

## Editorial

### Parochialism of a different sort

We at the Courier-Journal were once reproached for "parochialism" because we had published a story on a parish's efforts to aid a Catholic family whose home had burned. According to our critic, the situation paralleled a memorable headline that once had run in a Catholic newspaper. "No Catholics Killed by Tornado," the paper had reported.

Although we didn't think the criticism fit in that instance, it seems to fit the secular media's overattention to the tragedy that befell the first civilian in

space, while neglecting the astronauts killed.

Ironically for us, Christa McAuliffe was a Catholic, an active member of her parish and a teacher in her parish school. For those reasons, National Catholic News Service, which provides our national and international news, has focused on her.

But the secular focus on Christa McAuliffe seems to stem from a common fear that we are all vulnerable to tragedy. As a nation, we were shocked by the reality of a civilian being killed in

space. What happened to Mrs. McAuliffe could have happened to any of the thousands who vied with her for a place on the shuttle. The first civilian killed in space could have been one of our friends or relatives.

We were totally unprepared for the death of an ordinary person and, demonstrating a different form of parochialism, the media focused on this "new" aspect of space accidents. Moreover, we as a nation followed the media's lead. We gathered around televisions in a strange, communal fascina-

tion to watch again and again as the explosion was recreated through videotape replay. In hushed tones, we discussed the gruesome possibilities, but we did not look away.

And what of the others? Seven people died in that explosion. Seven families grieved for loved ones so suddenly taken from them. Certainly the astronauts and their families knew that every mission entails danger, yet their loss is no less than that of Mrs. McAuliffe. They must not be forgotten. They, too, deserve our prayers and a place in our memories.

## And opinions

### 'Scandal of sexism' in the Church cannot be ignored, writer asserts

To the Editor:

The scandal of sexism in the Catholic Church cannot be ignored any longer. It is doing great harm to women, to men and to the building of the Kingdom. There is something that is greatly disturbing about the Church's adamant refusal to consider the admission of women to Holy Orders. How we can condemn racism, and at the same time perpetuate the practice of sexism in our midst, is beyond me.

I believe the time has come to admit women to the diaconate, the priesthood and the episcopate. This conviction is not an uncritical response to the feminist movement, sometimes a bit exaggerated in our society. It is the fruit of years of prayer, inner struggle and much personal suffering. It is a conviction of the heart, rooted in personal experience. I cannot provide theological arguments. Allow me, however, to share the following reflections:

1) The subjugation of women down through history, including their subjugation in the synagogue and in the Church, is the result of a curse (Genesis 3:16). This curse was brought about by sin and is therefore to

be overcome, since the subordination of women to men is a corruption of the original condition of man, who, out of love, was created male and female in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

2) God the Father is also God the Mother (Isaiah 49:15; Psalms 27:10). Whereas a male priest is an image of God the Father, a female priest would be an image of God the Mother. Such an image is especially needed by men.

3) The biblical image of the perfect wife (Proverbs 31:10-31) is as applicable to a female priest, as "wife" of the Church, as it is to a male priest as "husband" of the Church. Jesus himself once used a female image to describe His own mission as the Good Shepherd (Luke 13:34). The Pauline image of Jesus as "husband" and the Church as "wife" is as culturally conditioned as His acceptance of slavery, and therefore is not to be taken literally.

4) Jesus chose only men as members of the Twelve, but then he also restricted them to seek the lost sheep of the House of Israel. The apostolate to the Gentiles would come years later. The realization that slavery is evil

and that racism is a sin would come centuries later. But Jesus allowed women to be part of his inner circle as much as possible in his cultural milieu (Luke 8:1-3). It is hard to believe that Jesus, in this day and age, would have excluded women from the Twelve.

5) For centuries, the whole Jewish family had participated in the preparation and sharing of the Passover meal (Exodus 12:3-5). We know that women disciples followed Jesus to Jerusalem (Luke 23:27, 49, 55). It is hard to imagine that they were not present at the Last Supper, serving as usual (Mark 1:31; John 12:2). It is hard to believe that Jesus, in this day and age, would have excluded them from sharing in the Last Supper.

6) It is written that the Word became man, not male. In the poverty of His human condition, he had to be either male or female. In His day, He had to be male, so that He could at least speak at the synagogue. Today, He could have been born either a boy or a girl. And the Risen Lord is a man, not a male (Mark 12:25-26; 1 Corinthians 15:40).

7) The Lord said that we would have to grow in the truth with the help of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-13). Jesus came to deliver us from the slavery of sin and lead us to fullness of life (John 3:16-17, 10:10). Such fullness includes a wholesome integration of the masculinity and femininity in each human person, as the Holy Father has pointed out in his recent teaching on the language of the body. Is this not a challenge to dig deeper into the truth of Galatians 3:27-28? The curse of sexism must be overcome.

Scripture is the norm of norms (norma normandis). Tradition is also a norm, but norma normanda. Tradition must conform to scripture. If our understanding of scripture grows, then tradition must grow. Each generation of Christians is called to enrich tradition with its own experience of the gospel. It is of course the responsibility of bishops to hold on to what is good without suppressing what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

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### Confront rather than avoid message of anti-Christian programming, film

To the Editor:

It warms the heart to learn that groups of Christians across the nation are actively protesting such movies as "Hail Mary" and "Agnes of God," which are full of anti-Christian imagery and reproach. However, I cannot help but feel that these activists are turning their backs on a wonderful opportunity to educate the Christian community regarding the significance of being a believer in Christ in modern-day America.

