

C-J Opinions

Finds dimension missing in discussion of contraceptive ban

To the Editor:

An important dimension has been missing from the controversy over the Church's moral teaching, which has been brought once again to the fore with the Oliphant cartoon vilifying the Holy Father. This dimension needs discussion, particularly in the Catholic press.

Good men and women "in the world"

truly believe that the Catholic Church is actually working against humanity by not endorsing manipulative means to regulate births. They are just as scandalized at us as we are at those who allow their children to die rather than to have blood transfusions or necessary surgery. And it is more than a suspicion that many well-educated Catholics agree with these good persons in the world.

Further, many who do follow the Church's teaching do so perhaps without really appreciating it, and this is made worse when the Church's teachers cannot give them understanding — either because they do not possess it themselves or because they lack the grace.

Thus, when lay Catholics attempt to defend and represent the Church, they may for a number of reasons feel reduced to public acts of popular piety that may dangerously begin to take on a political aspect *because they no longer accompany sufficient and effective dialogue while such dialogue is actually still possible.* Under such circumstances, these acts — however blessed, highly motivated, time-honored and fruitful in God's own way — may actually do nothing humanly to attract others to the faith.

All these things taken together make quite a state of affairs!

But the Church has something that *can* attract good persons in the world! Not something divorced from the cross and achievable only through compromise, but something so overwhelmingly beautiful that if only it is explained, it cannot fail to attract, for it bears the beauty of Christ! The Church holds up for all the most exalted understanding of the human person, of our dignity, of what it means to be a human person, of what

it means to have human relationships, available to human thought.

Then within the faith we superimpose the Second Vatican Council's teaching on our participation in the *munus regale*, Christ's kingship. In his *Sources of Renewal*, the Holy Father explains that the Catholic moral life has its basis in our participation in Christ's kingship! *Our self-determination; our self-rule is our participation in Christ's rule!* What dignity there is in the mutual rule of a married couple! Sacramental grace assists it. The Church never disappoints in Her teaching if we but understand her! Who knowingly would trade this exalted freedom for a life of dependent manipulation — the contraceptive life? The focus of attention should no longer be on numbers of people, a topic properly referred to responsible parenthood, which in turn must be liberated beyond a concern for economics and a dehumanizing concept of control.

It's fine to pray for Oliphant and editors, but please add a prayer — and put it first — that our teachers within the Church and all the faithful may be granted the graces of conviction and understanding, two distinct graces that *ordinarily follow* the act of submission full of hope and trust to Christ in His Bride.

Judy Echaniz
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Providence manifested by human concern

To the Editor:

I share Mr. Keenahan's joy over God's gift of the atom (C-J, "Chernobyl and Ginna," July 3). Yet, I find that joy somewhat dampened by the yoke of injustice it seems to have placed upon the necks of God's people who purchase the atom's energy. I agree with him also that there is a place for Catholic thought in the exploration and exploitation of the atom, and I suggest that it be exercised in the marketplace to affect corporate decisions as to how hard the poor will have to labor to buy a few kilowatts.

My views differ from Mr. Keenahan's about "God's ordinary providence protecting us from errant radiation." It seems to me that the *ordinary* providence of God manifests itself through the personalized concern and care we humans have for each other. The exercise of this care for each other may just be the prime purpose for our being. Anonymous associations, corporate utilities often tend to compromise this notion of "personal concern" in their need to juggle it with "profits." Mr. Keenahan's reassurance of the safety of Ginna might be more

convincing if plant officials could solve the failure of their sirens, and the slightly larger problem of what to do with spent but dangerous fuel without fouling our earth.

Sometimes, life and all the threats that beset it remind me of a situation in which one has to traverse a forest during a storm, when trees are falling left and right. I suppose one could put his primary focus upon establishing a computer pattern of the fall and plot a "safe" course through, or focus more largely upon becoming *one* with the source of the trees, the storm, and our very selves: one who knows all three intimately, who both sees the trees fall and who has already seen the trees fallen; one who intimately loves the trees, the storm and ourselves. But if we *only* plot the computer path and seek its safety, we may have missed the whole point of the trip.

I believe that Catholic Christian thinking does suggest that Ginna will be, indeed, safe one day — the day the lamb finds himself reclining beside the lion!

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Victor Bartolotta Jr.

A Closer Look



Power and money

Michael K. Deaver, the White House deputy chief of staff turned lobbyist, is quietly cutting an infamous political path. People are asking whether Deaver operated under a conflict of interest in serving as a governmental official and later as a private lobbyist. Certainly, as an intimate of President Reagan, Deaver would be a good contact for a foreign government hoping to gain the ear of the president or of Congress, or for a company seeking a lucrative government contract or a spot in the U.S. market.

Recently, a special prosecutor was named to look into Deaver's activities. It may turn out that Deaver did nothing illegal, but that's not the point.

The Deaver story is newsworthy only because it is contemporary. The story speaks about the enticement of power and money, and how easy it is to yield to that temptation. Looked at from that perspective, the Deaver story is as new as a used car.

A long time ago, out of an overactive desire for power and wealth, a young couple squandered an opportunity to live a rich and satisfying life.

The spiritual lesson that young couple — Adam and Eve — taught us is still pertinent: insatiable human desires cannot be satisfied through material means.

A sleeping child

As children in religious education classes, we learned that God is the one who keeps our hearts pumping and our lungs working. We also learned that God's grace is the reason for our existence. As adults, we may want to ask a few more questions about grace.

Theologians describe grace as the gift of God to humanity, but there are other definitions as well. Grace is the intangible experience of being able to do what you normally cannot do. It is the patience of a God who understands what it is like to be a human being and who makes up for our error, frailty and sin. Grace is the experience of the transcendental, the experience of sens-

ing what life is like in the heavens while we still live on earth.

