

C-J Opinions

Reduce deficit without further harm to poor

To the Editor:

There is much talk of deficit reduction in our cherry-blossomed city on the Potomac. However, the actions of the administration and some in the Congress lead us to question whether deficit reduction is indeed the object or whether it will again be used as a guise to continue the dismantling and disassembling of those federal programs that mark us as a humane, civilized society.

The federal deficit climbed to over \$200 billion in 1985. This deficit, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, is the result of enormous increases in military spending since 1981 and substantial reductions in federal revenue intake, stemming from newly created and expanded tax loopholes that primarily benefitted the already wealthy and large corporations.

One is inclined to suspect a hidden agenda when the Reagan administration sends to Congress a budget for 1987 that assaults human investment programs once again rather than addressing the identified causes of the deficit. Among the programs targeted for elimination or deep cuts are: vocational/adult education grants; soil conservation services; grants for programs to fight child abuse; aging services; airport subsidies; interstate highway construction and repair programs; rural water and sewer grants; housing assistance for the elderly and handicapped; child nutrition programs; SSI; student aid; food stamps; Medicaid; Medicare; dislocated worker assistance; etc. The president has chosen to eliminate or reduce a long list of programs that enhance the quality of life for us all.

Since 1981, budget cuts were directed almost exclusively to programs for the poor and vulnerable. Because these programs were not the cause of the deficit, cutting them did nothing to reduce it. But those cuts did inflict

more suffering on those living in poverty and helped to widen the gap between rich and poor in the United States.

Our silence makes us partners in this duplicity. It is time for us to call for: no further cuts in human investment programs; deep reductions in military spending; and the closing of loopholes to retrieve lost tax revenues in a just and equitable manner. New York congressmen and senators need to hear this message from us now.

Kathleen M. Dubel
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Emphasize praying the rosary during May, month of Mary

To the Editor:

In May 13, 1917, the Blessed Mother appeared to the children at Fatima.

At that time she told the children that war was punishment for sin, and that we must say the rosary and return to God.

We have not done so, and now we find American citizens imprisoned, kidnapped and murdered throughout the globe.

It seems to me it is time for America to get down on its knees and ask God's protection on us.

May has always been the month of May devotions to the Blessed Mother. Lately we seem too busy.

I think every church in the diocese should make a special effort to say the rosary at least once a week publicly, and invite all members of the parish to attend.

We need peace NOW, and that is the way Our Lady said it could be obtained.

Mrs. H. Pikuet
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Rochester

Attract candidates to vocations by showing character of growing religious communities

To the Editor:

Much alarm about the shortage of priests and the sharp decline in the number of entrants into religious life is expressed with attention to shallow influence such as society, culture and celibacy. Vocational administrators at the highest levels fail to: 1) focus on growing, fruitful, religious communities, 2) present the overwhelming evidence for characterizing the differences between growing and dying religious communities, and 3) provide authentic Catholic theology on the evangelical counsels — chastity, poverty and obedience — on celibacy and humility.

The rapid growth in the number of sisters in Mother Teresa's community and of priests in the Legionnaires of Christ are well-known. Relative to the number of professed sisters as 100 percent, the Daughters of St. Paul have 43 percent of postulants and novices in formation; the Carmelite Sisters of the Sacred Heart have 15 percent; Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters in Nigeria have 74 percent; and the Oblates of the Virgin Mary have 129 percent. The Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, has a growing number of priests and young school-teaching sisters.

In the growing communities, the young find their mission to love, serve and give witness to God in complete submission to those whom the Lord has sent to govern His Church. These communities put prayer first, live a genuine frugality and the obedience of love — a supernatural life, rather than one of merely natural principles. They are united and have theological validity rather than

being polarized and secularized. They have a uniform garb which identifies their mission of eternal life and love for the world while being apart from the world.

We need bishops with the eloquence, fire and wisdom of St. Ambrose to teach chastity and celibacy. His sermons were so powerful, attractive and compelling that mothers kept their daughters away from him, lest they become nuns.

We need holy priests like Father Tansi whose Nigerian protégés comprised more than one-half of the diocesan priesthood. One of them states, "You knew he was near God ... I wanted to be like him ... nobody preached to us to be a priest."

