

Editorial

Of hope and uncertainty

Early this morning, Tuesday, rumors began to circulate that Ferdinand Marcos was about to abandon his effort to maintain the presidency of the Philippines. By the time the working day was underway, U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz had announced U.S. recognition of the Aquino government.

It is peculiar that a situation that has dragged on for years has come to a climax so quickly. Only a few days ago, Marcos insisted that he and his remaining supporters would turn back the opposition and maintain control of the government. Just three weeks ago, he attempted to blame election fraud on the Catholic Church in the Philippines, saying that voters were "held back by priests, nuns and Namfrel (the National Movement for Free Elections) representatives."

But by this morning, he had made his bargain: the hollow victory of a meaningless inauguration ceremony, in exchange for his departure. And soon after, Schultz declared in his press conference that "We respect the government of the Philippines for this outpouring of democracy, and we stand with the new government of Mrs. Aquino."

Everything moved so quickly that one

wonders whether much thought was given to the future. Certainly the Filipinos had had their fill of Marcos, but how sure is anyone — the principals included — that significant improvement will occur soon?

Mrs. Aquino has admitted that she has no political background, short of that inherited from her late husband, and in her first hours as president installed several former officials of the Marcos regime as her new ministers.

Schultz asserts that she plans to put the highest priority on needed economic reform, but was uncertain about her ability to prevent strife among the various factions and to turn back the tide of communist insurgency.

"Among her impressive characteristics is a very deep, personal religious conviction, and out of this, I think, comes a sense of non-violence and perhaps compassion," the secretary said.

The Church in the Philippines has been instrumental in non-violent opposition to Marcos, and as the situation cools, we can only hope that Mrs. Aquino will find wise counsel from its leaders and from those officials she has carried over from the prior regime.

Pray that Church will be guided from schism

To the Editor:

On the front page of the Courier-Journal January 20, appeared an NC story that Bishop Frank J. Farrisson of Syracuse last fall halted an experiment with the Tridentine Masses in his diocese.

I assume that there is more to the situation than appeared in the story.

The Tridentine Mass was instituted by the Council of Trent almost 500 years ago to counter the Protestant Reformation. After Vatican II "opened the windows" to let in fresh, modern air, Pope Paul VI suppressed the Tridentine Mass.

Those who adhere doggedly to the Tridentine tradition cannot or will not accept the changes initiated by Vatican II (the liturgy and other things), and those bishops and parishioners who favor the changes object to having their authority to make changes challenged.

It is currently an ideological battle being waged by Archbishop Le Fevre, Cardinal

Ratzinger and the Catholic Conference of Bishops represented by Bishop Malone. Le Fevre's group accepts only the Tridentine Mass. While Cardinal Ratzinger might agree with Le Fevre in principle, he insists that since the pope authorized the changes, Tridentinists must accept the validity of the new liturgy. The conference's position is the one apparently taken by Bishop Harrison — if the Tridentinist questions a bishop's authority on the new liturgy, the bishop will ban (in his diocese) the Tridentine Mass.

Both liturgies are approved by Pope John Paul II. Each group is required to accept the validity of the other, but human emotions, dedication to a principle and the inability to accommodate opposite viewpoints has again brought the Church to the brink of schism.

Let us pray that the Holy Ghost will grant us the wisdom and grace to avoid it.

John J. Clark III
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Reader decries convoluted nature of argument

To the Editor:

Reading Mr. Charles' letter (Opinion: Feb. 20, "Writer disputes scriptural basis of letter on sexism in the Church") reminded me of a passage in Robert Pirsig's popular book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*: "The statements were guarded by enormous labyrinthine fortifications that went on and on with such complexity it was almost impossible to discover what ... was being guarded."

My point is that, even though I have a bachelor's degree in religious studies, I could not confidently decipher Mr. Charles' meaning. If Mr. Charles was trying to argue, among other things, that God is male, as it seems he was, well, I too would try to hide that point in "labyrinthine fortifications." If I am mistaken about his meaning, all I can say is that he should try to express himself more plainly so that readers of the

Courier-Journal can understand him. This will enable us, in the spirit of Pirsig's main character, Phaedrus, to take issue with him.

On the other hand, Mr. Gutierrez's letter (Opinion: Feb. 6, "Scandal of sexism" in the Church cannot be ignored, writer asserts") was concise and direct. He and I are in complete harmony on this most important issue.

And in closing, I wish I knew of a quote somewhere pointing out how odd it is that the empowered seem to spend so much time doing two things: 1) shaking their fingers at those who wish power were more evenly distributed and 2) fortifying their power. And, at times, these two activities are barely distinguishable.

Catherine Conheady
Hitree Lane
Rochester

It's not government's role to legislate morality

To the Editor:

In recent years and even more currently, there has been a tremendous amount of media coverage and personal expression on the subject of abortion. I think that from both of these perspectives there is a great misconception as to how to answer the question of abortion.

As a devout and active Roman Catholic, I can say that both the public at large and its government should realize that we cannot legislate morals. I seem to recall that Christ had a few things to say about people who sought only laws, laws and more laws, but I won't go into that here. The U.S. government's purpose is not to dictate the conscience of its people, but only to represent the active majority's views and see that they are carried out. Hence, if the majority of the participative voters elect to legalize abortion, then the government should reflect this in its legislation.

Given the real purpose of government, we cannot hold it to perceive the preciousness of life. This simply is not its function; it is the Church's function. I wish we would stop trying to pass the buck and accept the full responsibility for who and what we are as the people of God. It is we who should be on the one hand the instrument of God's love and forgiveness to ourselves and to our neighbor, and on the other hand creating an environment in which mothers who might consider abortion would not feel as if abortion were necessary.

