

C-J Opinions

Diocesan people should seek help of St. John Fisher in difficult time

To the Editor:

It seems that we ordinary Roman Catholics should be grateful to Father Curran for issuing a background memorandum outlining his dissent and to Bishop Clark for his statement in support of Father Curran. Both have stripped away much of the vocabulary that is often baffling in matters of this sort and have made it possible to respond in a little way.

Holy Mother Church, since her inception, guided both individuals and the community along the path to salvation, and as it appears, is continuing to do just that. It seems incredible that Father Curran cannot look about him and see that the ideas he espouses and would have us adopt as our guide to doing the Will of God are the very same miserable notions that the world has long since adopted, to the detriment of society.

The American birthrate is below replacement level. Thirty percent of all couples married 10 years or more have been sterilized, and more than half of all married couples in child bearing years are incapable of bearing children (Father Paul Marx, O.S.B.). Homosexuality is rampant, and even the disease AIDS is not a deterrent. Millions of Catholics are divorced and remarried, not to speak of the numbers of non-Catholics. Child abuse, kidnapping and child runaways, starvation of the elderly and the handicapped, and what else shall we mention? All this and Father Curran tells us that a little responsible contraception and sterilization would be good for us. Committed homosexuals striving for permanency would be acceptable to Father Curran. Abortion prior to the 14th 21st day would not be

abortion at all.

Like any good mother, the Church has been patient in trying to correct her son. Sometimes patience must be replaced by severity for the good of the whole family.

Bishop Clark speaks of a "serious setback to Catholic education and pastoral life in this country" if Father Curran's status is called into question. I would think that this setback has already occurred, specifically because his status has not previously been called into question. If Catholic education is not to set forth the teachings of the Church, what is it there for? Concern for the pastoral life of Americans should be concern that the truth is given to us, not that some will be outraged because Father Curran is disciplined.

Bishop Clark bemoans the fact that Father Curran and other theologians have "no quiet corner..." As anxious as the media is for news, they still do not hang around the theologians. The theologians are the ones who call press conferences, publish and appear on the talk shows with their novel ideas. Those theologians who stand with the Church do have their "quiet corners." He (Bishop Clark) mentions Father Curran being "respectful of authority... in a most Christian manner." Being disobedient in a nice way is still being disobedient. His "I cannot and do not retract..." is loud and clear.

It would be good for all of us in the Diocese of Rochester to pray to St. John Fisher asking him to help us follow Pope John Paul II during these difficult times.

Jacqueline P. Rondinaro
RD #1
Watkins Glen

Sisters of St. Joseph support bishop's position on Curran

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following letter was sent to Bishop Matthew H. Clark. A copy was also provided to the Courier-Journal for publication in this column.

Dear Bishop Clark:

This letter brings the assurance of our total support for you in the stance you have taken regarding the situation of Father Charles Curran.

You are showing the kind of leadership we need from the Catholic hierarchy of the United States. There is nothing ambiguous about your statements; this presupposes

great integrity and courage, since obviously there are those who will disagree.

You have a daily remembrance in our prayers and the guarantee of whatever kind of support that will be helpful in enabling you to continue firmly in the direction you have taken.

The central administration
of the Sisters of St. Joseph:
Sisters Elizabeth Ann LeValley,
Clare Brown, Ann Lafferty,
Agnes Catherine Battersby, Maura Wilson
and Rosemary St. Peter

Writer fears support letter will be taken as agreement

To the Editor:

I fear that Bishop Clark's letter supporting Father Curran as a person and theologian is being construed as an endorsement of Father Curran's theological opinions.

To avoid confusion, if not scandal to consciences, I think it incumbent on the bishop to exercise his office as chief pastor and teacher in the diocese by making clear the Church's belief and consistent tradition

Father Curran's teachings 'parallel secular malaise'

To the Editor:

Father Curran has recently been asked by the Vatican to retract his positions on sexual ethics which are contrary to the Church's moral teachings. If he refuses, he can no longer teach as a Catholic theologian at Catholic University.

Our bishop, the Most Rev. Matthew Clark, has defended Father Curran in the name of "setbacks to Catholic education in life in this country." We feel that Catholic education has suffered from the contradictions and confusion sown by Father Curran's moral ethics. His ethics parallel the secular malaise of our society.

As parents, we are the primary guardians of our children's souls. Teaching holiness, purity and prayer are the means of obtaining sanctifying grace necessary for salvation. The Vatican's decision, however unpopular, will serve the eternal good

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concerning those specific matters from which Father Curran dissents.

Failure to do so in the wake of his letter opens the bishop, unfortunately, to the charge of endorsing Father Curran's views, which as quoted in the Courier-Journal, approve acts of contraception, sterilization, masturbation, homosexuality, and so forth.

Father Jack Healy, O.Carm.
Carmelite Fathers
Colebrook Drive
Rochester

Group disagrees with bishop on handling of Curran case

To the Editor:

We are a group of loyal Catholics who strongly disagree with Bishop Clark's support of Father Charles Curran. Curran's teaching on sexual morality is in opposition to that of the Church and that of Pope John Paul.

We feel that Father Charles Curran is disloyal to the Church and that he should retract his views in this area or accept the discipline stated by the Vatican.

We agree with the exchange of ideas between theologians, but these views should not be taught before being declared as doctrine by the Magisterium.

Josephine Coy
Barbara A. Gutowski
Manet M. Parulski
Mary M. Studier
Mary Ellen Frisch
Don P. Stiner

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.

