

More Opinion

Bishops Letter Politics

EDITOR:

I would like to reply to Mr. Walter O'Hagan's letter (Nov. 28).

The bishops' letter contains much which is anathema to conservatives, so that is no wonder that William Buckley, Michael Novak, John J. Clark III and other conservatives are leading an attack on the first draft of the U.S. bishops' letter on social justice.

Mr. O'Hagan claims the pastoral is based on the works of Pope John Paul II and Pope Leo XIII. This may be true but the methods for implementation of the call for social justice are pure LBJ-1964, Hubert Horatio Humphrey-1968, Walter Fritz Mondale-1984 and Teddy Kennedy, anytime he opens his mouth.

Mr. O'Hagan accuses conservatives of being afraid to contradict the popes publicly. I don't know why they should be. The last I heard the popes were only "infallible" on matters of faith and morals, not social justice.

I trust that Catholics of a conservative persuasion will continue to attack the unworkable and unfair, socialistic, spread-the-misery programs which are put forth by men of the cloth under the guise of social justice being a moral issue when, in fact, in the U.S. for some time it has been a strict, straight up and down, liberal-conservative political confrontation.

It is not the need for social justice which is in question but the methods being proposed to achieve it.

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Curriculum Un-Catholic

EDITOR:

As a Catholic parent of five children, currently in public schools, I served on a parent review committee that reported directly to Lawrence Perkins and Joyce Porter (Rochester City School District) while examining the first draft of the proposed junior high sex education program. I have since read the second draft and have checked the third and latest draft. To prepare for this, I read or reread the basic magisterial documents on the subject: *Humanae Vitae*, the (1975) Declaration on Sexual Ethics, *Familiaris Consortio* and the (1983) Education Guidelines in Human Love (the Vatican Outlines). The purpose of my examination was to determine what in the proposed curriculum would be acceptable to Catholic parents who have not compromised any point of Catholic moral teaching. I have examined district family living/sex education curricula for a number of years and have long enjoyed the privilege that is mine by the State of New York in cooperation with the local school district on removing my children from those health classes or sections of classes I have found inappropriate.

As I read the huge curriculum and its revisions, I personally have not found a single topic that was given the kind of treatment that a Catholic family could accept, unless the family is willing to compromise Church teaching. Of course, as the *Courier* article (10/31) pointed out, contraception and abortion are obvious examples, but these are by no means the extent of the problem. I found a consistently inaccurate teaching of the human person in his dignity, in the ordering of his faculties and in his relationships. This incorrect reading of man is necessary to the curriculum's presentation not only on contraception but also on the family itself and on the individual as a member of society. The curriculum sees integrity as the harmony achieved when the person accepts what is socially acceptable.

Among the most serious of the problems with the curriculum is its fundamental opposition to the universal moral norms. Articles 19 (quoting the pope) and 40 of the Vatican Outlines clearly state the necessity not only of presenting but also providing "clear motivation" for these norms. Although we do not expect to find a theological defense of the norms in a public school program, the norms themselves should still be presented and supported with consistency to have the program acceptable for Catholic young people. To make matters worse, the curriculum employs old articles written by Catholics or published in Catholic magazines to support its opposition to the universal moral norms!

Another very serious problem is that the curriculum insists that religion is but another aspect of culture, always changing, always able to be changed.

Without question, the emphasis in the curriculum is the promotion of contraception for the sexually active and that sexual intercourse can be a value, although "partial," for the unmarried. These concepts go together:

For one to use contraceptives regularly (and thus "responsibly"), that person must first affirm fornication as a value. This is totally opposed to the moral norms and to Catholic magisterial teaching. However many others in the community may agree with the curriculum, Catholic young people should not be subjected to such false teaching as part of their formation. The curriculum does not merely present different opinions equally; I cannot repeat strongly enough that it is a method of formation.

Parents will never have access to the curriculum in their homes as any kind of a general procedure, nor will it be easy for them to keep tabs on the easily changed Teacher Information (background) Packets. They will not be able to counter strategies in class, audiovisuals, other material, or outside speakers. It is my opinion that a handbook, however fine (proposed in the *Courier* article) would be totally inadequate to counteract the negative influence of actually participating in the classroom program.

