

## Editorial

### Albany Guardians

Most of us are so saddled with personal responsibilities -- job, home, etc., that we rarely have the time to shoulder responsibilities in other areas -- to wit, the legislative scene in Albany.

That is why it should be pleasant to know that the State Catholic Conference maintains a staff in Albany to represent the interests of Catholics of the eight dioceses across the state.

The conference's annual brochure listing its principal concerns for the 1985 legislative session has just been issued. It breaks down the wide concerns of the conference under such headings as Protection of Life, Human Service Concerns, Education, Health and others.

While some of the goals are general in nature, such as "the support and protection of human life at all stages of development," the conference gets much more specific in setting down its "targeted objectives." There, it calls for "the elimination of state

funds in financing of abortions and the transfer of such funds to programs which aid women in carrying their pregnancies to term."

The conference also wants it required "that no abortion be performed on a minor without informed consent of the young woman and the notification of her parents or guardians." In the same figurative breath, the conference also urges the defeat of "all attempts to enact a death penalty statute in New York State." Such pro-life positions go hand-in-hand and the logical connection cannot be ignored.

In fact, all the concerns of the State Catholic Conference are interwoven, part of the "seamless garment." Other targeted objectives include a 25 percent increase in the state's public assistance grant; increased Medicaid eligibility levels to reach 100 percent of the federal poverty level; a program of educational tax credits for qualified educational expenses, including tuition, to parents of children attending public or nonpublic elementary and secondary schools; establishment of a Housing Trust Fund to finance, through loans and grants, the

rehabilitation of vacant or under-utilized buildings for use by low and moderate income households; an integrated program of services to respond to the major needs of the youths of the state.

These constitute the conference's major thrusts. However, they by no means cover all the organization's activities. To mention just two of the many other contentious issues facing all of us, the conference has studied and taken stands on the minimum drinking age and the investment of public pension funds in firms doing business in South Africa. For the record, the conference urges that the minimum drinking age be raised to 21 and that the state prohibit investments of public pension funds in firms doing business in South Africa despite apartheid.

While, of course, it is always best when a citizenry inform itself on such vital issues and do its own lobbying, it is still edifying to realize that the State Catholic Conference is on the job, representing the bishops of the state and all Catholics on matters of faith and morals when they become part of New York's legislative issues.

## and Opinions

### Cuomo Help Overstated

#### EDITOR:

On Jan. 25, Gov. Cuomo sent a letter to the editors of several Catholic newspapers in the state. In it, he took credit for a \$54 million increase in state spending for nonpublic school students since 1982-1983. It is true that the governor has been responsible for some increases. To his credit, he has set aside money in his budget this year for a \$2.50 per pupil increase in software and \$2 per pupil for library materials for students in all schools. He has also targeted \$8.8 million for a program for educationally disadvantaged students attending nonpublic schools. However, let's look at the \$54 million referred to by the governor.

Most of the governor's claimed increase occurred in spending categories such as transportation, which the governor does not control and which would have increased automatically under any governor.

Some further perspective may be helpful. State and local tax expenditures on behalf of nonpublic school students amount to less than 2 percent of total tax expenditures for elementary and secondary education in the state. Yet, nonpublic school students comprise 17.5 percent of the state's students.

One final observation. If enrolled in public schools, nonpublic school students would cost the state an estimated \$1.2 billion annually.

We think the governor does appreciate pluralism in education and is sincere about helping nonpublic

school students but the figures quoted by the governor as reflecting his help thus far should be kept in perspective. It appears that the governor and state lawmakers have a long way to go before this support for nonpublic school students can be considered adequate. A modest tax credit for parents who pay tuition to accredited nonpublic schools would be a good start.

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### Obligation To Jailed

#### EDITOR:

Americans should not execute justice on murderers because none of us ask God to give us our "just desserts." We who say mercy to murderers have an obligation to convert them. Write to someone in jail, visit the imprisoned. It is an act of corporal mercy, spiritual mercy and it will, if successful, keep our jail population down. Do penance for their conversion.

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### Best Way To Help Poor

#### EDITOR:

Re your One Picture editorial, Feb. 20. Why is it that those good people who dedicate themselves to helping the poor, the downtrodden, the deprived, the sick and the left-out always "insist" that

the method they employ (voluntary contributions) is the best, the most productive and the only method available. This is the same method utilized in the Old Testament, before cradle to the grave government security became the norm.

The Reagan administration and a magnanimous Congress have appropriated and the federal bureaucracy administers 42 cents out of every federal dollar for the funding of social programs --\$336 billion per year. It spends 12 billion for food stamps. It spends billions of Hill-Burton funds for hospitals. HUD builds hundreds and thousands of low cost housing units and subsidizes rents. Medicare and Medicaid pay hospital costs.

