

C-J Opinions

Saddened by student's view of Libya bombing

To the Editor:

Saddening was the DeSales student's impudence in supporting the displacement of U.S. hostility on non-combatative persons in Libya (C-J, Echo, May 1). The bombing of innocents in a retaliatory strike may never be justified.

The founders saw the settling of America as the exodus to the Promised Land. This nation was thought endowed with a messianic mission. As a result, we have occasionally succumbed to temptations of grandeur and superiority in the political arena. More than once, egotism masked as patriotism has thrived at the expense of others: the Hawaiian government was toppled and the land annexed; the Philippines colonized; Africans enslaved; Native Americans killed; among other triumphant gestures. Our forefathers "killed the prophets" while our generous hearts are currently lured into supplying headstone and gravesite, *Matthew 23:29-32*.

Our administration, with misguided zeal, proceeded in duplicity under the double banner of justice and peace. In utilizing the extinction of bystanders as an example for our opponent, the government betrayed a latent terrorist mentality. Justice is not served but denigrated by exaggerated retribution. Christ opposed the *lex talionis* as a compromise due to hardheartedness — see Moses' lament in Deuteronomy 10:16-19. He viewed it as a "distortion of justice." What place has an "escalated response" in Christianity when it supercedes the confines of theology? Jesus' mission was to reform a mitigated covenant, adding mercy to justice, prudence to zeal, lamb and wolf cohabitating. In this isolated incident, we've indicated to God and to the world our facility

to mimic our aggressors. How frightening to reduce democracy to a disassociate personality of Moslem fanaticism.

The hierarchy of France in 1960 anticipated the direction of modern warfare: "Whichever side perpetrates them, acts of terrorism, summary executions, and measures of reprisal against innocent persons are all condemned by God. Even to assure the victory of legitimate right and the triumph of a cause believed to be just, no one can even be allowed to have recourse to means which are intrinsically wrong."

Another concern is the propensity to detach behavior from held ethical principles. The result is our succumbing to "systematic atheism," making temporal existence, status quo and self-governance ends unto themselves — see *Gaudium et Spes I,1,2*. Every breath taken become a god justified at any cost. The death of Jesus the Christ for the "kingdom not of this world" assumes a degree of in-vainness. Beneath the veneer of the "common good" lies the animal impulse of self-preservation as primary motive. "The people of our time," the Vatican Council fathers commented, "prize freedom very highly and strive eagerly for it. Yet they often cherish it improperly, as if it gave them leave to do anything they like, even when it is evil." *Gaudium et Spes I,1,17*.

The Christian faith is constantly sifted in the realization that too often men, barely having left puberty, are main players in global affairs. Either we are trapped in a cosmic sanitarium run by the inmates or there is a providential Other.

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Awaits 'word from the mountain' on Curran

To the Editor:

I have been waiting patiently since March 20 for word from the mountain as to just what is Bishop Clark's real position. Now the word has come, not from the mountain but from the seashore — from E. Leo McManus, English Department, Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, Fla. (C-J Opinion: "Bishop Clark is image of 'circumspect bishop.'" May 15).

McManus claims Bishop Clark is usually "irenic," which means the stating or using of principles, seeking to promote Christian unity by magnifying the essentials and minimizing the non-essentials of theology. McManus' appraisal seemed to be an academic flight to the roundhouse to avoid being pushed into a corner.

Cardinal Ratzinger of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith proposes that "the crisis of the Church today is before all else, a crisis of priests and religious orders. The situation of the priest is singular, alien to modern society — a function, a role that is not based on the consent of the majority, but on the representation of 'another,' who lets a man share his authority, appears as something incomprehensible. Under these conditions, there is a great temptation to pass from the supernatural 'authority of representation,' the hallmark of Catholic priesthood, to a much more comprehensible

category, because it is only human and besides more in consonance with modern culture."

An interviewer asked the cardinal: "So ... it is your view that the priesthood is being exposed to a cultural pressure that would have it pass from a 'sacral' role to a 'social' role in line with the 'democratic' mechanism of the consensus formation from below that marks the 'secular, democratic, pluralistic society.'" Cardinal Ratzinger's answer was, "something of the kind."

The questions which now come to my mind are: is Bishop Clark really irenic? Is he a 'sacral' representative of Christ or a social director? Last but not least, does he place his irenic duties ahead of his duties as teacher of the official doctrine of the Church?

Unless our bishop — our official teacher — tells us in plain English, irenically if he wishes, the rest of us will be forced to draw our own conclusions, editor's notes notwithstanding.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Rhetoric notwithstanding, we believe Bishop Clark clearly enunciated his position in his column, Along the Way, in our edition of May 8. Perhaps it bears rereading.

Catholic literature sought by health workers in India

To the Editor:

I am one of the members of a group that regularly visits sick people in hospitals and elderly people who are not able to move

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes readers' opinions on issues related to the Church. Letters must bear the writers' signatures, full addresses and telephone numbers. They must be **brief, typed (double-spaced, please) and no longer than 1 1/2 pages.**

Letters should be mailed to: Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

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.

around. We like to take them Catholic literature, but it is scarce over here, and we cannot always afford to purchase as much as we would like. There remains much to be done in the task of bringing them into the Catholic faith and practice, and also to make them Catholics in all respects.

May I also request you to be good enough to publish my appeal in your "Opinion" column with a request to your generous readers to send their used copies of the Courier-Journal, other Catholic reading materials and pious articles of all kinds? We also welcome gift subscriptions to get the Courier-Journal straight away from the publisher. We find the Courier-Journal good reading material for those who are ill because the articles are usually good and easy to read.

We pray our Lord to give you all the graces to do more for the spreading of our Lord's kingdom.