Examine the curriculum. If you approve sexual intercourse as any kind of value outside of marriage and if you approve contraception, then you will probably want the program. If you adhere strictly to the constant moral teaching of the Church, you will probably want to excuse your children. There are bound to be non-Catholic parents seeking excuse for their children, too. If anyone would like to see my analysis of the first draft and my subsequent comments on the later drafts, please write to me.

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Life March Scheduled

EDITOR:

The most innocent and unprotected human beings are being slaughtered by the millions in our nation by abortions. This crime against humanity demands that we Christians make a stand, for silence implies approval. The 12th anniversary of the infamous Supreme Court decision legalizing this evil act against more than 15 million innocents is on Jan. 22, 1985.

The annual March for Life will take place that day in Washington, D.C. and all are invited. Buses will leave the Rochester area at 10:30 p.m., Monday, Jan. 21, and return at midnight (or later), Tuesday, Jan. 22. Bus fare will be \$25. Washington activities will include visiting our congressional representatives and senators (or their aides), a rally near the White House and a grand march down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol.

For more information and reservations, call Mrs. Dee Dries at 334-7562. Checks for \$25 must be mailed by Jan. 1 (made out to Dee Dries).

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It's Time to Be Critical

EDITOR:

Walter O'Hagan's letter of Nov. 28 admonished conservative critics of the first draft of the bishops' pastoral letter on social justice.

But with all due respect for the bishops, why not criticize them if we believe they are wrong?

Why, for example, have the bishops ignored the failures of Marxist regimes in feeding their people?

In Ethiopia, the Marxist rule of Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam has resulted in famine.

Even as people were dying of starvation, Mengistu's regime was spending millions of dollars celebrating the tenth anniversary of the revolution.

Ironically, here in the United States, the bishops are criticizing a government that has helped more poor people than any other government in history.

Despite their good intentions, the bishops seem unaware of the fact that programs like aid to families with dependent children have hurt the black family by subsidizing illegitimacy.

Also, the minimum wage has increased black unemployment among teenagers.

After the bishops' pastoral letter on peace and justice it was hoped that the next pastoral letter would be more realistic.

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Spiritual Famine

EDITOR:

Current and projected shortages of priestly and religious vocations are among the prominent indicators of deadly spiritual famine and plagues. These cannot be remedied with biological prescriptions to eliminate the discipline of celibacy for priests (and logically for all religious) and to have women priests, (Opinions, C-J, 10-31). Spiritual famine and plagues can be conquered by the Divine Physician and His staff of faithful servants only if the pathetic victims choose faith in Him, and accept His will which he prescribes through His church magisterium.

During the past 20 years, diocesan priests and most conspicuously the vast majority of women religious have increasingly rejected Church canons and authoritative teachings which Our Lord embodies and exercises in His church magisterium. Some were lured to serve the master of deception with illusions of their value in self-fulfillment.

The forces of worldly theological sophisms, of a secular humanism society with its flourishing promiscuity and values clarifications weakened others to rationalize away their burdens to teach and defend Catholic faith, doctrines and morality. Consequently, diocesan parishes, schools and now public schools are plagued with spiritual abortions, contraceptions, famine and deaths; the Mystical Body of Christ is persecuted, stripped, scourged and crucified.

The severity of these plagues cannot but increase when women religious, who reject the authority of Christ's magisterium, are appointed as spiritual directors for seminarians; women religious occupy themselves in comprehensive seminars on self-fulfillment, women priests and a sexist church; most tragically, priests continue to tacitly accept or collaborate in these

and other subversions of Catholic faith.

When and where priests and religious are faithful to their solemn pledge of undivided love of God, they are fruitful in their mission to build the Mystical Body of Christ. They continue to nourish the supernatural graces which led them to choose their vocations over the great blessing of a natural spouse and children, or other vocation; frequent reception of the sacrament of Penance, offering the sacrifice of their lives in union with Our Lord in Mass daily, and awareness of God's presence sustain their faithful vocations. In their worldly poverty, they are enriched with spiritual treasures of eternal value. Since their obedience springs from their trust and love of God which Jesus emphasizes is prerequisite for truth, they are free to see and reject temptations of worldly illusions that seduce others into evil which appears as good to them.