Catholics at Cornell U send letter supporting Father Curran to Bishop Malone, NCCB head

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following letter was sent to Bishop James W. Malone, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. A copy of the letter, written by the Cornell University Catholic Community, was sent to the Courier-Journal for publication.

Dear Bishop Malone:

As participants in a prominent educational community and faithful members of the Body of Christ, we are deeply disturbed by reports that the Vatican plans to strip Father Charles Curran, a priest of our diocese, of his credentials as a Catholic theologian unless he retracts his views on birth control and other matters of sexual ethics. We understand that this move would result in Father Curran's departure from Catholic University, where he has taught theology with great distinction for many years.

We ask that you urge the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to reconsider this matter. It is unclear how removing Father Curran's credential could do anything but damage the intellectual life

of American Catholics.

We do not wish either to endorse or attack Father Curran's teachings on sexual ethics. We simply note that he has publicly offered never to teach courses on this subject at Catholic University. We additionally note that he has said he wishes to be neither "defiant nor disrespectful," that he has never questioned the hierarchy on matters of dogma, and that his opinions are widely held in both theological and lay circles. These facts seem to us to signify a responsible position for a Catholic theologian acting in good faith.

This conflict seems to us unnecessary, detrimental and, above all, divisive. We again urge you to contact other authorities in this country and in Rome, with the hope that this situation can be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. Our prayers are with you.

The Parish Council
Cornell Catholic Community
Cornell University
William Fleischmann, chairman

Fr. Curran's teachings decay solid foundation of Church

To the Editor:

The solid-as-a-rock Church of 1950 is now a shifting pile of sand. This has been caused not from attack from without but by rot from within, starting with the liberal wave resulting from — if not mandated by — Vatican II.

Charles Curran is one of those who are rotting the Church from within. The great binding force in Catholicism is the authority of the pope. This is the mortar that makes the structure strong. Rotting of the mortar causes the crumbling of the structure.

Curran is a modernist who is bent on doing his thing, making his mark, uncaring of his

effect on his Church. He is defying papal authority so that he can be a big frog in a little pond, leading a very comfortable existence free from austerity and obedience to authority.

Charles Curran should be wearing a habit and living in a cell, or he should be out of the Church and openly anti-Catholic. He does more harm than if he were a blatant atheist. Those who support him are also anti-Catholic — they have lost the faith. "He who is not with me is against me."

John F. Starkweather
Middle Road
Rush

On the Right Side

Father Paul J. Cuddy



Three Great Popes

The history of the popes has interested me since my seminarian days at St. Bernard's. The two popes who have intrigued me most are St. Gregory the Great and Saint Leo the Great.

Gregory (540-604) was the son of a wealthy and noble family. His father, Gordianus, was a Roman senator. Little is known of his childhood, but the times were turbulent, times of savage wars between the Gothic kings and the Roman army, during which Rome itself was sacked.

Gregory became a lawyer and a politician, and in 573 he was named city prefect. But he had always had a yen for the religious life — some think that is why he didn't marry — and he gave up his public life to become a monk. The pope sent him to Constantinople for seven years as ambassador for the Holy See. At the death of Pope Pelagius II, Gregory was elected pope, and ruled the Church for 14 years, bringing to the office his skill as a diplomat, theologian and administrator, as well as a clear consciousness that the Bishop of Rome was the supreme pontiff with whom all other bishops must be in union if they were to be Catholics.

Leo the Great was also a Roman. He ruled from 440 to 461. Many are familiar with the heroic painting of Pope Leo, with tiara and staff, surrounded by a galaxy of monks and priests, parlaying with the fierce Attila the Hun, and persuading him not to sack Rome, which would mean murder, arson, looting, rape: utter desolation.

Leo did persuade the Hun to leave peaceably, by agreeing to send an annual tribute to Attila from the Romans. The emperor and his armies had been helpless to protect the Romans. Leo, without an army, but with grace and persuasiveness, saved Rome and the Romans. You can well imagine how the stocks of the pope went up with the people.

There is a remarkable parallel between Pope Leo the Great and our present Pope John Paul II, between St. Leo's times and our own. St. Leo became pope when the Church was in

confusion. There were heretical priests and congregations that had infiltrated the Church. Leo controlled heresies in the western Church, demanding explicit profession of the Catholic faith from the Pelagians, who had wormed their way into the Catholic community.

Pope John Paul II is strong in his expectations that Catholics, lay and clerical, should hold with the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. Leo intervened in the doctrinal controversy in the East. The Council of Chalcedon (451) was debating the nature of Christ. The matter was settled by Leo's famous letter declaring that "Christ is both true God and true man." The bishops of Chalcedon assented, saying, "Peter has spoken through Leo."

Leo met with Attila the Hun. John Paul has been meeting with modern Attilas, the communists, and with difficulty has safeguarded as best he could the Church, the liberties of the Poles and, by his declarations, human dignity and liberty everywhere. Leo was a great teacher and administrator. John Paul is equally so in a much more complex world and diverse Church, using every modern means: addresses, TV, visitations to the people in many nations.

About four years ago, I stopped at the Trappist Monastery in Piffard, near Geneseo. A young man, about 26, was visiting there. I said, "Are you a priest on retreat?"

"No," he replied, "I am just visiting different religious houses to find what my vocation may be."

"Why did you become a Catholic?" I inquired.

"Because of the doctrinal confusion of the Episcopal church," he answered.

"Hmpf. I don't see why we should be such an attraction, with the confrontations among the theologians in the Catholic Church," I asserted.

He shot back a look of dismissal of my objection and said, "But we have the pope!"

The voice of the bishops of Chalcedon spoke in this young man: "Peter is speaking, through John Paul II."