

C-J Opinions

Writer expresses concern for Father Curran, raises questions about basis of moral theology

To the Editor:

I am writing to share my concern for Father Curran on his work in moral theology. My heart goes out to him personally because I believe that he is looking to help us find some answers and understanding of the human destruction in life today. However, it (his work) has raised some questions for me personally.

My first question is, is there such a thing as moral theology? Second, what ever happened to sin? Third, are we going too far in one direction today and missing some basic principles in God's word?

Our Catholic community is already in a setback; can we truly allow it to get worse? Catholics are moving into other faith communities in order to grow into a new faith dimension of Christ alive. Our family life has become anything but the community God intended it to be. Are Catholic schools merely private institutions today because we as a community are losing our way? Do we really know the meaning of the word Christianity? If so, we know that the life of Jesus is the example to follow — not just the clergy — but for each and every one of us.

I personally feel that it is time to break down the barriers and walls holding each and every one of us into uncertainty. Are we not a nation living the sin of society today? Does my personal sin not affect another?

It appears to me that we as a community of believers need to look at where we are at. Is it not time to get back to basics — the meaning

of what the word of God tells us? Do we not need to look at salvation and repentance more clearly? We need teachers truly dedicated to living the word of God. I believe that we need to know who we really are in Christ in order to deal with the pressures and solutions of society. Is there no longer a right and wrong, good and evil, self-discipline? We need to help ourselves so that we may help others and especially our young people. We need to truly seek Christ and His Word so that we can develop values in human life once again. There is a great need in our own country to see Christ revealed today. We need liberation in Christ, not society. We need to prepare ourselves to meet our brothers and carry them to Christ. We need to relearn as a nation the purity of loving, of communicating and of caring for one another.

I believe that there is such beauty and tradition in our Catholic faith that we may need to go back and pick up some guidelines that we may have lost. How we as a community deal with the problems of society will determine the future of our young people. Let's not put all the pressure on clergy; they need us and we need them. All of us are searching for the truth.

My love and prayers go out to the theologians who have the heavy responsibility of teaching us the meaning of the gospel. May God's grace be with us all.

**Nancy Telech
Horseheads**

Disputes 'mainstream' agreement with Curran

To the Editor:

Father Charles Curran's statement, "My theological positions represent the mainstream of Catholic theology and are accepted by the majority of Catholic theologians today," begs for response.

The mainstream of Catholic theology, if it be Catholic, proceeds from the God-given authority of the Magisterium, that is, the pope and the bishops acting together. "...The college or body of bishops has ... no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head, whose primatial authority, let it be added, over all, whether pastors or faithful, remains in its integrity. For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, namely, and as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered... And even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* ... his supreme teaching authority is to be acknowledged with respect, and sincere assent be given to decisions made by him, conformably with his

manifest mind and intention, which is made known principally either by the character of the documents in question, or by the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated..." (Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, pp. 375-379).

Earlier Church documents; the *Documents of Vatican II*; the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, 1968; *Vatican Declaration on Sexual Ethics*, 1975; *Familiaris Consortia*, 1981; *Guidelines for Sex Education*, 1983; *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, 1983; and the many addresses of John Paul II on marriage, the family and the transmission of life clearly teach the bona fide Catholic position.

While Father Curran's theological positions may be accepted by many Catholic theologians, it is my opinion that his positions which are being questioned are not authentically Catholic.

**Jeanne D. Sweeney
Nob Hill
Rochester**

Writer considers coverage of Curran case 'predictable'

To the Editor:

Some things are so predictable, especially in the Curran case. Both Father Lawlor and Ms. Barbehenn in the *Courier-Journal* of March 20 gush over (Father) Curran and his support. Predictably, they shut off all opposition by announcing that support for Curran is a "breath of the Spirit," and his supporters are "objective" and "have a level of maturity." Obviously, the opposite must apply to those who dare to differ with (Bishop) Clark and Curran.

Much was made of the people of different parishes who signed petitions of support. No mention was made of the availability of petitions advocating another viewpoint. How much this sounds like those non-democratic countries of the world where candidates get 100 percent support because no opposition is allowed. Maybe this is a new fascism in the Church.

Predictably, after a period of time, this furor will subside and the Church will stumble onward with fewer vocations, smaller attendance and less support.

**Donald C. Ninestine
East North Street
Geneva**

EDITOR'S NOTE: Just to clarify. The *Courier-Journal* of March 20 did not cover opposition to Father Curran because at the time of publication, none had yet formally emerged. The organization *Concerned Catholics of the Diocese of Rochester*, which recently placed a petition advertisement in the *Democrat and Chronicle*, had requested information on running the same ad in this week's *Courier-Journal*. Although we were open to the idea, the organization itself has elected not to run the ad.

Furor should be redirected

To the Editor:

The furor in the diocese over the Curran situation is reaching epic proportions. It would be great if people would become equally aroused over the 4,100 babies aborted in this country every day. Father Curran has his life and the right to choose his course; the innocents have no choice!

**Josephine Coy
Legion Circle
Rochester**

Letter to cardinal urges emphasizing unity, truth rather than overzealous pursuit of 'right'

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a copy of a letter written to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Dear Cardinal Ratzinger:

"Earthly rulers lord it over their peoples. Yet it cannot be that way with you. Let the greater among you be as the junior, the leader as the servant" (Luke 22).

