

## Editorial

### The tyranny of time and space

In his opening address at the Filipino-American Association of Rochester's Mass of thanksgiving, Dr. Rufino Pabico spoke of the "tyranny of time and space" that had led to the broadcast and print media's extreme abbreviation of several long interviews he had granted shortly after Ferdinand Marcos left the Philippines.

That tyranny seems especially harsh as we reflect on the rush of political events that have occupied the media and the minds of the world's people throughout the month of February. So much has happened in so little time that assimilating the deluge of information has become quite a chore.

Lacking sufficient time or space, we may tend to oversimplify and happily accept the turn of events with little analysis. And once the flurry of activity slows down, we — led by the media — may turn our attention to newer, more interesting crises. That Marcos and Duvalier have fled their respective domains indeed seems a cause for ease, but the problems they created and allowed to fester remain.

Haiti's new head of government has promised free elections, but has not set a

time for such elections. And in the Philippines, President Aquino and her new government face difficulties with communist forces and with an economy plagued by the effects of Marcos' "crony capitalism."

Aquino is reported to have told a lecture audience, "Look, you people were so tolerant and so patient under Marcos for 20 years, and here I am only two days and you are expecting miracles." The frustration is doubtless extreme — both on the part of the new administration and Filipinos bursting with anticipation.

Like the Filipinos, the rest of the world community is eagerly awaiting changes in Haiti and the Philippines. But as we wait, we must be patient and attentive. Without the attention and support of other nations, young governments can fall to old power structures or unwelcome factions promising immediate change. If we, the media and the citizens of the world, allow ourselves to become bored by the pace initially set by these fledgling governments, we will be partially to blame should unfortunate reversals occur.

### Observance of Central America Week requires questioning, worship, prayer

To the Editor:

March 16-24 is Central America Week. This is a time set aside nationwide for worship, study and action in support of justice and peace in that region. In view of the conflicting reports and policies about Central America with which we are constantly bombarded, we might very well feel that our response to Central America Week can only be frustration, impotence and a strong desire to ignore it.

Indeed, how do we interpret our country's request for \$100 million in military aid to Nicaraguan contras to support the overthrow of an elected government? How do we respond to continued U.S. military support of Guatemala, which has had 38,000 of its citizens disappear? How do we respond to U.S. citizens willfully challenging U.S. immigration policy in the sanctuary movement? We are receiving mixed and confusing messages, as well as personally polarizing requests for our support, our energy and our beliefs.

How are we then, as U.S. citizens, to respond to this call for support? What are we, as Christians, expected to do in the face of such turmoil? The answer is simple and ancient and rooted in biblical tradition: we must be persistent in responsibly pursuing the truth. In the case of the devastation in Central America, we must resist the temptation to ignore it, and instead look squarely at the facts presented, and we must ask questions.

● On March 24, 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated by government forces which had repeatedly threatened his life in the past. Six years later, no one has been brought to trial. **We must ask why.**

● In El Salvador, no one has been convicted of human rights violations carried out against Salvadorans, and yet since 1979, more than 50,000 citizens have been killed. **We must ask why this continues.**

● The need to stem arms flow from Nicaragua has been used as justification for continuing military support to El Salvador, and yet the CIA admits that no evidence has been found of any arms being transported. **We must ask why our government continues its support.**

Within the last few days, President Reagan has requested deferral until 1987 of \$500 million in domestic Community Development Block Grant funds and \$220 million in domestic Urban Development Action Grant funds. The amount of funds the president has deferred until the next fiscal year approximates the amount he has requested for military aid to El Salvador and for the Nicaraguan contras. This represents a total loss of \$8 million for Rochester, with more cuts next year. The message clearly is that we can afford foreign military aid, but we cannot afford upkeep of our own cities. **We must ask why.**

● Sanctuary workers are on trial now in Tucson for aiding undocumented refugees. Judge Carroll refused to allow the defendants to give any justification for their actions. Judge Carroll, a federal judge, eventually had to be removed from the case because of his derogatory and prejudicial remarks about the defendants and witnesses. **We must ask questions about the fairness of this trial.**

These examples of circumstances in Central America, destructive policies toward that region and impact of those policies at home, are factual. The situation in Central America is not irrelevant to us. Policy decisions on all borders impact our lives through media, economics, culture and much more.

We cannot afford to ignore the situation, nor accept what we hear at face value. We must ask why, and not be satisfied with stale or obscure answers. Supporting Central America Week means asking questions, writing letters, listening to speakers, viewing the excellent films and videotapes available. It means worship, prayer, study, action and commitment.

If we responsibly address ourselves to the issues that Central America presents to us today, let us hope that in five years, we may be able to observe Central America Week by celebrating the existence of peaceful and secure nations and their people.

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### Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writer's 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.

## And opinions

### Papal encyclical provides most cogent analysis of propaganda used by communist infiltrators

To the Editor:

Cardinal Obando y Bravo, the cardinal archbishop of Managua, Nicaragua, has been forced to appeal to the United Nations and to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The persecution of the Church by the Sandinista government had escalated to an unbearable point.

