

Editorial

Second guessing

The much-heralded extraordinary Synod of Bishops begins Sunday in Rome. In calling for the synod, Pope John Paul II said its purpose would be to relive the spirit of Vatican II, to exchange experiences of applying the council's teaching and to deepen the understanding of those teachings in light of contemporary needs.

The pope has been mysterious about his intentions for the synod, and judging by statements from Vatican officials, probably enjoys the "ample and lively" debate and the "polemical statements of opinion" his cryptic statements have engendered.

On the left end of the philosophical spectrum is theologian Hans Kung, who has stated his belief that the Vatican is trying to reverse the post-conciliar liberalization of

Church teaching and policy. At the opposite pole is Archbishop Marcel LeFebvre, who professes that the synod will further liberalize the Church, driving it toward "self-destruction."

Though they disagree in their pessimistic predictions of what the pope may do, both speculators seem to be peering into a crystal ball through which they think they can foretell that which no one else can see. We, as Catholics, are supposed to be a people of faith, yet we seem lost in a sea of doubts — about the direction we will take and about our leaders. As Sunday approaches, perhaps we should stop debating and take the time for a prayer of faith that the synod participants will be inspired to move in the best possible direction.

Writer urges studying errors with totalitarians of history

To the Editor:

Before getting into the content of this letter, I'd like to compliment the staff of the Courier on the new format. The paper seems to be offering more print toward more of the parishes, with more parish human interest. Thank you and keep up the good work.

The October 31 edition of the Courier had a feature on Nicaragua with two views on that country's struggles. I'm particularly pleased that someone other than a do-gooder is featured also. Well-intentioned articles have been printed which have persistently condemned the anti-government fight. The Witnesses for Peace and others are well-intentioned, but are falling into subtle traps designed by experts. In the Karen M. Franz feature ("Former Sandinista says party misleads Nicaraguan visitors"), Humberto Belli, a former member of the Sandinistas, uses most relevant expressions and references, i.e., "They come back as experts on Nicaragua." In the feature by Teresa A. Parsons ("Witnesses for Peace return with messages for public"), Sister Beatrice Ganley said, "They placed great trust in us as recipients of their hospitality to bring their message back." How many people are the Witnesses for Peace talking about? Was this a poll? Are these people speaking for all the people of Nicaragua?

The people of Nicaragua are just as human as we are with probably as many frailties. The human being can be coerced, influenced, led, bullied, tricked, pleased, hurt and more, both there and here. We Catholics are consistently short-sighted, and we put our priorities in many dangerous areas. Will we Catholics ever learn? Will we as Americans ever learn?

The Courier has printed many articles and letters coming from many well-intentioned people, and it is good to have a sounding board offered like the Courier for Catholics to speak out in. So much energy is expended in doing good that often people are unaware of another dimension which is working in the other direction. Being unaware is a very human frailty, and it gets us in trouble if we do not see any other dimension. Often we hear this statement: "There is evil so that good has something to be compared to."

Today we are repeating mistakes instead of learning by our mistakes. Students of history can document the oft-repeated mistakes. In the past 45-50 years starting before World War II, we have seen many dangerous and almost fatal occurrences. Hitler started possibly with well-intentioned plans to better the lot of the German people who were beaten in WWI, but then things began to happen in subtle ways until many well-intentioned German people became enslaved by "the propaganda experts." What happened? Loss of free speech, freedom of movement, freedom of religion, loss of property and private enterprise, growth of prejudice, and others. Look at what happened after WWII. Countries weak from the effects of war became tools of a growing deadly ideology which systematically took away the same things taken by Nazism. Again, we saw this creeping evil while our do-goodism was taking our attention. In Poland, we can see this happening even though the Catholic Church is strong. The nibbling continues to erode freedoms while we wrap ourselves in our do-goodism.

Grenada fortunately with the help of its neighbors and the United States was able to stop the creeping evil. Again our do-gooders were spreading their influence to stop our involvement, warning us that there was nothing to fear. Did they talk to the students who were in Grenada?

