

Editorial

A Question of Semantics

Last Tuesday, the Supreme Court ruled against an Alabama law allowing for a moment of silence in the public schools. The court said the law violated the constitution by specifying that the moment of silence might be used for voluntary, silent prayer.

The court ruled that such a specification violated the constitutional provision of separation of church and state because "it is entirely motivated by a purpose to advance religion."

Perhaps the justices ought to rethink their interpretation of the First Amendment and the rationale for its attachment to the Constitution. The

founding fathers — John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, etc. — were men of religion. Jefferson, in fact, wrote more than one book on the philosophy of Jesus Christ. The First Amendment dictate that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" stemmed from a desire among the founding fathers to maintain religious freedom, the freedom to practice the religion of one's choice or to choose none at all. It was their intent to ensure that no religion gained official status within the governmental framework — becoming, in effect, the Church of State. One of the primary concerns in

the establishment of this country, from the days of the pilgrims well beyond the framing of the Constitution, was that each citizen have the freedom to practice his or her own faith, without fear of persecution or loss of rights.

Maybe the wording of the Alabama law was not as carefully selected as it should have been. And we should note that the court's ruling to some degree can be considered a victory for school prayer because it opens the door to other moment-of-silence laws that do not specify prayer.

But, based upon the rationale for the creation of the First Amendment, it

seems ridiculous to strike down a law because it reiterates a freedom already expressed in that amendment — that students have the right to pray whatever they wish, if they wish to pray at all. Otherwise, they may use the period to contemplate the goodies in their lunch boxes. Unless the justices believe Alabama teachers have some means to determine what the students are thinking during the moment of silence and that those students who are thinking of bologna sandwiches and Twinkies will be punished, the court's ruling is merely a game, one that obeys the letter of the law but disregards the spirit of that law.

and Opinions

'Concerned' Efforts Do More Harm than Good

To the Editor:

Father, protect us for we know not what they do or why they do it.

Having taken their case to the American public during the last election and been rejected, and having been unable to achieve success in their class struggle using domestic unrest and provocative confrontation, our "concerned" brethren have now moved their field of operations 13,000 miles away, to a corner of the world where we Americans cannot see for ourselves whether or not, as Richard Ryan tells us ("Moral Imperative Prompts Student's Apartheid Protest," C-J, June 5) "the natural laws and the spiritual values are being violated."

The divestment movement purports to do "good," and he who opposes them opposes "good." The movement is calling for the destruction of the most viable economy on the African continent. It wants to take bread out of the mouths of some Black Africans so that it can put ballots in the hands of other Black Africans. To reread a page out of the Vietnam history book, they want to destroy South Africa so that they can save it.

Fortunately for Black South Africans, the attention span of the American media (and hence the general public) is short, and they will soon turn to saving someone else. The divestment movement will disappear from the front page and go the way of the Women's Peace and Justice Encampment. It will still exist, but receive only the amount of attention it deserves.

Africa for Africans (and being either Black or "concerned" does not make you African and it especially doesn't make you a South African, Black or White).

John J. Clark III
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Counterpoint

Dennis Lehmann, David Kaufman and Jack Spulla voiced their views during a Thursday vigil, organized by Nicaragua Invasion Contingency Action (NICA), at the Federal Building in downtown Rochester.

Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Gov. Cuomo Applauds Elevation of Cardinal O'Connor

The following is a statement released by the office of Governor M. Mario Cuomo on the elevation of New York Archbishop John O'Connor to cardinal.

"John Cardinal O'Connor of New York."

It sounds so right, so natural, so appropriate, and it is.

The whole family of New York rejoices that the Holy Father has recognized its appropriateness and elevated our archbishop. Now he assumes a position of greater honor. Perhaps even more important, he has been given an opportunity for even greater efficacy. Because in raising Archbishop O'Connor to Cardinal O'Connor, the pope has placed him on the highest possible platform, aside from the papacy itself. From that height, his words, his teaching, his example, his inspiration will soar to the 18 million New Yorkers who claim him as their own and, through an already awesomely

effective media, to the hundreds of millions who occupy this globe. The whole world will see our Cardinal O'Connor. The whole world will hear our cardinal — how sweetly he sings the Church's song of love.

If you look in the encyclopedia, it will tell you that the term cardinal began in the sixth century. It was first applied to bishops who were friven out of their own dioceses by the barbarians, and assigned to more congenial precincts. Now, we are very proud of the Big Apple and the whole Empire State, but we are not about to suggest that Scranton was overtaken by barbarians a year ago — although I understand it did vote Republican in the last election.

But it is worth remembering that the institution of cardinal was routed in the Church's effort to ward off the attacks of those who denied the sanctity of life, the dignity of the individual, even the existence

of a creator responsible for us and to whom we are responsible. Cardinals began in an effort to instruct the world of the Church's magnificent lesson.

The Church sees itself in such a vulnerable position today in many parts of the world.

Our Holy Father knew he needed to gather up the Church's greatest leaders and release them in a dramatic, unrelenting effort to deliver the message again and again. The message of the Sermon on the Mount. To a world desperate for something true to believe in.

No one can do that better than John Cardinal O'Connor. So special, so dazzling are his commitment, conviction and his gift of the capacity to communicate them, that in only a few short months he has focused the attention of an entire state and much of the nation beyond on the cares and concerns of our Church. He has reminded them of the dogma that keeps our Church whole while it

remains Catholic. With stunning power he has informed them of the concern of the Church, especially for the poorest and most disadvantaged among us — the spiritually tormented, the homeless, the disabled, the despairing. Now the whole world will hear him.

We are grateful to our Holy Father for recognizing this extraordinary man's usefulness.

We congratulate our cardinal for the way he has used his special gifts and the way he will use them for the good of the Church whose glory and crosses now rest more squarely on his shoulders.

And we thank him for adding to all of this a sense of humor, a sense of joy, a gentleness and a humility that disguises the pain of the enormous burdens he carries.

John Cardinal O'Connor of New York ad multos annos.

Send Catholic Writing To Foreign Missions

To the Editor:

Readers may like to mail their used Catholic pamphlets and magazines directly to the foreign missions.

If those who wish to do so will please send me self-addressed envelopes, I will give them the addresses of missionary priests and nuns who need Catholic literature.

Mary Conway
14 Castle Street
Cork, Ireland

Greetings and Bon Voyage

To the Editor:

Good luck to the new Courier-Journal staff as things begin to fall into place!

And gratitude to the former staff — Anthony Costello, Carmen Viglucci, John Dash, Terrence Brennan and Joan Smith

(who was on the staff until this past year).

My work in the Sisters of Mercy communications office has put me in touch with the Courier-Journal on a regular basis since 1972. During those years, I've valued the

staff's professionalism as well as their overall grasp of the diocese and of issues, and their sensitivity to news in the making.

I hope their well-seasoned skills have led them all into rewarding new work.

Sister Elaine Kolesnik, RSM
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Rochester

Appeal for Aid

To the Editor:

I would like to make a personal appeal for some financial help for the people of a small

town in India. My adopted missionary son, Father V. Anthony Dhas, has written to me stating that they have had no rain in over one year, with temperatures at times of 110 degrees. They need financial assistance so they can dig wells for cooking, washing and, most of all, for drinking.

Father Dhas' address is: Thittuvilai 629852, Bhoothapandy, India.

Catherine Fagg
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