

Editorial

Render unto Caesar?

During last week's convention of the Diocesan Attorneys' Association, a panel discussed the potential effect of Internal Revenue Service regulations on the political activity of non-profit, tax-exempt organizations. These regulations apply to all tax-exempt religious organizations, charitable groups, etc.

One panelist, Jesuit Father Charles M. Whelan, a law professor at Fordham University, said the church may have to forfeit its tax-exempt status to remain true to its mission. Although Father Whelan said he is "dead against" church endorsements of political candidates, he said that IRS regulations "come dangerously close to turning preaching into partisan politics." He further noted that "The work of the church is more important than preserving exemptions."

On the other hand, the counsel for the National Conference of Bishops has claimed that IRS regulations of this sort violate First Amendment provisions. Panelist Robert Clark, an ABC News political correspondent, took a harder view: "I don't think you can draw the line anywhere. I don't think you can say that the church has a right to teach and preach, but that it does not have a right to tell parishioners how to vote — that it does not have a right to endorse a political candidate."

A pragmatic view was expressed by panelist Geoffrey R. Stone, professor of law at the University of Chicago. Stone called tax-exemptions an aspect of "government largesse," a privilege to which strings are necessarily attached. He said, however, that IRS rules "conditioning receipt of a privilege or a

benefit on sacrifice of other constitutional rights" are unconstitutional.

An interesting debate, but what is the solution? It is important to note that the IRS has not yet used the regulations as grounds for removing any church's exemption. But as Father Whelan said, that is no guarantee for the future. Surely the church cannot, from a financial perspective, afford to relinquish its tax-exempt status.

Nonetheless, the church must use the pulpit as a forum for discussion of those public issues relevant to Catholic doctrine. Abortion, capital punishment, nuclear disarmament, care for the poor and elderly — these are only a few of the "political" topics the church must discuss.

Yet outright political involvement —

endorsement of a given candidate or a proclamation against voting for certain candidates — is not the church's ideal role. The church must call its people to think and pray, to make their political decisions from a religious viewpoint; it must counsel and educate. But individual conscience and choice are essential elements in the separation of church and state upon which our government is based.

It is here that we — the church, not the state — must draw the line to which Clark referred. Regulation — whether enforced or not — is not the issue. The issue is the need for churchmen. — from Jesse Jackson and Jerry Falwell to the parish priest and the conference of bishops — to define their own moral and ethical roles with respect to political activity.

and Opinions

Auburn's Father John Nacca Lauded for 36 Years' Service

To the Editor:

Somewhere in the Holy Scriptures, it is recorded that "giants walked the earth." Such a giant has been unselfishly ministering to all the people of Auburn since 1949. Appointed pastor of the second-oldest Italian-American parish in the Diocese of Rochester at the age of 34, handsome and energetic, he has grown old in his service of 36 years as pastor of St. Francis. The diocesan historian, Father Robert F. McNamara, informs me that this zealous, talented priest will this June tie the record set by the able Father William Mulheron, who was pastor of St. Mary's, Auburn, for the longest pastorate in Auburn Catholic history. And, if one takes into account that this same priest served as associate pastor to his predecessor, Monsignor Adolfo F. Gabiani, on two separate occasions between 1941 (the year of his ordination) to 1949, I think it is safe to conclude that the dean of the active Italian-American clergy of the Rochester diocese has, in reality, actively served the

people of Auburn for a longer period than did Father Mulheron. I speak, of course, of the charismatic Father John J. Nacca. I have watched his priestly ministry very closely since 1950.

Father Nacca has given loving service to the people of St. Francis, Auburn; St. Francis Xavier, Rochester; and Assumption of Our Lady, Fairport. I recall, at the age of 15, going through the modern school he had built at St. Francis, Auburn; it is one of the finest I have ever seen. In less than eight years, the midnight Mass was so crowded that the priests could barely get up the aisle in procession to begin the Mass in that new church.

The late, beloved father Joseph P. Beatini told me that Father Nacca "treated me like a brother." The late Father Basil Ostas, for many years pastor of St. Peter and Paul Church, Auburn, said Father Nacca brought back to the practice of the faith literally many hundreds of people and set the city of

Auburn afire with the eloquence of his sermons and the vigor of his total dedication. He is one of the great orators of the diocese. What was said of Archbishop Sheen — "Oh, God, what a protagonist you have in this man!" — could well be said of John Nacca.

Father Nacca has always preached the undiluted Catholic faith, in good times and bad. He has held no teaching of the Church lightly. His successor will find a congregation that knows the difference between right and wrong, and one extremely well-instructed in the history, doctrine, and discipline of the faith.

I am sure that, often, while presiding at Mass, Father has gazed at and reflected on the window in the facade of St. Francis — which depicts the Good Shepherd — and resolved anew to model his actions that day on the attributes of that Shepherd who daily lays down his life for his people.

Is it any wonder that the saintly man is what Father Nacca has become? One priest put it so well when he said of John Nacca:

"He has been and will always be a true priest of Jesus Christ."

Being the positive-minded person that he is, as Father Nacca concludes his long and very fruitful ministry at St. Francis, I am sure the words of the psalmist — "For to me, the measuring lines have fallen on pleasant sites; fair to me, indeed, was my inheritance." — are uppermost in his mind.

At the end of his earthly pilgrimage, escorted by the multitude of souls that have been led to heaven by the magnificent eloquence and clarity of his thousands of homilies, and more especially, by the eloquence of his saintly life of total dedication, he will hear those very precious words "Well done, thou good and faithful servant..." To which the vast congregation of souls who he has helped reach heaven will respond with one accord: "Amen, Alleluia, Alleluia!"

