

Editorial

A child's confusion revisited

One Saturday a long time ago, a child of eight or so was watching a "classic" film on the television matinee. For about an hour, the film had made the child feel sympathetic toward the lead character who, at the end, was led down a long corridor toward an electric chair.

That character, a convicted murderer, had either been innocent or had come from an environment that nearly explained the crime.

The child could not understand how it was that the prisoner was being killed for taking a life but that the executioners were able to walk out of the death chamber free men. Should they not also be executed for taking a life and, if so, would there not then be a never-ending procession to that gruesome chair?

The child pondered that question nearly 20 years ago, but it comes back to mind whenever the death penalty is discussed. And, although the childlike confusion has been replaced by an understanding of the rationale offered for capital punishment, it still seems illogical to claim that the taking of one life is any worse or better than the taking of another.

This week, our news service offered a review of "The Morality of Capital Punishment," a book by Michael E. Endres, published by Twenty-Third Publications of Connecticut. The review states that Endres' book "is both timely and important — timely because of the mounting public concern over crime, violence and terrorism; important because of the many people calling for a return to the death penalty as one solution for wiping out serious crime."

The review — written by Father Hugh H. Nolan, editor and writer, of St. Isaac Jogues of Valley Forge Parish in Wayne, Pa. — goes on to discuss the 1974 Supreme Court decision upholding the constitutionality of the death penalty in three states, and later notes the response of the American Catholic bishops to that decision.

In a 1980 document entitled "Statement on Capital Punishment," the review says, the bishops "noted the primary reasons for the reinstatement of capital punishment as deterrence, reform and retribution, but said that there is no conclusive evidence the death penalty deters crime.

"The death penalty, the bishops said, leaves no room for reform and taking a life is not a valid act of retribution. In the discussion of the statement Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia stressed: 'The poor and members of the racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to die.'"

According to the review, Endres argues that four purposes must be fully met for the death penalty to be moral:

- It must better protect society than other alternatives.
- It must better restore the order of justice.
- It must ensure that innocents are not unwittingly executed.
- It must be imposed with the kind of scrupulous fairness that concerned Cardinal Krol.

The review continues: "Applying these criteria to what is and has been happening, Endres asserts that 'not even one of these purposes of punishment has been or is now being met.' Projecting from past and present experiences and analysis of social institutions, he proceeds convincingly to the conclusion that 'these purposes will never be achieved in the future.'"

Although we certainly do not agree with Mr. Endres' conclusion that the death penalty cannot meet such criteria — there are certainly cases in which its use may be justified — we must agree with Father Nolan's evaluation of the book as a resource for informed, adult debate: "This work is definitely a contribution to its field. It could help prevent emotion from trampling reason on this volatile question."

Writer says habitless nuns can't set good examples

To the Editor:

In response to the editor's note on religious wearing habits (Opinion: October 24, "Sisters wearing habits tell world 'We believe'"): Do our nuns really set an example that is inspiring for children or anyone by not wearing their habits? My answer is a definite no!

Courier in its 'finest hours'

To the Editor:

This is just a short note to tell you how very much I enjoy the Courier-Journal.

I have been a faithful reader of the Courier for over 30 years and, in my opinion, these are its "finest hours."

Please try to remember that for every letter of criticism you receive, there are countless other readers who are on your side and just assume that you know that fact without having to write you.

Whatever you do, don't let Emily Morrison get away — she is truly a gifted writer.

Any chance of your publishing twice weekly?

Fran Wesley
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EDITOR'S NOTE: The staff at the Courier wishes we could publish twice weekly so that we could get more news out to our readers with less delay. But unfortunately, we have neither the staff nor the funds for such a venture. If circumstances ever change, however, we'll surely consider the possibility!

In no way are many of today's nuns giving good examples of the aspects of our holy faith that we were taught as children. How, for instance, are the nuns showing obedience when they outwardly ignore the request of our Holy Father to return to their habits? Did their vow of obedience fly out the window when the "new breath" of Vatican II flew in? How is it that these brides of Christ are giving an example of humility and mortification when as mistresses of the world, they arrogantly parade around in the latest of fashions? How do our nuns exemplify detachment from the world by allowing themselves to be seduced by its material pleasures as they cling so tightly and willingly to their perfect hairstyles and clothes? Where do they show discipline and dedication to their roles as brides of Christ when they cast off their habits? These are the same beautiful habits which once were marks of their being loyal and forever true to their one Spouse, Christ Jesus, and to His holy Church.

Instead of serving the needs of the Church, they now serve their own need to be just one of the girls, rather than the staunch pillars of faith that our sisters used to be.

I find no holy example in these sisters who refuse to wear their habits. Rather, I find self-love, earthly affections and disobedience.

Frank Fusare Jr.
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Elmira

And opinions

Answer call to priesthood for love

To the Editor:

After reading the letter to you (Opinion, Oct. 24: "Why would parents want their sons to answer the call to priesthood?") from Mr. Markham, my heart and head say I must speak out.

I'm not so sure the content of much of his letter regarding the priesthood was biting satire, as you assumed.

The main and plain-and-simple reason a man becomes a priest is love. A man becomes a priest because he has a burning love for God almighty and the desire to pass that love for God on to his fellow human beings.