The problem is not that the nation doesn't care about the poor but those who march to a different drummer (doing it their way by collecting alms for the poor on street corners or through fund drives) are unable to cope with the rising costs and the difficulties of a changing society. They would find life so much easier for themselves and for the poor, downtrodden, deprived, sick and the left-out if they directed them to the appropriate responsible government agency by reason of being born in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Then--repeat then--if they are not cared for in the manner to which they are entitled, those who truly care about their welfare should raise Billy Hell until they are cared for adequately.

As for Gov. Cuomo position of schools (Feb. 13), it is about time that nonpublic schools gave a raspberry to the separation of church and state "argument" and sued New York State on behalf of

the students for an equitable share of the education budget and school aid under the provisions of equality before the law provisions of the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This amendment makes all citizens alike, both public and nonpublic students, equal before the law.

Nonpublic schools arise -- you have nothing to lose but \$5.3 million on textbook aid and 1.4 million in computer software funds.

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### Ecumenism Alive, Well

#### EDITOR:

We read the Open Window Jan. 9 and would like to share a few observations.

In our diocese, ecumenism is indeed alive:

- In Owego, the lay people of various traditions meet to share and dialogue on a regular basis;

- In Port Byron, a community prayer breakfast is held monthly and has been for several years. The Council of Churches is presently involved in a community lunch program and an anti-pornography campaign;

- The Seneca Falls Council of Churches sponsors a yearly School of Religion;

- In Elmira, the churches sponsor the Ecumenical Preaching Mission.

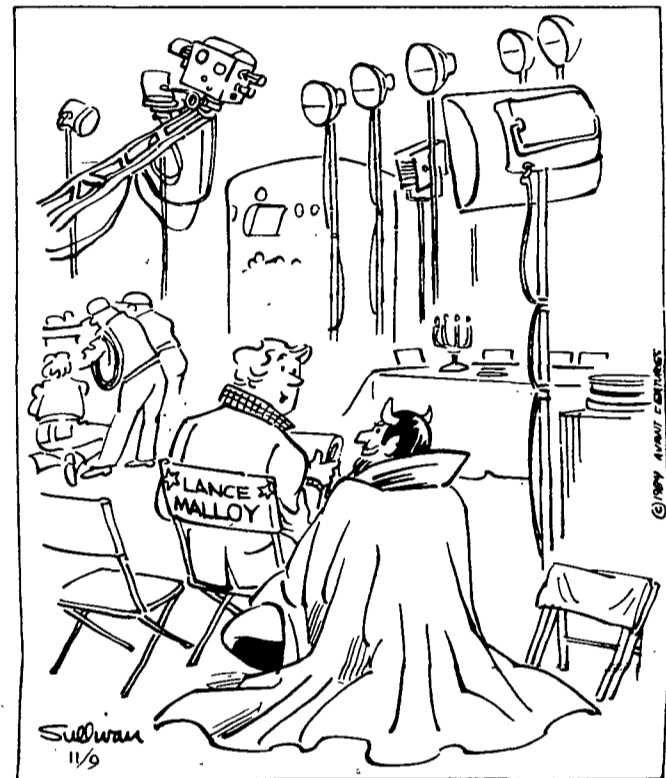
If all ecumenical activity throughout the diocese were gathered together the list would be almost endless.

As members of the diocesan Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, we are even more hopeful.

The commission has prepared sacramental guidelines which will be released soon, diocesan workshops have taken place in several regions, and we are presently involved in preparations for a Region II meeting of state ecumenical officers in October. Finally, we find a ray of hope in the efforts being made to incorporate ecumenism in the diocesan educational system.

The ecumenical movement is the lived experience of those who, in practice, share in the expression of Christian baptism. At some point in the future it will no longer be a word but the realization of Christian unity.

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"THAT'S SURE A TEMPTING OFFER, BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT BEING PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES."

### Renovation Criticized

#### EDITOR:

The decision has been announced. (It was made a year ago.) The renovation of Mother of Sorrows Church will begin this summer.

How can the American bishops and clergy talk about the "redistribution" of wealth when they institute, approve and promote such an unnecessary and undesirable expenditure of \$200,000 (we know it will be that and more before it is over)? Whose wealth is to be redistributed? Corporate business? The hard-working middle income person? Certainly not the Church.

In addition to tearing a parish apart and destroying our ability to pray in what is

really a new church, could we really think that Christ, were He here today, would overlook the struggling missionaries of Africa (some of whom are from our diocese), the lepers of the world or the millions of helpless, hopeless starving people of Ethiopia in favor of such an expenditure?

Upkeep of a plant is necessary to protect investment, but these plans are totally unacceptable. I, for one, am reducing my weekly contribution to such a wealthy parish to \$1. The balance or my regular contribution will be sent to one of the above mentioned charities, where God's work will be done with it.

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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 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.

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**Thanks**  
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