

Editorial

The paramount value of life

This week, the Courier-Journal presents an eight-page supplement entitled "Respect Life," in conjunction with the Respect Life Program of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Respect Life Sunday, Oct. 6.

The supplement contains a variety of articles centering on the respect life theme. Perhaps the most interesting is "Suicide: The Next Pro-Life Frontier," by Dennis J. Horan and Edward R. Grant. This article seems central, not for its focus on suicide, but because its discussion of the rationale for legalized suicide has bearing on the entire pro-life movement.

The article discusses the arguments for "rational suicide" based upon an individual's determination that his life is not worth living, for reasons of pain, handicap, perceived futility, etc. In stating that the legalization of "rational suicide" would eliminate the ability to provide psychological assistance to those in despair, the authors stress that the value of life cannot be measured by arbitrary, objective standards. Instead, the article professes, life is the most important value, in and of itself. Society's attempt to place a value on individual lives by employing such arbitrary standards as "quality of life" or "fetal viability" is the crux of the pro-life/pro-choice conflict.

In his letter to the diocese (Page 8), Bishop Matthew H. Clark speaks of a "consistent life ethic." Promoting that ethic is central to the continued *humanity*, in the ethical

or idealistic sense, of our society. Whether it be the life of a starving Ethiopian child, an elderly person with Alzheimer's Disease, a fetus intended for abortion, or a teenager determined to end his troubled life, that life is precious, important and must be saved.

In keeping with that consistent ethic, we must not focus so narrowly on any one of these overlapping issues as to neglect the others — for as the articles in the supplement indicate, a loss on any single front has grave consequences for the battle at large. Each aspect of the pro-life movement is completely interwoven with the other aspects, and dividing up our overall effort into competing causes weakens our chances of success.

We must, as Catholics, Christians and members of the world community, do all we can to convince society at large that life is our greatest gift and is of paramount importance at any stage of development. In his letter, Bishop Clark asks each of us to take one conscious action each day to promote respect for life. That action — perhaps a kind word to a person in despair, an offer to help an unwed mother, or a small contribution to Ethiopian relief — will not likely bring earthshattering results. But the sum of those actions — one from each of us, each day — will bring individuals, and eventually society as a whole, to see life as an eternal value, one that cannot be measured by the standards of "quality" or "viability" we might attach to a commercial product.

Writer urges enthronement of Sacred Heart

To the Editor:

In his Angelus message of August 24, His Holiness John Paul II felt it of pressing import to restate the "Heart of Jesus" as "King and Center of all hearts." Contained in this axiom and expounded in this particular message were the following points of truth: the love of Christ as our life blood; the kingdom, while it begins in time in this world, supercedes and more importantly is interior; finally, conversion of the world must begin with our individual conversions and day-to-day reconversion.

The National Enthronement Center encourages the enthronement of the Sacred Heart in the "domestic church" of the home. A covenant of family and individual with the Heart of Jesus is instituted. Christ Jesus is

Nursing sister suggests sanitarium for AIDS

To the Editor:

Over 50 years ago, this region was plagued by the communicable disease known as tuberculosis. In an effort to protect the health rights of individuals, a therapeutic environment was established at Iola Sanitarium and Mt. Morris, staffed by qualified personnel who were interested in participating in the care and cure of these afflicted people.

Today, the pestilence of an incurable disease called AIDS is here. Until an effective method of prevention is developed, I believe another therapeutic environment could be established.

Regional statistics are obscure as to the number of cases in New York state. Those of us in the health care field who are taking care of these critically ill individuals know the serious problem that exists and how difficult it is to care for AIDS patients in a general hospital. Therefore, I propose a special therapeutic, clinical research environment staffed by interested, compassionate and qualified personnel start soon in this region.

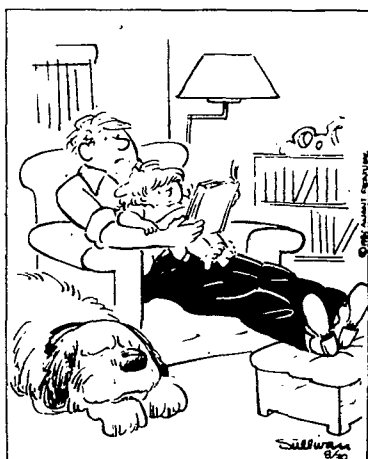
Marian Elizabeth Schantz, RSM, RN, MSN
Our Lady of Mercy Convent
1437 Blossom Road
Rochester

named family regent, a promise of continued devotion is made with the reciprocal knowledge that our Lord will honor the promise made to St. Margaret Mary on behalf of those devoted to His Heart: "I will bless the homes in which the image of My Sacred Heart shall be exposed and honored." With the predominance of family crises in the Church, such a simple gesture of love of God and an admission of dependency is more than timely.

The ceremony may be presided over either by a priest (with our without family Mass) or the head of the household. Alone, you say? Consecrate your angel as a family. Children moved away, gone to college? A member lost or missing? They can be consecrated in absentia. The covenant covers both living and deceased members of the family. As the Beloved has said: "Come to Me all you who are weary, and I shall give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

For more information, contact: National Enthronement Center, 3 Adams St., Fairhaven, Mass 02719. The center is also the promoter of Father Damien the Leper. Materials and relics may be obtained at the same address.

Donald Blais
6 Fondiller Ave.
Rochester



NO SWEETHEART THE TONGUES OF FIRE THAT CAME DOWN ON THE APOSTLES WEREN'T LIKE BUDDY'S WHEN HE KISSES YOU GOODNIGHT ON THE NOSE.