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Tax reform must restore progressive system

To the Editor:

Early in our history as a nation, Oliver Wendell Holmes, chief justice of the Supreme Court, wrote: "Taxes are what we pay for a civilized society." If we enter the debate about tax reform from this perspective, the principles of progressivity and equity are key to the discussion.

A civilized society does not impose burdens on those already burdened. The federal income tax system was designed to be progressive — that is, those with the greatest ability to pay should pay higher rates than those with less ability. Those members of our society who need all their earnings to provide food, shelter, health care, etc., for their families should not be expected to pay a large percentage of their income in taxes. Yet, since 1981, the working poor have seen their taxes more than doubled, while wealthy individuals and profitable corporations have enjoyed a decline in their effective tax rate. It is not enough to assume that rising yachts will lift all dinghies. Any tax reform enacted by Congress this year must replace this trickle-down philosophy.

To restore progressivity to the tax system, taxable income should be broadly defined. Upper-income persons and profitable corporations should not be able to shelter large parts of their income from taxation because low- and moderate-income earners will have to pay more. Tax rates should be higher for those with more income, and the point at which people begin to pay taxes should be above the poverty line, since this is the floor of income needed for basic survival. Consumption taxes must be opposed. Such taxes place a heavy burden on those who spend all or much of their income on basic needs.

Many profitable corporations use the tax laws to avoid paying their fair share. A recent study indicates that 128 major, profitable corporations paid no federal income tax between 1981 and 1983, and some even received rebates. These corporate tax breaks are not free. This year they may cost the U.S.

Treasury \$120 billion! Providing tax breaks for corporations reduces the amount we have to spend on the social needs of our people. In addition, these loopholes are negatively affecting our economy by encouraging business acquisitions and mergers; unproductive, unnecessary investments; and the transfer of money into unproductive tax shelters. Citizens doubt the fairness or equity of this kind of tax system.

Taxes should raise sufficient revenue to pay for social needs, maintain the quality of life for all in our communities, shrink the gap between rich and poor, and encourage behavior that benefits the whole of our society. We must call on Senators Moynihan, and D'Amato to settle for no less, as tax reform moves through the Senate.

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Seek causes of terrorist acts, not retribution as solution

To the Editor:

The recent bombing of Libya by the United States was a deplorable act. The answer to terrorism is not the killing of Libyan civilians, which makes us no better than the terrorists themselves, and is sure to only increase their rage and frustration. Rather, we as a nation need to examine the things in ourselves which lead to that rage: our cultural arrogance, our exploitation of Third World nations, our support of the corrupt and unjust. We need to seek a peaceful way of preventing terrorism. Of course terrorism is utterly wrong and must be condemned, but it springs from a very deep hatred of the United States. We need to ask ourselves what we have done to earn that hatred.

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Editor Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



Ireland tours and others

Q: How many times have you been to Ireland?

A: Just escorting groups from the diocese, 14 times. But my first venture there was in 1945, when I had a nine-day leave from the Air Force in France and went over to Ireland for seven days, and had many funny things happen. One I recall: rooms were hard to come by after World War II, and visitors swarmed to Dublin for relaxation and food which was so scarce, especially in England. I was put up in a rooming house, and for some time during the night I had a roommate, a Canadian officer who had been greatly out on the town. In the morning he disappeared. The chamber maid said slyly: "When he found he was rooming with a priest he had a great start, and left right away." My first tour group was in March, 1973.

Q: How did you get into this tour apostolate?

A: Curiously enough it goes back to Father Henry Atwell, who was editor of the Courier at the time. He was an ultra-liberal in theology and published outlandish stuff from radical theologians, rarely giving space to Pope Paul VI or the non-radical theologians: I was outraged and entered into an acrimonious controversy with him. He had a sense of justice and finally wrote: "There are some who think as you do. Why not write a weekly column?" So this column was born October 13, 1967, thanks to Father Atwell.

Q: What has that to do with Ireland tours?

A: Six months after this column began, Bishop Kearney assigned Father Atwell to be pastor of Avon. Father Richard Tormey, brother of Father Dan Tormey of Strong Memorial Hospital chaplaincy, came from the chaplaincy of Cornell University to become the new editor. The On The Right Side column continued. Monsignor Pete Randall was somewhere behind the scenes in finance at the Courier. Tony Costello was

business manager. After Christmas in 1971, Tony Costello phoned St. James Mercy Hospital in Hornell, where I was chaplain, and with persuasive cordiality said: "Father, how would you like a free trip to the Holy Land?" In my innocence I thought this was a reward for five years writing the On The Right Side column, which gave solace to many distressed and unhappy Catholics. It turned out that the Courier was starting a series of tours and needed a tour director. Anyway, I said "Yes," and so began a long series of wonderful tours.

Q: Why always Ireland?

A: Besides Ireland there have been many other places the past dozen years: Mexico, Hawaii (where I visited Father Damien's leper colony on Molokai), Africa, China, Japan and most of Europe. But Ireland remains a favorite. Why? Some is ethnic, but many of our people with no roots in Ireland are just interested in the country. The program is always a good mixture: interesting places; comfortable hotels; good guides, which is important to really understand what we see; superb entertainment; and the congeniality of the people on tour who quickly form a kind of family. Daily Mass is a great bonus for many. The Irish people are a curious combination of seriousness and hilarity, of piety and irreverence, and of generosity, which has made them great missionaries but capable of vindictiveness. All these aspects make the tours attractive. All the Irish speak English, but one often has to listen intently to understand.

Q: Are there any tours to Ireland planned for the future?

A: Yes. Several who have gone before are asking for another, and some who have been wanting to go for years have expressed interest. We are working on an especially attractive tour for October 11, and Mary Louise Garvin, who has been to Ireland 17 times, is assisting in the program.