and am on a journey led by the Spirit, I'm born again every day. It's my joy to know know a good number of "born again" Catholics, and we do not go around questioning people, "Are you really saved?" If Anne has had an unpleasant experience with some who have been lacking in tact and gentleness, I'm sorry, but then again it does sometimes spur people to think and effect on their relationship to God, and that's not such a bad thing.

I hope, and don't think that I've completely forgotten all charity towards those who think differently (as Anne said "they" did) than I, and I know I'm not in the business of condemning anyone; it's not my "call." I believe that God works uniquely in each person's life, as that individual responds to His grace, but I also believe that God wants us to have much more than what we're usually willing to settle for.

As co-pastoral leader of the "Spirit of Life" prayer group, it's my experience that

we are happy to acknowledge Mary as the Mother of God and of us. Some of our members are of other faiths and are some of the first to say they have enjoyed and benefitted from our teaching, sharing and prayers on and to Mary.

I would hardly call our attitude one of being ashamed of this holy and special Lady, as Anne labeled us. It is true that some Catholics' faith was awakened outside the Catholic experience and they may have been slow to appreciate the treasure of our Church. That is why I am most grateful that my experience has come within and is expressed within the renewal of the Catholic Church, and has deepened my participation, belief, love, and service in and for our Church.

I hope that Anne and others who've been "turned off" by some "born again" Catholics will be open to a changing of their vision of us through my sharing.

Mrs. Sheila Cody 1240 McMahon Road Victor, N.Y. 14564

Wheelchairs Left Behind

EDITOR:

As I settle into middle age I find a surrender to a belief in God that is both a joy and relief. I am discovering and experiencing within me the blessed truth that God's concept of the world and of us is far more beautiful and generous than I have cared to believe, or wanted to accept.

Let me share a recent experience. Recently I joined my daughter as she was helping handicapped children learn to ride horses. I was assigned to jog along next to a horse and steady its little rider. After several laps around the ring, I was given a brief rest period. Exhausted and relaxed, I watched as one of the horse and rider clusters approached. One person led the trotting horse while two people steadied a smiling child bouncing on top in a most relaxed and delighted manner. Around me I heard cheers and applause as we were swept up into the spontaneous happiness of the

moment. It was impossible to tell who was helping who -- all experienced a simple but profoundly rich joy.

It was at this point that I experienced what might be called a "mini-mystical" experience. Suddenly I felt I was involved in an understanding of church community in action that was both ideal yet very real. A bit dazed I returned to the immediate situation as someone handed me the lead rope and I was again off at a jog around the ring.

In the weeks that have passed I have not forgotten the incident and a slight change has taken place within me that affects my ministry. I find myself a bit more open to the profound dignity of each person I am with. I also feel a greater openness to the extraordinary dimensions of good that are present and active regardless of my ability to perceive them. All this leads me to a relaxation of my control and an abandonment to our God of love who is both within me and around me. Some have called it the "wings of eagles"; for me it is like the leaving behind of my personal wheelchair.

I am happy to announce the riding lessons for the handicapped children have started again (on July 10) and will run for five consecutive Tuesday mornings from 9:30 a.m. to noon. The program is in need of helpers. If you are familiar with horses and riding, over 10, and interested in this type of sharing experience your help would be most welcomed. Please call the Sigl Center at 271-6463 and ask for Margaret Kintz. I am sure you can find the experience, as my daughter and I did, both fun-filled and liberating.

Paula Dumont 67 Palo Alto Dr Rochester, N.Y. 14623

Duarte Defense 'Unimpressive'

EDITOR:

Mr. Harold Knauf (7-4) believes that the Courier-Journal in its Page 1 Salvadoran sanctuary report (6-20) "... would have been

more objective if it had advised readers that the newly-elected president of El Salvador (Napoleon Duarte) is considered a devout Catholic and is a graduate (engineering) of Notre Dame University."

As a life-long practicing Catholic, a 30-year Knight of Columbus and a 1944 graduate of Notre Dame, I am unimpressed by Mr. Knauf's brand of logic and objectivity as much as I am uninspired with his blend of religion and politics.

For Mr. Duarte was acting as head of the ruling junta in 1980 when Archbishop Oscar Romero, following a written appeal to President Carter to cease shipment of arms to his little country, was shot and killed while offering Mass in the cathedral, a murder still unsolved. Also, in 1980, occurred the martyrdoms of Sister Rita Ford and companions -- the investigation and prosecution stonewalled until 1984. Thousands of innocent men, women and children, 80 percent Catholic, are wiped out yearly by government death-squads formed, equipped and financed by the U.S.

Mr. Knauf is displeased with the sanctuary movement and with the faithful of Corpus Christi Church "... the same crowd that opposed the war in Vietnam, a war which (the U.S.) could have easily won..."

He fails to perceive the likeness in plight of a Cambodian family which escaped "the perils of the Communists" -- our parish has been enriched with the arrival of such a family -- and one from El Salvador which has escaped the perils of another strain of statism.

I haven't met anyone in the sanctuary "crowd" in Rochester but evidently they feel compassion and pity for prisoners, for the homeless and for those who hunger and thirst for justice. Matthew 25.

Let all be blessed with the fullness of the Holy spirit in doing the best they can to share their gifts. Matthew 25. Frank Carver PO Box 21 Trumansburg, N.Y. 14886



* I LEARNED A PAINFUL SPIRITUAL LESSON LAST WEEK. NEVER USE A DONALD DUCK VOICE WHEN YOU ANSWER A QUESTION IN SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Priest Killed; Protest Urged

EDITOR:

At the May 22 session of the European parliament in Strasbourg, France, Lord Bethel, representative of the United Kingdom, introduced a resolution on human rights and on paying tribute to Rev. Geza Palfi, "a Hungarian priest in Transylvania tortured to death because he protested against the fact that Dec. 25 had been declared a working day." This violation is a way of life behind the Iron Curtain, the Baltic States, too, being victims of stepped-up religious persecution.

There is an international campaign to protest the killing of this priest. Letters are requested to be sent to the Roman ambassadors of the free countries which are participating in this protest. An investigation by the proper government agency is requested. The U.S. address is: His Excellency Mircea Malitza, Ambassador of Romania, 1607 23rd St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

Captive Nations Week, the third week in July, was proclaimed by Congress and approved by President Eisenhower, who hoped this would become an ongoing reminder of the repressive nature of communism. It would be an appropriate time to remember with prayer those who are denied the right to worship. Readers should ask their pastors to include this in his announcements.

A new term, "cultural genocide," has been added to the cruelties inflicted on minority people. This is practiced chiefly in the Ukraine and Romania. In Romania, it denies 85 percent of the Hungarian population higher education. It diminishes the use of native languages and subtly phases out cultural and traditional values. In the Ukraine, it is called "Russification." I feel impelled to write my congressman to bring these violations to the floor for action in protest and for publicity.

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