How did Cuba, a former Catholic nation, a close neighbor, get where it is? More mistakes? Stop for a minute and examine our own Catholic backyard. What have we done to strengthen our Church. How about our Catholic priorities: Are we heading in the right direction or being used by the creeping evil which is undermining around the globe? If what I see and what many others see happening continues on its present course, we may find the same thing happening here. What guarantee do we have that it isn't?

Remember the biblical story about the Tower of Babel? God saw what was happening and stepped in, caused the people to speak in many tongues, and the materialistic evil was stopped. Confusion set in. Confusion to help good. Today confusion is being used by the creeping ideology, the anti-Godism started by Karl Marx. Our unity is in our religion, in Christ's teaching, but look at what's happening. We are interpreting good and evil in our own way, not in the way Christ preached it.

Humberto Belli states that a visit to Nicaragua does not make one an expert on what's happening in that country — it takes many years of living in a country to know and understand how it breathes. Scientists do not come up with cures for diseases in a few weeks; some take many years.

The world has a disease which came into being many years ago, before WWI, the anti-God movement being spread by communism. The movement is strong, well-organized and orchestrated. It works slowly, has tremendous patience, is cautious, and rests when necessary to gather strength. It uses all our traits to its advantage. Its infiltration is like dry rot, hidden, working oh so slowly, that we can't know it's there until too late.

Can we benefit from our mistakes in Germany, Cuba, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, an in the United States? Are all the refugees fleeing from their homelands doing so because of our country's policies? How stupid to think so. Maybe the Courier should open its pages to the refugees so that they can tell us why they are really fleeing. And why did they come to this country if it's such a villain — supporting the contras, Afghans, Salvadoran rebels, the Grenada episode, the Philippines?

In conclusion, I challenge the readers to examine two books in a serious manner. These two books can provide a barometer of the future for God-fearing people of the world: the Holy Bible and (the works of) Karl Marx. Both books should be read carefully, and then compare the messages. Which one will win out? Looking at the attitudes of many Catholics today, if they continue as they are now, we might see a new book on the shelves entitled, "A bible according to Karl Marx." I fervently hope not.

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And opinions

Resents being compared to Nazi propagandist

To the Editor:

I am very dismayed with your printing of John J. Clark III's letter (Opinion, Oct. 31: "Are letters propaganda?") regarding my writings to the Courier-Journal. To be compared to a Nazi like Goebbels is an insult.

Mr. Clark has the right to express suspicion about the source of any vital information regarding Nicaragua, but he should do it by challenging something specifically to which I can respond. To brandish what I've had published in the Courier-Journal as a "big lie" is nothing but a smear.

In fact, my writings have consistently dealt with exposing the Big Lie which has allowed Ronald Reagan to get away with, so far, one of the biggest international crimes of this horrid century, the contra "war" in Nicaragua. In my letters to the Courier-Journal, I have always provided documented sources to back up my opinion. And, I have tried to put forward witnesses that don't have an ax to grind — especially those witnesses who have experienced profound changes of heart with hard-won realizations of truth. I've reported the words of ex-CIA officers and respected journalists, each of whom has sacrificed a livelihood in order to report the news correctly. Above all, I went to Nicaragua for six weeks this year to see and hear for myself.

Mr. Clark doesn't tell us who his sources are or how he comes to the conclusions he professes. As an example, in his letter to the Courier-Journal of May 1, 1985, Mr. Clark described a philosophy of communist conspiracy using ruthless methods of propaganda and manipulation in the West; in doing so, Mr. Clark used a quote that he said came from Lenin, the Russian revolutionary.

Try as I could, in libraries and with a few communist organizations I contacted, I couldn't locate where Lenin ever made the quote Mr. Clark said he did. So I wrote a

polite note to Mr. Clark asking for his source on Lenin. Mr. Clark refused, saying he wanted to protect his source. Funny; I thought Lenin was the source.

Subsequently, on ABC's "Nightline" program of September 18, I learned from a Soviet official, that, as part of his work, Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda wizard, had done a thorough rewriting of Lenin to make him look beastly and communism (look like) a boogeyman. It was remarked by the Soviet official that President Reagan apparently uses the Goebbels "translations" of Lenin. Which translation does Mr. Clark use? I'm still curious.