Magdalen College, which lay people conduct and established just a few years ago, reports that a number of its women have entered "into a sound religious order" and more than 35 percent of its men have entered seminaries. This God-centered lay community is but one example of the fruitfulness of priests and religious who serve God with undivided love.

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Fight Lung Disease

EDITOR:

The annual Christmas Seal Campaign of the American Lung Association is under way, with 350,000 households in our 11-county region receiving these traditional symbols of the holidays by mail. The seals, used customarily as decorations for card envelopes, gifts and packages, are a public indication that the user has contributed to the work of the American Lung Association of the Finger Lakes Region.

This is the 80th anniversary of the association, the nation's oldest voluntary public health organization which was formed in 1904 to stamp out tuberculosis. Christmas seals were first used in 1907 as a method of obtaining contributions from people who knew firsthand at that time the terrible tragedy of consumption.

Today, the American Lung Association and its 144 affiliated associations throughout the country, along with its medical section -- the American Thoracic Society, are dedicated to the control and prevention of all lung diseases and their related causes, including smoking, air pollution and occupational hazards.

Christmas seals have become a part of America's holiday tradition. They carry the promise that the serious and preventable diseases of the lungs -- for both young and old -- will be attacked with the same vigor and determination that tamed TB. By contributing to Christmas Seals, we will all share in the victory.

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Word for Sunday

Who Are Authentic Christians?

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Jn. 1/6-8, 19-28. (R1) Is. 61/1-2, 10-11. (R2) 1 Thes. 5/16-24.

There are four marks to identify the true Church of Christ; but there are only three marks needed to identify an authentic Christian. St. Paul enumerates these three marks in the second reading.

First, there is joy -- "Rejoice always." Francis de Sales used to say that a sad saint is a sorry saint. Artists put a halo around the heads of saints because they irradiate love, peace and joy. Religion should never be a depressing thing, for religion gives us God. And God is the highest good. And joy is the possession of good.

Recently an article appeared in a magazine titled "Sloth Isn't Just Laziness." The author called sloth "the most modern of the deadly sins." St. Thomas Aquinas defined sloth as "sadness about spiritual good," or joylessness when faced with God, our supreme joy. So sloth is the most depressing thing in the world. If joy is joyless, how great will the joylessness be! It is hell on earth.

Since one cannot endure sadness for long, one does one of two things. First, either one runs away from the cause of the sorrow, namely, God and the things of God. So we see the sacraments or prayer neglected or used halfheartedly. Or, as is common in the media, we see a spiteful, bitter resentment of persons who lead men to God -- a malicious detestation of both clergy and Church. Or secondly, we see as an antidote to sadness a relentless pursuit of pleasure. Thus we have the playboys and the playgirls; but, more common, restless activity. "There go the grownups / To the office, / To the store. / Subway rush, / Traffic crush; / Hurry, scurry, / Worry,

flurry. An attempt to make ends meet? More likely, an effort to fill up the empty hole in the human heart which only God can fill.

Pascal put it this way: "There are three kinds of people in the world: those who have sought God and have found Him and now serve Him, those who are seeking Him but have not yet found Him, and those who neither seek Him nor find Him. The first are reasonable and happy, the second reasonable and unhappy, the third unreasonable and unhappy."

The second mark of the true Christian is prayer -- "Never cease praying." Prayer means one is on talking terms with God. It means one depends on One higher than oneself; that one, in other words, has his feet planted firmly on the ground. And that is what humility is ("humus" in Latin means "ground"). Humility is truth: knowing who we are in relation to God; and it is justice, being inclined to act on our knowledge. That is why the truly humble person is a pray-er; he or she knows wherein lies one's power.

The third mark is thanks -- "Render constant thanks." An author once asked, "Who's the greatest saint in the world?" He received this answer: "It is not the one who does the most by way of virtue, but the one who is always thankful to God, who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness and has a heart always ready to praise God for it." Thanks is gratitude directed to someone for someone or something. "What hast thou which thou hast not received?" asked the Psalmist. Hence St. Paul said, "Render constant thanks." To live unthankful to God is to live with a low-grade fever. It's not dangerous in itself, but a sign that something is wrong. Living gratefully to God is the sign of health. Breathing consists of a double action: inhaling and exhaling. So does life. To receive only and not to give thanks is to inhale and not to exhale.