

Editorial

Tax Relief

"Catholic education constitutes a privileged chapter in the history of the Church in America."

"An act to amend the tax law, in relation to providing a tax credit or in the alternative, a modification reducing federal adjusted gross income, for qualified educational expenses in computing the personal income tax pursuant to article twenty-two thereof."

The two quotes at cursory glance would seem to have nothing in common -- not in sentiment, substance or style. Yet, much the same as the poet's Colonel's lady and Julie O'Grady, they are sisters under the skin.

The first is a simple statement of fact by Pope John Paul II when he visited our country in 1983.

The second is the necessarily convoluted, legalistic language of the opening of a bill introduced by Sen. John J. Marchi in the State Senate and which will be coming up for vote any day. What Sen. Marchi hopes to achieve through the bill is tax relief for parents of children attending public or nonpublic elementary or secondary schools in this state.

This relief would come either through a flat tax credit of \$20 per child or through a deduction of up to \$650 for each child in Grades K through 8 and up to \$1,000 for each child in grades 9 through 12.

NB: the bill covers all children in elementary and high schools. In its broadness lies fairness and, frankly, a better chance of solving constitutional problems.

Sen. Marchi said, "Our objective is to ease the financial strain on families with children in both public and nonpublic schools."

The State Catholic Conference strongly supports the measure, labeled S. 3200, and urges all parents to express their position on it to their state representatives.

J. Alan Davitt, conference executive director, noted that "parents of children in nonpublic schools have been waiting a long, long time for some measure of tax relief. Now that a bill is up for a vote, we must make our views known."

The bill is eminently just in that it not only stresses the equality of all Americans in New York State but in that it affirms the worth of both public and nonpublic schools.

Some facts anyone considering support of this bill should consider:

- There are 564,000 students in nonpublic schools -- 17.6 percent of all students in the state. Catholic schools account for 12 percent of all students.

- Catholic schools in New York State have a 28 percent minority enrollment -- 13.3 percent Hispanic, 12.1 percent black and 3 percent other minority.

- Nonpublic schools represent tax savings of great proportions to state taxpayers -- an estimated \$1.5 billion-plus a year.

Does the bill have a realistic chance in the legislature?

The Senate Finance Committee has already approved it.

It is a year of legislators talking significant tax breaks, long overdue for New York Staters.

Gov. Mario Cuomo has been boasting of his personal care for all schools, a specific of this bill.

A chance. What may be the missing ingredient? The fact that it seems to have come into urgency too quickly; that citizens haven't had enough time to voice their feelings. That can be remedied by a quick letter or telephone call to state senators. The mailing address for the State Senate is Legislative Office Building, Albany, N.Y. 12247.

and Opinions

40-Year Priest Lauded

EDITOR:

I would like to extend wholehearted congratulations to Father L. James Callan on the 40th anniversary of his ordination into the priesthood (C-J 3-13-85).

Occasionally, in this hectic-paced world, good people are seldom acknowledged for their efforts and contributions to the mainstream of everyday life, in line with these thoughts, without resorting to grand, overbearing comments, there's no doubt in my mind that Father Callan is an upstanding credit to his chosen profession.

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R-Rated? It's Sinful

EDITOR:

In the March 6 Courier-Journal appeared an article by Michael Gallagher captioned "Is It a Sin to Watch an R-Rated Movie?" The article does not really answer the question but an answer is needed.

R-rated movies are so designated because, as I understand it, they may include excessive violence, sexually suggestive sequences or offensive language. Before actually seeing the movie, there is hardly any way that the prospective movie-goer can learn just how offensive the movie might be. But since movie-going is rarely something one is required to do, then to see such a movie is to be willing to court an occasion of sin without unavoidable necessity. There is also the risk of giving scandal.

The pervading movie climate is at a dangerously low level at this time by reason of the attrition process. We have become so accustomed to the intrusion of immoral values into our daily lives that we are unable in large part to make truly wholesome judgments regarding what we see and experience.