Abortion should be a legal act so as to ensure that in the instance in which it seems to be needed it could be done in the most peaceful means possible. But I would like to end with this question: What if abortion was legal, and everyone was Christian, and nobody took advantage of the law?

Arthur Michelini III
St. Joseph's House of Hospitality
Rochester

And opinions

Real heroes of today have courage to face responsibilities of family life

To the Editor:

Religion and politics are two subjects where, in the course of discussion, some of the participants will wander toward the abstract and the indefinable. However, being what they are, these subjects will continue to be discussed till the end of time.

Yet there is another subject that can be added to these controversial items, that being abortion; it is here that indecisiveness and I part company, for I look upon it as the taking of a human life.

There are those in the judiciary who will state that the fetus is not human, that it cannot possess a soul, that in going to full term it will be something less than human though it has all human characteristics. This is pure arrogance, for who can say exactly when a divine being placed within this tiny human being a soul, to grow and mature along with the body?

It is strange indeed when a judicial system can sentence a man to two 25-years-to-life terms for committing two murders, yet sanction the destruction of an unborn child which, if allowed to live, could develop into a normal, healthy human being.

Abortion is not just a local issue, it is national, for it takes place in just about every state in the country. When there are thousands of people willing to assume the costs of bringing an unborn, unwanted child into the world, the parents will choose abortion.

Much has been said and written about whether a woman should have the final say concerning her body and the birth of a child, or whether the courts should intervene and make the decision for her. In fairness to the judicial system, there are judges who oppose

abortion as well as those who favor it. But should the choice be left to the woman, let it be filled with compassion, for both the child and those who would adopt it.

President Reagan has received a lot of criticism for his stand against the Roe v. Wade decision, which permits or legalizes abortion. This law, passed by the Supreme Court about 13 years ago, sounded the death knell for thousands of babies.

There is yet another strange and troublesome thing about this: many anti-abortionists face fines or jail for demonstrating against it, since it is now law.

Sometimes the decision is taken away from both the courts and the woman, in this case, a young girl. She was told by the baby's father that if she did not consent to have an abortion, then he was going to leave. From such stuff wimps are made. This, incidentally, was a local incident.

There is no doubt in my mind that similar ultimatums are issued to other young women across this country by young men who, having enjoyed the benefits of a close relationship, lack the courage to accept the many responsibilities that go with it.

All heroes do not come from the battlefield, nor from the ball diamond, nor from the football field, for such adulation is ephemeral. The real heroes are those who are willing to raise large families in today's economy, who attend church regularly, and to whom the thought of an abortion is an abomination. It is always in homes like this where there is love in abundance.

William R. McLaughlin
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Unity and cooperation among pro-life forces should be sought to improve hope of success

To the Editor:

You said in your editor's note to my last letter (Opinion: "Writer expresses disappointment in editorial," Feb. 13) that the March for Life's peaceful character was distorted because of the request by Mr. Brown (that President Reagan) pardon the bombers. (But the march remained peaceful despite the request. The 100,000 or so marchers marched peacefully because they wanted the abortion holocaust in this country to stop. They marched because of an immoral and unjust law that permits the murder of unborn humans in the womb. They marched so that maybe their children wouldn't have to in the future.

Maybe, just maybe, if all of us who believe that abortion is an aberration and that the law is morally wrong could stop wasting our time on things that won't make a difference or save a baby's life, and get down to the business of figuring out how we all (the Christian press, clergy, lay persons, etc.) can stem the tide of terrorism in the womb, maybe then, with trust in God, we can do something together that might just start saving lives of the most innocent among us.

If we stopped debating and arguing points of disagreement long enough, we all might find we are united by a common goal. We can all do something positive for the babies. The press could become an educator. Let people know the truth about abortion. Emphasize the Catholic Church's stand on abortion. Let people know how they can help the pro-life cause. The clergy could preach pro-life, anti-abortion sermons more than once a year. They could come to the rosary marches outside the abortion hospitals in the Rochester area and show the community that there is action behind the sermon. The clergy could help by being more receptive to those wanting to bring pro-life programs into the parishes. And we the community can let our legislators know how we stand on this tragic issue by writing and phoning them. We can show support for those trying to educate the public on the truth of the abortion issue by financially helping out and by volunteering

time to those organizations. It would be nice to see more folks from all over the diocese at the Saturday marches at Highland and Genesee hospitals.

Maybe it's just a fantasy, but with everyone joining together with the common goal of stopping the legalized murder of unborn babies, things just might start to change and lives could be saved.

Mary Ellen Frisch
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Spencerport

Questions aid to Nicaragua

To the Editor:

I was intrigued by the ad (January 16) signed by many people asking that no U.S. aid be given the contras in Nicaragua, because it brings up an interesting question.

In the case of a peaceful U.S.-Nicaragua solution, what in Lenin's name is the Sandinista government going to do with the \$2 billion worth of military aid donated out of the goodness of their hearts by Soviet Russia?

I wonder if the Russian gunships come with a conversion kit to crop dusters.

John F. Starkweather
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Thanks for airing program

To the Editor:

I want to express my thanks to all who made possible the program, "America: You're Too Young to Die," which was on Channel 13 at 8 p.m. Friday, January 24. God bless them!

The program was done very well and had a message for the people of America. Are we listening? We have the answers and can make America great once again. What are we waiting for. Nothing is impossible with God as our guide.

Let each of us ask Him for His help, now and always.

Mrs. Donald Drexler
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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.