Charles J. Lauricella
42 Shafer Street
Rochester

Examine Consciences on Attitudes Toward Sacrament of Reconciliation

To the Editor:

If the church's acceptance of general absolution is to be understood, then letters that present opposing views (Opinions: April 10 and 24) need to be looked to for inspiration about the mystery of God's love, his ineffable power to heal, and his enduring mercy — it just doesn't do to justify ourselves by expressing our love of God and our faith in Him apart from our efforts to grow in appreciation of the sacrament of reconciliation.

I don't feel Ms. Schwenkler ("General Cure-All?") made absolution easier to understand by her comparison. It was an *ad hominem* attack on the routine use of general absolution instead of a more positive exhortation to return to the practice of

individual confession. Mary Guinta's view of God's greatness ("Find God Everywhere"), points to a deeper realization of God's power to forgive sin — but she preaches tolerance as if we can be justified in our acceptance of God's greatness apart from our participation in the sacramental life of the Church. Is this logical?

There is some merit in both opinions, but we have a problem of self-righteousness to address. The Church fosters our belief in God's mercy and advocates our cooperation with the work of salvation. If we defer from the reception of sacramental reconciliation, we insult ourselves from the priestly ministry to bring a greater integrity (Christ's) to bear on our faith.

It is sad to witness "justification by faith"

become an excuse for non-reception of the sacrament of reconciliation. Surely we aren't denied salvation if we are persuaded by the error of rationalist practices. But how does a faithful Christian live the life of Christ apart from the graces that are imparted to us in the sacraments? Why don't more of us read and reflect upon Pope John Paul II's Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance? Let us probe our consciences.

This is where adult education can begin to lessen our anxiety about the Church in the modern world — Vatican II didn't solve all our problems, but we have a greater responsibility as laity to share in the work of redemption. Let us neither demean others' ideas nor deny ourselves the opportunity to understand the spiritual problems that confront us all.

We've just begun to realize how deeply the important work of Vatican II affects us. Let us consider the common ground of faith on which we walk before debating the goodness of another person's views of how to live the faith Christ gave us. We didn't deserve it. He freely gave it.

Matthew F. Carney
201 Walnut St.
Corning

Don't Embrace 'Modernism' of Newark Diocese's Renew Program

To the Editor:

In reference to the letter from Eugene J. Bowe (Opinion: "Consideration Urged," April 10), regarding the possibility of our diocese participating in the Renew Program of Archbishop Peter Gerety of Newark, N.J., we strongly urge the good fathers responsible to absolutely refuse or deny any

participation in this program of Renew.

We are fully aware of the dangers involved in this program. The gimmicks released by the Chancery Office of Newark, while appearing on the surface to call Catholics to a greater piety, contain a very grave danger in their hidden agenda.

The modernists who are the architects of

Discussion of Lesbianism Requires Openness

To the Editor:

I write in response to William McLaughlin's letter in the April 24 Courier-Journal. I've not read the book about which he writes, "Lesbian Nuns: Breaking Silence." Nor have I seen the Phil Donahue show to which he refers. I do direct my remarks to his characterizing homosexuality as a sinful state or lifestyle.

Some estimate a 10 percent incidence of homosexuality in the general population. There is no reason to conclude that there would be fewer than 10 percent of any given religious congregation who would be homosexual. The label is not a stigma. Discussion of lesbian nuns is not in itself "a betrayal and possibly an attempt to destroy this most beautiful of vocations."

We Christians are a diverse lot sexually, racially, economically, philosophically and

culturally. Our vocations are, all of them, "most beautiful." Passing judgment on any among us does no one any service, enhances no one's calling, and gives our God no glory.

Reconciliation was Jesus' ministry and is ours. Many times that ministry is fulfilled by our listening to an individual's story, a narrative of thoughts, feelings and experiences quite different from our own. Other times, we are ourselves the storytellers and minister that way. Great pain and great gifts are shared, whatever our role. I hope that our personal experiences of openness to diversity can be translated into a communal openness as we discuss the issue Mr. McLaughlin brings to our attention.

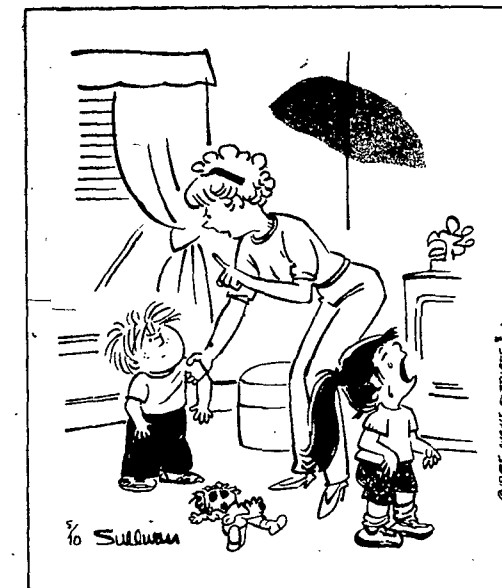
Susan M. Schantz, SSJ
445 Frederick Douglass St.
Rochester

Renew are skillful in their use of Catholic terminology. They are guilty of misuse of such words as Eucharist or penance, or even sin; they do not use the true Catholic doctrinal meaning as taught by the Magisterium.

It should be remembered that all priests in the United States are bound by their sacred oath against modernism.

Let us not get involved in a program that does not favor the Holy Father and his Church.

Spencer and Margaret Badger
30 Creek Hill Lane
Rochester



"WHAT WOULD MICHAEL LANDON SAY IF HE KNEW YOU SMACKED YOUR SISTER BECAUSE SHE DIDN'T WANT TO WATCH 'HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN'?"

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writers' signatures, full addresses and telephone numbers. They should be sent to: Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, and 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 writers' own styles.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space reserved for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent to other publications or persons. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.