In a somewhat related issue, Prof. Geoffrey Godbey of Penn State wrote that excessive compulsion to experience as much "fun" as possible is a mark of "tremendous spiritual deficiency." I add that spiritual

deficiency leads to unrestrained self-indulgence. Thus the love of God is no longer a determining factor in our attitudes nor in what we do. Our own satisfaction is the motivation. We are afraid of missing something, of not being "with it," in spite of St. Paul's admonition that there are some things that should not even be mentioned among Christians, let alone practiced. If we really love God to the extent we are commanded to do by Our Lord Himself, with our whole mind, our whole soul and with all our strength, there would be room for nothing that would take us away from Him and from our obligation to serve Him totally.

Whatever distracts us from that stern obligation -- love of God is the first and greatest commandment -- certainly must be avoided to best of our ability. I am unable to imagine that an R-rated movie is likely to foster that love. The consequence seems to be that we should avoid subjecting ourselves to undesirable movies. Whatever takes us away from God is to be shunned. Why should it not be called a sin?

In sum, if we are really trying with the help of God to work toward that perfection which Our Lord told us to seek -- be ye perfect -- then there is only one answer to Gallagher's question: Yes, it is a sin to attend an R-rated movie.

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First Penance Regulation

EDITOR:

Our daughter, who is in second grade, will be making her First Penance and Communion soon. Back in September we inquired as to when these two sacraments would be received. We were told that First Communion is made in the second grade and First Penance in the fourth.

This concerned us because the Church's norm is that preparation for and reception of First Penance is to come before First Communion. A Vatican declaration (Sanctus Pontifex) issued in 1973 and recently reaffirmed in the Code of Canon Law speaks to this.

We discussed this with our

pastor. Both he and our religious education coordinator were very understanding and receptive. Our parish's First Penance and First Communion program has recently been revised to reflect the Church's norms.

We have heard that there are other parishes that celebrate First Communion in the second grade and First Penance in the fourth. If you are a parent with young children and you are in a parish that has this policy you may want to discuss it with your pastor or religious education coordinator. Many parents are not aware of the fact that they can have their children receive First Penance before First Communion, let alone the fact that our Holy Father wants it that way.

Vatican Council II stressed the importance of an informed and involved laity. With a spirit of Christian charity we should question our parish and diocesan leaders when they steer us in a direction that strays from our Church's teachings and norms.

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Bishop Clark Seconded

EDITOR:

As my life progresses my awe increases at that great parting gift Jesus gave to us -- His Spirit. The Great Enlightener, Disturber, Empowerer. She is Mistress of Surprise, working in many and varied ways, through all sorts of persons, blowing where She will as mighty wind or gentle breeze.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I have pondered the March 13 Courier-Journal. Is it mere human coincidence that the cover story about the need for a pastoral letter on sexism is followed by our bishop's column highlighting the painful shortage of priests in our Church?

Bishop Clark's column ends with the words: "There's much more to be asked. Peace to all." To which I respond, "Amen. So be it."

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Evidence Lacking

EDITOR:

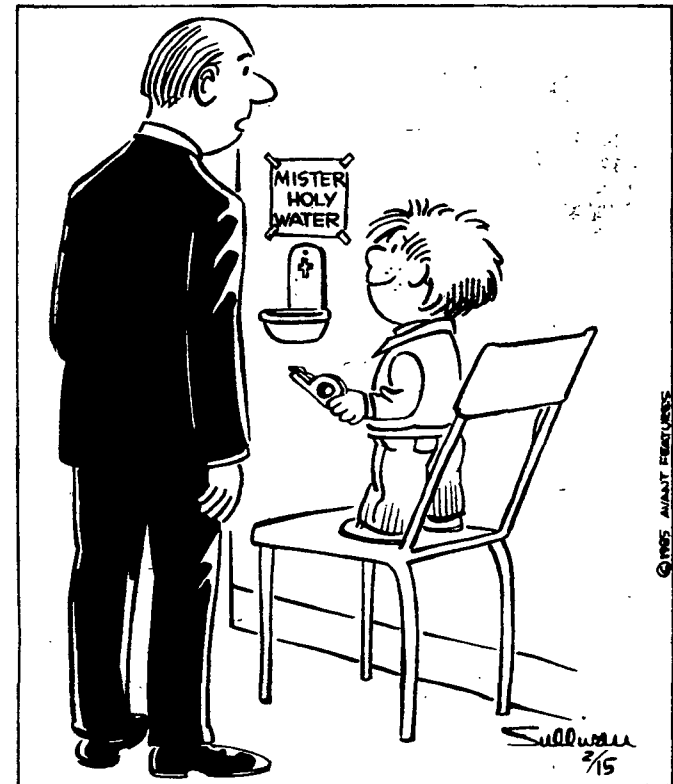
It was a great shock when I found out from John E. Milich's letter (C-J 2-27-85) that "there is a whole wing of the CIA totally devoted to propaganda." The next thing he'll tell us is that the "arrow" outside of Langley, Va., which read CIA, doesn't point toward the CIA Headquarters. I've heard charges against the CIA before but these are beyond belief. Nevertheless, we must accept these charges as undisputed facts because they are made by ex-CIA analysts and even an ex-commander of the Angolan Task Force during the CIA's covert (?) war there. It is a pity that we don't know what position the chronicler of these charges holds.

The most convincing action to demonstrate CIA chicanery was taken by no less a person than Peter Fox, the reigning "conservative" city editor of the statewide Billings (Montana) Gazette who publicly resigned his National Guard Commission and relinquished his duties as an intelligence officer to protest, not CIA's (legal) operations but its morality. Peter must be a disciple of Secretary Henry L. Stimson, who once said that "gentlemen do not read other gentlemen's mail." Secretary Stimson, you might remember was secretary of war at the time of Pearl Harbor.

Unlike Mr. Milich, I am not sure that I want Director Casey accepting analyst estimates just because an analyst has gone to a lot of trouble to compile an estimate, such as that compiled by ex-CIA analyst J.R. Horton. As I remember the definition of an estimate, it is an opinion and opinions are like posteriors -- everyone has one and everybody thinks his is the cutest.

Having disagreed with Mr. Milich on one item, I must agree with him on another. "The 'instruction' of Nuremburg made clear each and every citizen is responsible for the crimes of their government." But the "lesson" of Nuremburg is don't ever lose a war and most of all don't ever lose it to the Russians (especially if all that is restraining them are accommodating democratic allies).

I believe Mr. Milich



"IT'S A NICE IDEA, ARNOLD, BUT I THINK IT WORKS BETTER FOR COFFEE."

misspoke when he said, "We can't reform our undemocratic economic system, our money-ruled electoral system and our totalitarian and brutal foreign policy until we know the truth." Some do know the truth and I believe what he really meant was our capitalist (bad, bad, bad) economic system and our liberal (good, good, good) oriented, media dominated electoral system and, while he refers to our brutal and totalitarian foreign policy, it is hard to accept this as a valid description since our foreign policy is proposed by our president, amended by the Senate, reversed by the House and is the center piece of all counter activities by every left wing political, social and religious organization throughout the world.

In conclusion, Mr. Milich says, "For several years our nation has subjected the Nicaraguan people to genocidal aggression by satanically named 'freedom fighters.' Our nation(?) Nation means people of the country, and until the Sandinista rape of Nicaragua most Americans didn't even know where Nicaragua was except when they had an earthquake and we sent them aid, when Maryknoll missionaries needed a plane to go or when we needed bananas. As for the genocidal aggression, they may not have liked Samoz and he may have had his hand in their pockets, but he did maintain "peace."

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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.