I could not but feel a twinge of sadness as these words were proclaimed this past Palm Sunday. Once again, we celebrate the greatest liberating event in the course of human history, and we are faced once more with our inability to solve our problems by Jesus' command of love and understanding. We are so worried at times, I think, about being right that we lose sight of the human and ever-developing side of our nature. It seems that we have no room to grow, but that everything has been cast in concrete forever.

In the present turmoil over dissent and the need to struggle with the uncertainties of human behavior and relationships, it seems that the leaders of Holy Mother Church in their zeal to see things clearly fixed have lashed out to stop what is still questionable. Guidelines we will always need; absolute answers to individual human moral choices

in ever human act we will never have. That fact is born out in the 2,000 years of tradition that we as priests have exercised in the sacrament of penance.

I ask all those involved in this controversy over the teaching integrity of Father Charles Curran to consider seriously the events of Holy Week and, in the light of freedom that Jesus won for all people now resident in every human person through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to institute a fair and open process where the questioned issues may be debated on their merits alone. Certainly the right to dissent is absolutely necessary if we are to continue to make the gospel a living force in the changing mores and philosophies of humanity.

In Christ, I hope and pray that we can find a way to become what Jesus Christ died for: not right but one! May God help all of us to discern His will and give to Dr. Charles Curran and the thousands of Catholic teachers throughout the world that he represents the ability to bring our Church and, if possible, humanity with it to the "truth."

**Father Paul J. Freemesser
Church of the Annunciation
Norton Street
Rochester**

Thanks bishop for statement of support for Father Curran

To the Editor:

I wish to thank Bishop Clark for his statement in the *Courier-Journal* of March 13, 1986, regarding Father Charles Curran. This statement evidenced a great deal of respect for Father Curran as an individual and as a responsible theologian, while at the same time, expressed the hope that an agreement will be made "which will allow Father Curran to continue serving the Church as a theologian and will promote resolution of theological differences through the normal channels of writing and debate."

I wish to commend Father Daniel Tormey and the "Friends of Charles Curran" for their well-organized informal session at St. Anthony's Church on March 21, 1986. My hope is that many will avail themselves of the opportunities to become more informed on the theological positions taken by Father Curran and to understand the legitimate possibility of dissent from non-infallible teaching by the Church authority.

**Sister Elizabeth A. Hughes, RSM
Prospect St.
Avon**

On the Right Side

Father Paul J. Cuddy



The Father Curran Rhubarb

Q. What do you think of the contestation between the Holy See and Father Curran?

A. It has puzzling facets. Not the least is the excited enthusiasm for Father Curran's claim to reject Catholic teaching, and the relative silence of those who should be sturdily supporting our Holy Father and the Church. No one questions his personal virtue, but if you had a bridge to build, would you hire an engineer who has a nice personality but is a questionable engineer? John Paul II has a nice personality, but is a better theological engineer. Father Curran teaches some pernicious doctrines.

Q. Like what?

A. 1) Abortion: The Church declares this an "unspeakable crime." Father Curran teaches one can be justified in taking truly human life "for a value commensurate with life itself." His disciples praise how he "nuances" some hard realities. In nuanced language, what is meant by "a value commensurate with life?" Does compassion extend to the unborn baby?

2) Homosexuality: On the television program, "Crossfire" (March 14), Father Curran teaches copulation is normally heterosexual. But some men and women are so constituted that their sexual attraction is toward their own sex. He nuances his teaching nicely by saying that they should not be casual or promiscuous in sexual behavior, but rather, it is permitted to find a compatible partner of the same sex and form a "union of love which is permanent."

The Church never condemns a person whose being is homosexually constituted. But the Church and scripture cannot condone this "permanent union of love." A platonic relationship, yes. A carnal relationship, no.

3) Premarital sex: "Only in very rare situations would I justify premarital sex." Well, that's carefully nuanced. Chastity and purity are integral virtues in the Catholic Church. That statement of his satisfies neither the Church nor the Planned Parenthood outfit.

Space limitation does not permit extensive discussion here on teachings about the Magisterium (the teaching Catholic Church), contraception, etc., but these are also a concern of the Holy See.

Q. Is anyone for the Holy Father?

A. Archbishop Hickey of Washington, D.C., wrote: "It is the right and duty of the Holy Father and the bishops in communion with him throughout the world to hand on the full and authentic teaching of the Church and to ensure that it is presented with fidelity in our parishes and institutions of learning." Nuanced rejection of the teaching of the Church hardly fits with the Holy Father and with the bishops in communion with him.

On the March 14 TV program, "Crossfire," liberal Tom Braden and conservative Senator Dornan bated Fathers Curran and Micelli. Senator Dornan asked Father Curran, "Why don't you leave the Catholic Church and form a church of your own?" He replied pleasantly, "Because I wish to belong to a big Church." By "big," he explained, he meant a church that could hold many different points of view. A charisma of the Catholic Church is unity of faith. Father Curran likes to say, "Unity in what is necessary. Freedom in what is doubtful. Charity in everything." Not the Church, but Father Curran, is having trouble with what he considers doubtful. There is no charity in afflicting the faithful with contradictions.

In 1967, I made my retreat at the Jesuit Retreat House in Auriesville. The retreat master was Father Dineen, then, director of Jesuit Novitiate at Shrub Oak. He told me, "The most insidious danger to the Church we will have is 'The Third Way.' In this, Catholics will not externally leave the Church. But they will remain within the Church, accepting what they will, the morality which they find satisfying, the Mass and the Sacraments as the Spirit moves them — but only tenuously remaining part of the institutional Church." What a sorrow that his prophecy is coming to pass.

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.