From the very beginning, God almighty has loved us and has forgiven us time and time again when we have messed up and turned our backs on Him and thought we could go it alone.

God Almighty, because of His overwhelming love for all of us finally gave us the most precious gift He could, His Divine Son, our Jesus.

After 30 some years, living with sinners (prostitutes, pimps, tax collectors, lawyers and all other riffraff) trying to straighten their lives out by His perfect good example and love for them and us in His divine priesthood, (Jesus) gave himself to us in the Holy Eucharist.

I, for one, thank God every day upon rising, for His priests and the priesthood.

In the past few years, I've been faced with possible death as a result of health problems. I have been able to accept these problems as

God's will only because a priest has been able to celebrate Holy Mass and by the will of God bring Jesus to me in the Holy Eucharist, the Bread of Life — God's most precious gift to us His creatures.

Sure, we need bright young people to become experts in the computer field, engineering and medicine, but they in turn, need a priest to feed their souls. The older we get, the more we will realize this fact.

Scripture tells us — so what if a guy does make a big killing on the stock market or earns a huge salary in medicine, law, engineering, etc., and screws up and loses his or her soul — the gain for eternity is nothing. You can't take it with you, and as Father Albert Shamon said in his column a week or two ago, there are no U-Haul trailers behind hearses.

In answer to Mr. Markham's last question — Why did Jesus of Nazareth want to be Christ? — it was love, Mr. Markham, and if you REALLY have loved someone and thought about how your heart would break if something should happen to that loved one, you can almost feel that burning love between God the Father and God the Son, our Jesus united with the giver of love, the Holy Spirit.

If Mr. Markham was dead serious in his letter and criticized Jesus and looked down on the priesthood, he is in our prayers.

Leo Edward Meehan
540 List Ave.
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Urges cable subscribers to vote for EWTN

To the Editor:

I would like to encourage all subscribers of Greater Rochester Cablevision to take advantage of the possibility the company is offering to obtain quality Catholic programming. Option D on the current customer survey is Eternal Word Television Network.

EWTN broadcasts every day from 8 p.m. to midnight and features general entertainment along with programs of many well-known Catholic speakers, including Mother Angelica, Father Ken Roberts, Ralph Martin, Jesuit Fathers Matthew and Dennis Lynn, Father John Bertolucci and Father John Powell.

Most areas of the country that have cable are already receiving EWTN. The network, which is operated by Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Irondale, Alabama, has re-

ceived official approval of Pope John Paul II and has been endorsed by bishops all over the United States.

EWTN is presently seen on 251 cable systems serving 3.5 million homes. Let's do what we can to get Rochester added to the list of communities that have access to wholesome Catholic programs for their families. Tell Greater Rochester Cablevision that your family wants Choice D — EWTN.

Thomas J. Cusker
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EDITOR'S NOTE: Although all GRC customers were supposed to receive survey forms with their last billing statements, we have heard that some subscribers did not receive them. We suggest that all interested subscribers contact GRC if they have not gotten surveys. Don't lose your vote!

Bishop's remarks should be cast in 'enduring bronze'

To the Editor:

Socrates, the ancient Greek thinker, said to the jury condemning him to death: "In the next world, I shall not be punished for asking questions."

In this world at a youth conference in Geneva (Courier-Journal, September 25), a young man asked this question of Bishop Clark: "What can we do if our pastor won't let us have a youth group?"

"There is no simple answer to that," the bishop replied, "without knowing the circumstances and history of the community, and something of the personalities involved ... All of us have limitations and faults. These should not constrict or dampen the gifts and enthusiasm of the community; the community at the same time often can be helped by the understanding that a 'no' from

Sandinista's spelled 'communist'

To the Editor:

Relative to the doubts concerning Nicaragua, have we forgotten the reception the pope received there? How the square was closed to his friends but filled with communist sympathizers until just before he arrived? How the pope castigated the priests who were part of the government? How the jeers of the crowd were planned to drown out his words?

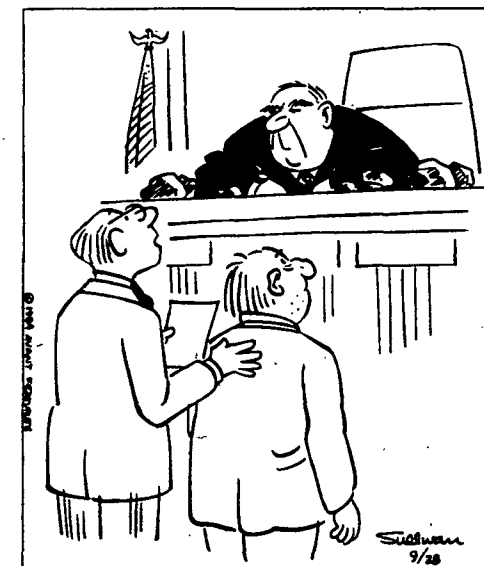
Sandinista is spelled "communist."

Father Donald J. Murphy
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a pastor may signal not so much a lack of confidence in the petitioners as in himself."

The bishop's (answer) should be cast in enduring bronze for all to read and remember.

John J. Overlander
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IF IT PLEASES THE COURT, MY CLIENT WOULD LIKE TO WITHDRAW THAT LAST REMARK ABOUT LETTING HIM WHO IS WITHOUT SIN CAST THE FIRST STONE.

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.