Those blessed with an authentic Catholic vocation to consecrated life as a priest, brother or sister are being called in a higher state of grace by divine love. The Holy Spirit of truth and divine love draws them into a supernatural marriage with the divine spouse of their souls. The love of God transcends humanity, time, space and natural concerns about chastity and celibacy. Spouses of natural marriage are called to spiritually mature to the same supernatural states of grace. As they grow in divine love and become as little children, they are transformed to the transcendence of holy priests and religious. In seeing through the veil of flesh, they see Jesus in others and with that angels know why there are no marriages in heaven.

F. H. Mitay
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'Distressing to read' of Church persecution

To the Editor:

It was distressful to read in a letter to the Courier-Journal (Opinion, March 6: "Papal encyclical provides most cogent analysis of propaganda used by communist infiltrators") of the persecution of the Catholic Church in Nicaragua and the lack of support by the American Catholic hierarchy for Cardinal Obando y Bravo. Also to read in other publications about the communist Sandinista government's harassment of religious of all faiths, closings of church-operated schools and censorship of religious sermons.

Why is it the Courier-Journal and other Catholic newspapers do not take the lead in educating the American public concerning the degradation of freedom in Nicaragua? We certainly will not see this information published with proper emphasis in the Gannett press.

James R. Law
White Birch Circle
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EDITOR'S NOTE: The Courier-Journal rarely has means of directly reporting the

affairs of Nicaragua. We do, however, carry articles from National Catholic News Service whenever pertinent information is provided. We have, in fact, published several NC articles on Cardinal Obando y Bravo, and also covered speeches on Nicaragua which were presented within the diocese.

May Church never grow to point of embracing error

To the Editor:

We are being repeatedly reminded that we belong to a "growing" Church and must be open to new ideas. The point is, are these "new ideas" that are being espoused conducive to a growth in virtue and holiness in the Church, or rather to the growth of the secular humanistic values of the world?

May Holy Mother Church never "grow" to the point where she embraces error.

Arlene O'Connor
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Retreat discussions help parents persevere in teaching children to resist societal pressures

To the Editor:

I recently went on my first retreat, to the Notre Dame retreat house in Canandaigua. It was a wonderful experience. I recommend retreat to anyone who feels their outlook on life needs polishing.

On Saturday retreat participants attended conferences where the gifted priests at Notre Dame gave us insights into our roles as Christians. After each conference we broke up into groups to discuss with one another the ideas they'd presented. Participating in a group discussion was optional, and I opted to attend. There we shared personal experiences, problems we all face, and suggested to each other ways to deal with those situations as mature Christians. Later a member of each small group reported their thoughts to the whole.

A point brought out as part of one group's report was that as parents they wanted their children to do what was right, but they didn't want to make their kids feel like they were different, like an odd-ball, before their peers. I made no response then but feel compelled to do so now.

As parents I do not feel we need to apologize to our children for asking that they be different if it is going to make them be better, stronger, healthier than their peers. At the same time, our children should not feel they have to apologize to their peers in any way when they say "No" to the peer pressure exerted on them.

There is a book called *The Edge*. It is loaded with quotes of some of the world's great achievers. I have taken some of these quotes and plastered them around my seventh-grade classroom as subtle guideposts for my students. One by Joe Paterno states: "We need people who influence their peers and who cannot be detoured from their

convictions by peers who do not have the courage to have any convictions."

Another, by Andre Gide, reads: "It is better to be hated for what you are than loved for what you are not." Nowhere does it say that it is easy, just better.

Another is: "You must stand for something or you'll fall for anything."

Just before leaving for the weekend retreat, my husband and I received reports from our oldest daughter's teachers regarding her work. Some were positive, but more said things like, "She needs to work harder," or "She could have a 90 average but..." Comments like these make us, her parents — also teachers, smolder. One teacher who also mentioned the inconsistency of her work habits also wrote the following: "I am also very impressed with the manner in which she conducts her social life as opposed to the way her peers conduct themselves. She seems to be developing a healthy, inquisitive attitude."