Finally, instead of Red-baiting and now Nazi baiting by Mr. Clark, I would like to propose a constructive idea for helping people arrive at their own verdicts about what's really going on in Nicaragua.

I think there should be a nationally televised Congressional investigation — or the impeachment of Ronald Reagan — regarding our president's Central America policy. At local levels, fact-finding panel discussions should be formed to debate matters.

The issue is one of life and death, freedom or continued slavery for our neighbors. In this country, it is a struggle to redeem the good name of our nation in the effort to steer a moral course, as the wisest and strongest path. Individually, for the health of my soul, I have tried to make readers aware of important evidence and testimony as I find it.

I wish that debate on the Op-Ed page of the Courier-Journal be vigorous, informed and respectful concerning Nicaragua. I will be glad to provide source material or answer any question regarding anything I've ever written to the Courier-Journal in that spirit.

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Further reflection on vocations, 'obsession' with sex

To the Editor:

A recent opinion ("Self-seeking" causes critical lack of religious and priestly vocations," Oct. 31) stated: "The greatest obstacle to vocations (and to a life of faith) is the obsession with sex..." The purpose of this letter is to reflect further on this "obsession."

The Eastern Churches — both Orthodox and Catholic — have never blurred the issues regarding priesthood and celibacy, as we Roman Catholics have. When the idea of organizing self-denial appeared in Patristic-era Christianity, it was in connection with the desert monastic movement. Although the bishops of the early Church were often asked to refrain from marital relations, for the most part, celibacy was not necessarily a call for the ordained.

When reflecting on the lack of vocations to the priesthood, we should honestly examine our own Western "obsession with sex." Specifically, we should realize that celibacy is an extraordinary charism — a spiritual gift for a special few. If God hasn't given it, we should rejoice in the sanctity of our sexuality: for married persons as they celebrate their shared love, and for those who are single, as we are "chaste and being chased."

The imposition of a monastic, community-oriented discipline upon those who are neither monks nor members of a religious community seems incongruous within a Christian perspective.

Without question, some individuals are

Objects to Father Cuddy's remark about military nurses

To the Editor:

In response to Father Paul Cuddy's "On the Right Side" (October 31): Since "certain safeguards on the home front are missing in the freedom of the service," it appears that Father Cuddy feels that it is his responsibility to warn Father Lew Brown about the perils of women, most specifically "military nurses." I don't profess to be well-versed in matters of the military, but I do find it difficult to believe that the only female contingent in the armed forces is comprised of the nursing profession. The allusion is offensive and degrading.

In addition to describing them as "very

denying their call from God: this is true in any age — we have the scriptures and the lives of the saints to testify to this. I do not believe this is causing our so-called crisis. However, I would suggest that the hierarchy — our theologians and bishops — has not entirely heeded the call of God and the Church, a call to honest, radical study and discernment of what is appropriate and essential to ordained ministry today. As Christ's Church, we must be open to the stirrings of the Spirit and allow ourselves to be led, perhaps to new and challenging areas.

I do not suggest that we open admission to the priesthood, regardless of state-of-life or gender, simply because of a "vocational crisis." We need to remember that above all, ministry is a call to service and, of course, self-denial. The people we minister to as baptized Christians are the focus of our efforts. Today, we realize that baptism is the sacrament of initiation into ministry, not ordination or vows. I believe that the Spirit is moving to invite each of us to consider ways to shoulder the burdens and meet the needs of our brothers and sisters.

Regarding the lack of self-denial, we may well ask who is resisting when married persons gifted with liturgical, spiritual and pastoral leadership are turned away from service because of a relatively recent custom of celibacy.

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attractive," Father Cuddy did acquiesce to the fact that "many of them" — not all of them? — "are very holy women. Who is mortal man to judge the "holiness" of a person, whether male or female, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief? I feel a sense of gratitude and relief that the Lord is going to be the judge of my "holiness" and not Father Cuddy. It is my sincere hope, that if Father Cuddy should find himself being ministered to by "an angel of mercy" that she hasn't been a "military nurse" who read his article!

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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.