

C-J Opinions

Writer asks columnist to channel fears toward improving nuclear plants

To the Editor:

I was a little sad and disappointed when I read Victor Bartolotta's article on nuclear energy (A Closer Look, July 3). I had hoped that if the Rochester Catholic press tackled this important matter it would do so with skill and insight worthy of our great Catholic intellectual tradition. Instead you have substituted hearsay, superstition and boogey-man fears for facts. Before we get into a full-fledged campaign to shut down the Ginna Nuclear Plant, I would like to offer a few thoughts about nuclear energy. Exclude nuclear weapons. Incidentally, I live well within 10 miles of Ginna.

Let's consider a few things about nuclear power. Atoms are not an invention of man. Atoms are the way in which God the Creator arranged all material matter. And if atoms are split — like in the Ginna plant — they generate vast amounts of energy. If they are put together — like in the sun — they also generate energy. In fact, God powers His universe with the sun, which is the greatest nuclear reactor in the universe. I believe that when God conceived of and created the power of the atom He meant man to use it. He certainly didn't forbid such use. In His providence, he foresaw that in the year 1986

there would be 5 billion people on this earth. They would need large amounts of energy. So He fixed things so that man could unravel the mystery of the atom about this time.

The challenge is for man to achieve this potential. Nuclear energy has problems — every new discovery does. We solve these problems by study and hard work, not by giving up. We have come a long way; we have about 100 operating electric nuclear plants in this country. There are about 100 more under construction. Our Navy has 100 nuclear-powered submarines. These can tell us a lot. One hundred and fifty men shut themselves into one of these subs and go down under water and stay there for several months without surfacing. All this time they live in close proximity with the sub's operating nuclear reactor. How is this possible if nuclear reactors are so dangerous? Nobody will ever put the genie of nuclear power back into the box. In addition to the U.S. achievement, nuclear power has been built in many foreign countries — Germany, Russia, England, Spain and Denmark. France generates 60 percent of its electricity this way.

It has always seemed to me that Catholic thinking should first of all agree with reality.

It must be true. It must be free of superstition and boogey-man fears. Anti-nuclear propaganda uses both. Catholic thinking should lead mankind forward to a richer life; it shouldn't lead men back to the Dark Ages.

If Catholic thinkers want a worthwhile cause, I suggest that they work on the improvement of nuclear power. This would be something worthy of the name Catholic. Come on, Mr. Bartolotta, put aside your superstitions and boogey-man fears. Your talents can be better used elsewhere.

You close your article with an expression of concern for the safety of your young daughter. I am going to close this letter with a prayer that your daughter will never be injured in any way by an auto. I have enough confidence in Ginna to say that the ordinary providence of God will protect her from any errant radiation. I am afraid that it will take a special providence to protect her from errant motorists.

Gerard E. Keenahan
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Victor Bartolotta Jr.

A Closer Look



Indigestion

The main course is bullets, well-done, which the U.S. government plans to serve to Nicaraguans. By voting for \$100 million in aid for the Nicaraguan contras, the House of Representatives has assured the world of one thing — Nicaraguans will experience extreme indigestion.

The people there are hungry, but what America intends to serve them is not good for them and will not help them grow. The House's actions will not satisfy the need Nicaraguans have for nourishment, nor are they anything like Jesus' act of feeding the hungry multitudes with loaves of bread and fish.

The facts on both sides of the issue are distressing. Neither the United States nor Nicaragua deserves the best in cuisine.

Nicaragua is guilty of suppressing human rights by censoring the press, ousting Catholic Bishop Vega and — according to the International League for Human Rights — torturing prisoners. The United States is guilty of violating Nicaragua's sovereignty by arming rebels who kill civilians and rape women.

The U.S. bishops have already come out against any more military aid to the region. The bishops have repeatedly asked all parties, right or wrong, to sit down face-to-face and talk instead of shoot.

Meanwhile the Nicaraguan people are hungry, hungry not only for food but for peace and an end to violence. They're tired of having to buy their food from American gun manufacturers. They know about indigestion.