Anti-Christian programming will not come to an end as a result of protest; it is utterly unthinkable.

One proven and common-sense method by which Christians of all denominations can significantly neutralize the effects of unjust denunciation and, in fact, use this antagonism to create a positive, is to hold the problem in place and adjust our approach to it by treating diatribes as a science; classifying and cataloging them according to type, quality and method of delivery.

When such uncontrolled antagonism enters our community, it has significant power to scandalize and inhibit people from identifying with their religions and from cultivating their faiths. When anti-Christian programming is encompassed and controlled within our community and examined objectively, its mysteries and its power to control are neutralized.

Although I am not an educator, I had the occasion several years ago to soothe the inquiring minds of a group of Christian youths who questioned the negative image of Christianity coming through the media. It was difficult for them to understand that they might be called someday to other lands to win the struggle that other people might live in dignity when they cannot find dignity at home.

I instructed them not to avoid or protest

movies, television programming or printed materials with an anti-Christian bent. I instructed them to view episodes of "Saturday Night Live," "Pray TV," and many of the anti-Christian situation comedies popular at the time.

We discussed the inherent powers of satire in addition to stimulus/response and negative and positive reinforcers, focusing on various ways in which these behavior controllers are used to train animals and how they are incorporated within certain of the media to train people.

I equated this problem with Jesus' scourging (in public) at the pillar, and reminded them that the anti-Christian pro-

gramming we view is one of the few means by which modern Christians living in the comfort of America might feel the real significance of being a Christian.

We ended with a stimulating discussion pertaining to what ultimately exists within that portion of the American press that seems to run itself breathless in its attempt to dignify anti-Christian movies.

In any case, it is important that we do not avoid or protest anti-Christian programming and written material, but seek it out, subdue it and examine it with an effort to understand its motives and state of mind, and the passion behind the historical drive to humiliate Christians in public.

Anti-Christian programming belongs to the Christian. It was addressed to us in public. It is very much a part of the history of the Christian experience in modern America. It is ours to do with what we will.

As we live out this Christian experience in the short time that we have, it seems logical and justified that we acknowledge and bring into focus any element that has a profound effect on our community.

Acknowledging our nemesis is simply a matter of being honest with ourselves and with our community.

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### U.S. must have consistent policy on terrorism

To the Editor:

It is right for our government to condemn terrorist acts such as those that occurred at the Rome and Vienna airports. However, the foreign policies of the Reagan administration render such protests pure hypocrisy.

The United States, through its do-nothing policy of "constructive engagement" with South Africa, encourages South Africa to continue the war against its black population. South Africa's foreign belligerence has also increased due to constructive engagement.

South Africa now supports the overthrow of the neighboring governments in Angola and Mozambique, and occupies the country of Namibia in violation of a United Nations decree. South Africa has invaded Botswana, destabilized the government of Lesotho (resulting in the recent coup there) and has threatened to invade Zimbabwe.

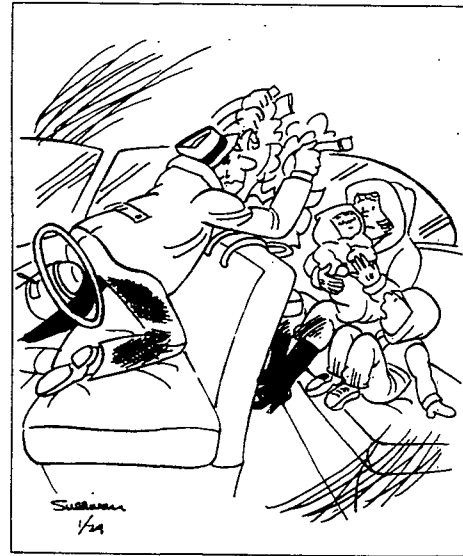
The U.S. government also maintains a policy of international terrorism and subversion directed against the peoples of

Central America. The United States provides El Salvador with the weaponry and training required to maintain its death squads, and it supplies the aircraft that the Salvadoran air force uses to bomb rural villages.

The United States also supports the contra war against Nicaragua. The contras almost exclusively attack civilians and are guilty of many atrocities. The (U.S.) government constantly criticizes Nicaragua's policy on its Indian population, but maintains a curious silence about genocide against Guatemala's Indians.

Fortunately, the majority of American citizens does not approve of the Reagan administration's foreign policies in southern Africa and Central America. It is up to these citizens to tell President Reagan and Congress that they disapprove of these policies, so that the United States is credible in its opposition to terrorism.

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"I'LL BET JOSEPH DIDN'T HAVE THIS MUCH TROUBLE WITH THE DONKEY SEAT FOR JESUS"

### Consider interdependency

To the Editor:

The next time you pick up a pencil, look at it carefully. Did you realize that the rubber in it came from a tropical climate; that the graphite probably was dug out of the earth (maybe overseas); that the wood came from a tree that took years to grow; and that the metal around the eraser likely came from underground? The point is that our world is interdependent.

This is also true in nature. Whales are at home in the water, whether off Alaska or the warm waters of Hawaii, depending on the

time of year. And so, if water gets polluted in one place, it travels someplace else and everything it touches or comes in contact with gets polluted.

So when you order your spring garden supplies, make sure you buy products that are biodegradable, that is, ones that break down in the soil and do not cause any pollution. There are all kinds of ways to do things that do not need toxic chemicals. Substitutes can always be found when we look far enough.

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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 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.