And opinions

Area Social Ministry offices state opposition to expansion of jails

To the Editor:

We, the Board of Directors of the Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry, Diocese of Rochester, are opposed to any expansion of the Monroe County Jail. Instead, we call for a complete change and reform of our jail system, which would introduce an expanded variety of alternative programs that would be rehabilitating in nature.

We clearly understand the need for different sentencing for violent and non-violent offenders. We also realize that individuals need to be accountable for their actions. But we believe, as faith-filled people, that we need to remind ourselves and the community we live in that scripture and our faith tradition call us to treat all people with respect; we believe they can be liberated from what may prevent them from being the full persons they have a right to be.

It is our belief that a comprehensive study of our jail system would show that no new jail cells are needed, if viable alternative programs were made available. We come to this conclusion based on many factors, some of which we would like to mention.

According to the Monroe County Court clerk, 10 percent of the jail population is labeled developmentally disabled. It is our feeling that people with this type of disability should be in a facility or program that will help them deal with their disabilities. Residential programs for the developmentally disabled are already available in the community. With some changes in these programs, they may be able to include individuals with a criminal record.

According to Sheriff Andrew Meloni, 70 percent of the jail inmates have an alcohol-related problem. It is reported that there is one Alcoholics Anonymous meeting per week in the jail, which is totally inadequate in our opinion. The jail offers no program similar to the DWI diversion program that has been proven to be 96 percent successful.

On an average day, 12 percent of the inmates are 16-18 years old. New York is one

of four states that treats 16 year olds as adult criminals. Many local communities have developed small residential units to provide for special needs and they have proven to be successful.

The New York Catholic Conference of Bishops believes that we should work to eliminate the societal factors contributing to crime, such as: unemployment, lack of adequate housing, lack of funding for preventative and remedial education and more. We concur with the bishops and suggest that the Monroe County taxpayer do this by insisting that legislators oppose the jail expansion project. This project will cost nearly \$30 million in construction and finance charges. In addition to the capital costs, it is estimated that it will cost \$24,000 per person per year to operate the facility.

We call upon the people of Monroe County to say NO to walls that confine and YES to programs that will liberate.

Father Michael J. Bausch, executive director

Kathleen K. Macki, board president

Genesee Valley Office of Social Ministry

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry of the Diocese of Rochester has issued a similar statement regarding prison expansion in New York state, calling it "an inadequate and inhumane approach to crime and crime prevention."

Citing the fact that many welcome the possible construction of an additional 500-bed maximum-security facility on land adjacent to the Elmira Correctional Facility as a "means of creating jobs," the office's board of directors questions this rationale "since the segments of our population with the highest unemployment rates are those found in disproportionate numbers in state prisons (blacks and Hispanics). The community would be better served if these dollars were channeled into creating jobs for the structurally unemployed and for those inclined to seek jobs within an expanding prison system," the statement says.

Writer disputes feminist opinions expressed by 'majority' of women questioned at forums

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to the article about the proposed pastoral on women (C-J, Sept. 11, Page 7: "The Diocesan Forums on Women in the Church: Making the Invisible Seen).

The article listed four different viewpoints that have been voiced regarding the proposed pastoral. It failed to mention a fifth opinion that has been expressed to the national committee. Many women have told the national committee that the pastoral should not be written because there are far more important issues that should be addressed.

The Catholic Church, in her teachings, has always upheld the dignity of women. The radical feminist ideology is in direct opposition to Church teaching because feminism denies the distinct role of women in God's plan for humanity. I hope the bishops recognize the destructive influence of feminism and acknowledge in their pastoral the problems feminism has created, such as abortion on demand and the deterioration of the family.

In the article, Judith O'Brien, chairwoman of the Diocesan Commission on Women, states that "the majority view is that women see that they have been left outside the door." On what does she base her opinion? The majority of women in the Church have never been asked. It is true that the majority of opinions expressed at the forum held in Rochester on September 15 (See C-J, Sept. 18, Page 1: "Forum on women in the Church evokes despair, hope) were of the radical feminist view. But I doubt that this gathering was very representative of Catholic women whole. I'm sure there were many family who were not able to attend a lengthy on a Sunday afternoon. If the bishop

really wants to know what the majority thinks, there should be surveys in churches at Sunday Mass — surveys that do not contain loaded questions such as the ones asked at the forum.

O'Brien also complains that women are not "able to share in the Church's power structure." This has been the complaint of other feminists who urge ordination of women. I have to question whether it is the opinion of the majority of Catholic women. The thing that strikes me most about this complaint is that it seems to go contrary to the gospel message. Jesus corrected His apostles for seeking power. If we truly believe Christ's words that "many who are first shall come last and the last shall come first" (Matthew 19:30) we will not be concerned about who has power and who hasn't. Instead we will obediently and joyfully accept our God-given roles and continue to further God's kingdom even if our efforts are sometimes invisible.

Lynne Buonemani
38 Holcroft Road
Rochester

Sister seeks stamp donations

To the Editor:

May I ask your readers to save their cancelled stamps for Sister Claire Adrian, OP, of St. Catherine, Kentucky?

Please send stamps to:
Mr. J. Lane, 118 Rogers Ave., Somerville, Mass. 02144.

Mr. Lane is collecting stamps for me in the New York and Massachusetts areas.

The proceeds from the sale of these stamps are used for our retired and sick sisters.

Sister Claire Adrian, OP
St. Catherine, Kentucky

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 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 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.