Money sale

The Reagan Revolution continues with all the excitement of a blue-light sale at K-Mart. The newest battle is tax reform. Despite differences in House and Senate versions, the latest word is that congressional and administration attempts at sweeping reform will be like repainting a house and calling it a remodeling job.

The proposed tax reform will give the best and the largest tax breaks to the country's wealthy, lowering their overall tax bracket from 50 percent — a percentage which we all know no rich person really pays — to from 27 percent to 38 percent, depending on which legislative version you are talking about.

Americans are no fools. Early surveys show that middle-income Americans who will enjoy tax breaks the size of a thumbnail are very skeptical of "tax reform" *a la* 1986.

What would real tax reform look like from a Catholic, social-justice perspec-

tive? There's no doubt that the tax system in America cries out for reform, but not the kind of reform our legislators are proposing. Politicians are literally capitalizing on the popular point of view that something needs to be done about our unfair system of taxation.

Catholic social teaching is clear in stating that responsibility for paying taxes and for helping those less fortunate increases with wealth. Naturally, the Church assumes that taxed money is not being spent on things like bombs which destroy life, but that money collected from taxes is being used to add to the richness of life.

Catholic social teaching instructs us that love equals justice and charity. True love means providing for our neighbor if that neighbor is in need.

Pope Paul VI summed up Catholic thought on the system of just taxation in his encyclical *On the Development of Peoples* (1967). He said that "the struggle against destitution . . . demands great generosity, much sacrifice and increasing effort on the part of the rich man . . . to support out of his own pocket (those) works and undertakings organized in favor of the more destitute . . . to pay higher taxes so that the public authorities can intensify their efforts in favor of development." (#47)

Let Catholics judge whether Congress and the Administration's recent efforts at tax reform adhere to these principles of economic justice.

Quack-Quack

At the Seneca Park Zoo, ducks are teaching us about the basic problem the city of Rochester has in keeping separate the water used for drinking and water used for waste. The ducks live in a cramped, triangular section of the children's petting zoo. Vital to their needs is a small, blue plastic swimming pool which the ducks use for swimming, drinking, and the elimination of wastes. The ducks urinate in the same water they drink, but the ducks do not seem to care.

Is it possible that we humans are no smarter than ducks? Why is it so difficult for us to separate the water we use to eliminate our biological wastes from the water we use to drink?

And what spiritual message might we glean from this deep lesson innocently brought to us by our brother and sister ducks? Only that, because all are God's creatures, there is an equality among the created. As co-inhabitants of the earth, ducks and people share the same environment.

God forbid that ducks and humans share a similar intellect.

Spirit inspires ban on artificial birth control

To the Editor:

Archbishop Oscar Romero once stated that it almost seems as if many of us need a ninth Beatitude: "Blessed are those who do not become offended by their cross." In the 1980s United States, the "cross" some Catholics and much of our secularly oriented society seem to be offended by is sexual morality. We are incredulous that the Church should want, indeed demand, that we remain true to the moral teachings of the New and the Old Testaments as well as the teachings that have been consistently taught by God's Church throughout the ages.

Since the Church erred in its judgment about Galileo, this is used by many to suggest that the Church can be wrong on just about anything — even sexual morality. This is not correct! In matters of astronomy or physics the Church does not speak infallibly. It can be wrong, was wrong about Galileo, and if it chooses to speak out on the ozone layer may be wrong again! But, in matters of faith and morals, when the Pope speaks in accord with the bishops, what is spoken is as close to infallible as humanly divinely possible, even if not spoken "ex cathedra," and as such we are obliged as Catholics to listen and obey! Sexual morality is a legitimate area for the Church to speak authoritatively to all Catholics on. Obviously some Catholics choose to disobey the Church's teaching. This does not take away from the truth of the Church's teaching, it merely speaks for a free will that can choose to disobey!