I would love to see her get a report card with the 90 average that her teacher feels she is capable of getting. Being an English teacher, I could wring her neck when she puts off writing her book report until the last minute; however, I can sleep a little more soundly at night knowing that someone has observed that she is able to conduct herself in a positive manner that is out of step with that of her peers.

I don't know what has given her that edge. A friend would say, "It pays to say your prayers," and don't be afraid to say "No" with confidence and love and without regrets or apologies when you know it is the best answer for you and those you love.

Karen P. Donnelly
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On the Right Side Father Paul J. Cuddy



After my first priestly assignment (three years in Clyde), Bishop Kearney sent me to Immaculate Conception parish, Ithaca, to serve under Father William Byrne, one-time principal of Aquinas. While pastor of an Ontario parish, Father Byrne had read all the works of Cardinal Newman. He was very meticulous and organized.

Father Kress was newly ordained, and he and I arrived July 5, 1938, to take the place of Fathers John Brill and Gerald Kelly. Father Don Cleary was chaplain of Cornell, and was in residence at the rectory.

It was the custom years ago to bring Holy Communion to the sick and the housebound on the first Friday of the month, in honor of the Sacred Heart. Father Kress and I each had been assigned our "route" by the pastor.

One cold, wintry day, I arrived at the home of Katherine, on steep Cliff Street, which leads to the present Tompkins Hospital. She was a spritely old lady who had a bad heart condition that kept her from going to Mass, and she cheerfully related how her father and mother and uncle and other relatives had all died suddenly of heart attacks, and she would, too. Actually, many years later, she did.

On this particular First Friday, I rang the bell. Katherine, who was the soul of correctness, met the Blessed Sacrament and the priest at the door with a lighted blessed candle, escorted us to a little table altar which she had beautifully set up, with two burning blessed candles, holy water, a glass of water and a spoon, a crucifix and a nice linen napkin. I placed the Blessed Sacrament on the little altar and began the prayers: "Peace to this house, and to Katherine who lives here," as she piously knelt for the holy rite.

As was the custom, she made her monthly confession, received Holy Communion, answered the prayers with devotion, and when all was finished, she stood up and assisted me with my overcoat. She seemed bursting with curiosity. Then she said, "I wasn't expecting you. Father Byrne was here last week, and he said that Father Kress would be bringing me Holy Communion."

"Well," I replied, "he changed his mind and decided to leave the schedule

as it is."

Then with obvious satisfaction, she exclaimed, "Well, I'm glad!" And as I was getting ready to make a bow from the hip, she continued: "It's so hard to break a new one in."

The famous English novelist, Graham Greene, went to Mexico in the thirties, shortly after he became a Catholic. (One thinks of Greene and Waugh and R. Knox and C.C. Martindale, SJ, and wonders: "Why the influx of intellectuals into the Church 50 years ago, and just a dribble today?")

In the thirties, the Church was undergoing a vicious persecution by the Mexican government. Churches were closed. Priests were imprisoned and many were executed. Some just ran away. The religious garb of priests and sisters was forbidden by law. Mass, baptisms, religious marriages and Holy Communion were all contraband. From his time in Mexico, Greene wrote *The Power and the Glory*, later made into a movie, "The Fugitive."

The book in novel form told of the persecution: a whole state priestless, excepting for one priest. He was in constant fear of capture and death. He developed a drinking problem, became coarse and weak. He wanted to leave for a place of safety, but was impelled by his priesthood to remain, hiding, giving the sacraments secretly, though terrified by his probable capture. When villagers, scandalized by his weaknesses, tried to get him to leave, he gave a blunt response: without him they would have no Mass, no Communion, no confessions, no sacraments. They would be priestless.

The book concludes with his capture and execution. As the shots from the rifles ripped through his body, a knock was made secretly at a village door. A stranger had arrived, a new priest to carry on. *The Power and the Glory* is worth re-reading.

It may well be that we priests sometimes are a problem: from temperament or personality or weakness or stupidity. But most priests I know give generous service. The people are served because we are impelled by our priestly vocation to carry on the love of Christ, His Church and His people. We may be problems at times, but we are priceless instruments of the Lord.



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