But finally, among other things, grace is mysteriously intertwined with life itself. Grace is real but unseen, necessary but not fully known. Grace is a parent who checks on a sleeping child before finally retiring for the night.

Clara Bentley

Clara Bentley (not her real name) lives with her nine-year-old daughter in a Rochester apartment they share with Clara's sister, who also has a child. Together, social services gives the four of them a total of \$192 a month for food. A quick computation tells me that each person in Clara Bentley's home can eat \$48 worth of food a month, and no more.

I know that I spend more than \$200 a month to feed my daughter and myself. How can less than that amount feed four?

"They don't care if we live or not!" Clara tells me, and my gut reaction is to agree. Poor people are a nuisance to this administration.

Constance Jones (also not her real name) works at Econo Lodge in the city. She makes \$107 a week to support her 10-year-old daughter and herself. Welfare cut Constance's allowance when she got her job. Her sister watches her daughter while Constance works so they can avoid paying for child care. Constance wants to know where she can live more cheaply in order to better provide for herself and her daughter.

Last week the Reagan administration proposed paying poor people in cash rather than in such benefits as food stamps, Medicaid, public housing and the like. Some people wonder if this is just another way of getting rid of the problem of the poor.

Last year the government spent \$95 billion on social-welfare programs. That's a lot of money. But then again, last year's military budget was \$294.7 billion. Somehow I can't help but think about all the food we could buy for Clara Bentley, Constance Jones and other poor people with even a fourth of that \$294.7 billion.

Protest article, sisters' departure

To the Editor:

This letter is being written in direct response to the article concerning the Sister Adorers leaving Most Precious Blood (C-J July 17: "Sisters Leave Most Precious Blood").

We take offense at the negative notoriety this article caused for our parish. We feel it was biased and did not merit front-page placement. There have been many times when space was requested in the Courier-Journal for very good and positive activities going on at Most Precious Blood, and we did not receive the publicity. Yet, not one week after our new pastor was notified of this move, the article appeared on the front page.

The sisters claim that their efforts to "run the school were being undermined." In reality, it was the administration and the school's policies that were being undermined by a few of the teachers. The vast majority of the parents were more than willing to be supportive of the teachers, until it became apparent that the children's state of mind was being affected and in essence causing an adverse effect on their schoolwork. It is our moral obligation and responsibility as parents to stand behind our children, especially when we *know* they're right.

Ridiculing and name calling have no place in a Catholic school where Christian principles are being taught, but in this case, not practiced. At the junior-high level, preteens

and teen-agers have enough difficulty coping with all the physical and emotional changes that they go through without being insulted and degraded by teachers, which only adds to their insecurity.

We have been told the order has left our parish so that the sisters can go into other fields. I'm sure the order was well aware of the situation our parish is in at this time, with both of our priests being moved and a new pastor having the monumental task of having to learn every detail of operating the parish. The sisters' decision to make this move now not only adds to his heavy burden, but encourages derogatory gossip among parishioners and non-parishioners alike. This move seemed most self-centered, when we so desperately needed their help more than ever.

We are a strong parish community, and we will continue to work together for the good of our community and our children. We are here to work under the new administration just as hard as we worked under the old administration.

Our only goal is to help our new pastor in any way we can for the common good, to do what's best for our parish and our children in the true Christian manner in which Father Sebastian founded Most Precious Blood.

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Organization 'disturbed' by bishop's position

To the Editor:

Authentic Catholic faith, by its nature, binds the faithful in humility, truth and the obedience of love of God and His voice in the Church. It binds them in unshakable loyalty and union with the Church, the papacy, and the episcopacy, as they were established by Christ and have legitimately developed in history under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit. It binds them with the need to seek and defend the truth.

"Concerned Roman Catholics of the Diocese of Rochester" are gravely disturbed by 1) Bishop Matthew H. Clark's failure to give witness of unity with the Church; 2) his erroneous "Along the Way" teachings about the Church; they echo those of Father Charles E. Curran in distortion and nullification of the Vatican II teachings; and 3) their clear rejection of the Church doctrine of inerrancy of the Church's teachings in matters of faith and morals.

We deplore Bishop Clark's continued refusal to give witness of unity with the Church, by affirming that Curran's moral teachings as unambiguously declared by the Holy See are false and contradict infallible moral teachings.

In clarification of the infallible teachings of the Church, one of America's premier, orthodox exegetes, Father William G. Most, states, "Curran thinks, first of all, that the points on which he dissents 'are all matters of ordinary, noninfallible teaching and not matters of divine and Catholic faith' ... from

Vatican II, they are infallible teachings."

Father Most authored a recently published book *Free From All Error*. It is available from the Institute on Religious Life, 4200 N. Austin Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60634.

Bishop Clark and Father Curran are united in their rejection of the Church doctrine of inerrancy in its teachings of faith and morals. They teach that the Church occasionally teaches falsely. As an example they offer their contention that the Holy Office once taught that slavery was not intrinsically evil. This contention is not supportable by scholarship of the Church's social teachings.

In the most comprehensive and definitive study and research, England's foremost Catholic scholar in Church social teachings, Father Rodger Charles, SJ, states the following in *The Social Teaching of Vatican II* (pp. 155, 156: 1982, available from Ignatius Press):

"To say that the Church over the years contradicted her teaching on slavery is wildly wrong; more — it is a line of argument which is so simplistic, so ready to cast complex historical and theoretical issues in the language of a particular time of the twentieth century theological polemic, that it discredits those who use it."

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