There have been numerous encyclicals written over the years, but nowhere except in *Humanae Vitae* when Pope Paul VI condemned artificial birth control do we find such protests

and such disobedience directed towards the contents of an encyclical. Are we to assume that the Holy Spirit has apparently guided the popes well in all the other encyclicals but has allowed error in *Humanae Vitae*? Are we to believe that this spirit of unity and wisdom speaks to each of us Catholics out of step with what He speaks to the pope and the bishops? The spirit does speak to us individually but we must seriously ask ourselves who is doing the speaking in this instance when what that spirit is supposedly telling us is to disobey His Church! Could perhaps another "spirit" be the one we've invited into our hearts? Could we be listening to a spirit of darkness, despair, dishonesty?

Our secular sisters have, in this instance, recognized before we Catholics have the ills of the birth control pill. In the secular feminist health bible, *The New My Body, Myself* written by the Boston Women's Group, the authors have come out condemning the birth control pill and the intrauterine device. We are told that these pills and devices hurt women and are not safe. What science and common sense have revealed to our secular sisters, I hope the Spirit will soon reveal to our spiritual sisters.

The "pill" has brought with it soaring infidelity, promiscuity, abortion, venereal disease, stringless sex to teens. By its fruits you will indeed know it! Perhaps *Humanae Vitae* wasn't the exception after all and the Spirit's words do lie within its pages. Sexual morality just may be a cross, but it sure beats the fruits of immorality.

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Pilgrim Virgin statue symbolizes intercession of Mary

To the Editor:

Very soon the Rochester diocese will host the National Pilgrim Virgin statue in several of its churches. Pope Paul VI in 1967 blessed 50 such statues, each designated for a specific country. These statues today continue to travel throughout their specified nations. Traveling also worldwide are two International Pilgrim Virgin statues, as well as one that does not travel and is permanently stationed in Russia.

At a time when the world seems to decry its heroes and to be devoid of sound role models, the Blessed Virgin once again reminds us of the new covenant with God, promising an era of peace.

Today, with many of the serious tragedies — abortion, AIDS, teen-age pregnancy, divorce, suicide — and with the ever-growing incidences of alcohol and drug abuse, it seems quite evident that we are fast approaching a state of alarm.

No matter how ominous the signs seem in

Mary there is hope, comfort and solace. Whenever there is a threat of doom, how reassuring to know there is something we can take hold of, hold onto.

A soon-to-be-released movie starring Martin Sheen is aptly titled "State of Emergency." Dealing with the life of a nuclear physicist played by Sheen, the film depicts the reality of the current nuclear crisis and, within that framework, unfolds the meaning of the "message of Fatima." The movie is due to be seen in theaters before Christmas this year.

All events seem to be intertwined somehow, with Mary again and again assuring us "there is a way out."

Elaine Beaudrault
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Agrees with writer's analysis

To the Editor:

I was very impressed with Edward Gaffney's July 3rd analysis of the Friends of Father Curran meeting held at St. Mary's in Auburn. His technique of contrasting statements with original source material, especially to reveal half-truths, was very reminiscent of the style of the author Michael Davies. Davies, in his book *Pope John's Council*, pointed out several places in the documents of Vatican II where ambiguous phrases combined with orthodox statements would plant "time bombs" to be detonated later by selective quotation. Gaffney seems to have experienced at least two detonations at the Friends of Father Curran meeting. Unfortunately, I concur with Gaffney's concluding statement regarding the state of our diocese.

Matthew M. Smith
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Ithaca

Appreciates 'A Closer Look'

To the Editor:

The column by Victor Bartolotta Jr., "A Closer Look," is refreshing, sensitive and timely. Mr. Bartolotta has the ability to get to the "heart of things," be they social, family or spiritual matters.

Particularly, I appreciate his concise integration of social issues as they affect members of our "extended family" — our sisters and brothers seeking sanctuary at home, or free and just space in South Africa.

The column "A Closer Look" is definitely an asset to the Courier-Journal, adding an important dimension that is both provocative and hopeful.

Father Daniel J. O'Shea
Abbey of the Genesee
Piffard