Few voices were raised in support of the cardinal or the Nicaraguan Church by the clergy in this country, so his only recourse was to appeal to secular institutions, in the humiliating position of appearing to be abandoned by the American Catholic Church. Both the cardinal's dignity and cause have been diminished by lack of support. A few news releases, a few press conferences, a few pleas from the pulpits on behalf of the suffering Church would have put the spotlight on his cause and could have strengthened his case, and possibly moved the American Catholics to at least prayer for those suffering persecution.

Lack of interest on the part of American Catholics can be attributed partly to their deprivation of unbiased news from Nicaragua, and partly to their possible indolence and reluctance to do their own search for truth. They have to a great degree accepted propaganda and media hype "selling" the Sandinistas.

*Divini Redemptoris*, the Encyclical letter of Pope Pius XI, so prophetic on the subject of atheistic communism, written about 50 years ago, contains the answer to much of today's apathy. Quotes are as follows: "They worm their way into professedly

Catholic and religious organizations"; "... a propaganda so truly diabolical that the world has perhaps never witnessed its likes before." The Holy Father posed this question: "How is it possible that such a system long since rejected scientifically and now proved erroneous by experience, how is it, we ask... that such a system could spread so rapidly in all parts of the world?" Pope Pius then answered his own question: "The explanation lies in the fact that too few have been able to grasp the nature of communism. The majority instead succumb to its deception skillfully concealed by most extravagant promises." This, from paragraph 15, is just part of the most cogent analysis of the modus operandi of communism I have ever read.

The St. Paul edition of the Vatican Text is only 25 cents at religious goods stores. I have a study guide which I would gladly share.

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### Poor reception?

To the Editor:

More study of the bishops' pastoral on defense and the economy reveals that they respectively support pacifism and socialism. Both of these isms have failed — demonstrably so.

It is too bad that the bishops' incursions into fields in which they apparently have minimal competence will inevitably affect reception of their edicts on religious matters. Or is it?

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### A Word for Sunday Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 15:1-3, 11-32; (R1) Joshua 5:9-12; (R2) 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

Alexander the Great told his officers that when he conquered Persia, he would destroy all his enemies. To celebrate that conquest, Alexander had a lavish banquet for his officers. When they entered the banquet hall, they were amazed and dismayed to see Alexander with the enemy officers all around him. His own officers said to Alexander, "We thought you were going to destroy your enemies."

Alexander answered, "I have. I have made them my friends."

Sunday's readings are all about reconciliation. The first reading celebrates Israel's liberation from Egypt, and thus its reconciliation with God. St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians uses the word "reconciliation" five times in five sentences. And the parable of the prodigal son is simply a story of reconciliation.

The basic Greek word for reconciliation is *allasso*, which means "to change." It signifies a change especially in relationships: to change enemies into friends, rebels into loyal subjects, and the estranged into sons again. In music, we call such reconciling "harmonization." Reconciliation is a bringing into harmony of opposites: sinners (all of us) and the sinless One (God); enemies into friends.

The first point to note about reconciliation is that we are reconciled to God rather than God being reconciled to us. Remember that God is love, and God never changes. So His love for us, like that of the father of the prodigal, never changes. He waits for us. He invites us to come home. In fact, He sent His Son looking for us, and His Son died for us in order to bring us back home.

Reconciliation, therefore, is a one-sided affair. God reconciles; man is reconciled. "God has reconciled himself to us through Christ — not counting men's sins against them." That is why the name for the sacrament of the forgiveness of sins is better called "Sacrament of Reconciliation" than "Sacrament of Penance." Penance connotes our doing, whereas reconciliation connotes God's doing. And it is what God does — forgiving — that is the important aspect of the sacrament. He forgives, He reconciles.

Thus in the new formula for absolu-

tion, the priest says, "God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself, and sent the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Forgiveness of sins sweeps from the Father through the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Church, to us.

Of course, the corresponding element to God's reconciliation is that we accept it. Coming to his senses, the prodigal decided, "I will break away and return to my father." God's forgiveness, His offer of reconciliation, has to be appropriated, to be accepted by all us prodigals.

Once God has made reconciliation possible, and once we have appropriated this possibility by returning to the Father through the sacrament of reconciliation, then we must share our experience with others. As St. Paul said, "He has entrusted the ministry of reconciliation to us."

There are others who do not realize the love God has for them. The elder son in the parable lived right in the midst of his father's kingdom. He experienced all the blessings and benefits of living under his father's care — yet he didn't recognize the great love his father had for him. Because he didn't know this love, he was unable to see it extended to his younger brother.

Loved by God, we must love others, "be ambassadors for Christ."

Paul McCartney of Beatles fame wrote a hit rock record entitled "Ebony and Ivory." Using the metaphor of ebony and ivory keys on the piano, he asked why we could not live in harmony with each other. His words speak specifically of racial harmony, but they carry a message for reconciliation in all of life. Sung by McCartney, a white, and Stevie Wonder, a black, the words go like this:

We all know  
People are the same wherever you go.  
There is good and bad in everyone.  
We learn to live when we learn to give  
Each other what we need to survive  
together alive.  
Ebony and ivory  
live together in perfect harmony,  
Side by side on my piano keyboard,  
Oh, Lord, why don't we?