

C-J Opinions

Writer says group misunderstands growth of theology, bishop's position

To the Editor:

This letter is to reply to the comments made by Joseph J. Murray (C-J Opinion: "Organization disturbed by bishop's position," Aug 21)

Bishop Clark stands not for the issues Father Curran addresses but rather for Father Curran's right to dissent on these issues. All of us who have reached a crossroad in our lives and have turned to the Holy Spirit for guidance know how very difficult it is to understand the

path our loving Father wishes for us to take. Issues of morality are very difficult. The Church is indeed guided by the Spirit. However, just as we individuals must grow spiritually, so must the Church.

Catholic doctrine of today on issues of morality represents the Church's best interpretation of the "proper" position on such matters, that is, the most Christian action one could take on that particular issue. Doctrine that does not fall under infallibility is, how-

ever, just that. It offers the best judgment of the Church and the Holy Father at our present level of discernment. My position is not that the Church is wrong in its present teaching on vital moral issues of today, in truth, quite the opposite is true.

It is the role of Catholic theologians to probe and test Catholic doctrine that does not fall under infallibility. They offer new as well as traditional perspectives on these pressing issues. It has traditionally been the role of conservative forces to promptly condemn new views as heresy. It is vital to retain liberal opinions and protect the right of liberals to speak on such issues. It is the balance of conservative and liberal viewpoints that aids in guiding the Church along its journey of perpetual discernment with the Holy Spirit. To remove the voice of liberals will bring about the stagnation of Catholic doctrine and could possibly even move us away from the Holy Spirit, and thus our God.

Bishop Clark does not wish to separate us from Pope John Paul II, but rather wishes to maintain to process of probing and discerning on these moral issues in our Church. The bishop should not be labeled as rejecting the

Church and all she holds as truth because of his desire to guide the Church further along the road of enlightenment.

Bishop Clark is a man of peace and love whose intentions are good, whose positions are what he feels are for the greatest benefit to the Roman Catholic Church. It is not the role of Mr. Murray to pass judgement on him. Perhaps the Concerned Roman Catholics of the Diocese of Rochester should concern themselves with the acceptance of the fact that the Holy Spirit is working in those around them and may move them in directions that their organization may not initially find to be acceptable.

Our journey of faith is a very difficult one. It is sometimes filled with doubt, but we must persevere. We must continue with our Church along a path of discernment with the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we will find the Church was right all along. Then again, perhaps a theologian may some day offer the Church wisdom not yet foreseen. I pray that his or her voice is not silenced.

Christopher P. Vogt
Hightower Way
Webster

Dissent more harmful to pope than bullets

To the Editor:

In the rather irreverent letter "Today's Church not restricted to European experience" (Opinion, July 7), by Patty Federowicz, the question was asked, "Where do you experience the reality we call 'Church?'"

The author then proceeded to imply that the Church in Rome was somehow irrelevant to this reality because of its age and (lack of) physical proximity. That's like saying Alaskans can ignore the lawmakers in Washington, D.C.

Adding insult to injury, Federowicz stated: "So many people in the Catholic Church today seem to confuse the pope with the Holy Spirit." That's news to me. I've yet to meet a Catholic who was that confused. I always thought the Holy Spirit worked through the pope infallibly in matters relating to faith and morals.

To use a fallible Church decision on

science, e.g. the author's reference to Galileo, as a reason to ignore infallible Church teaching is heresy.

In a recent meeting at the Church Teaches Forum in Louisville, Kentucky, last June, the Rt. Rev. Abbot Edmund McCaffrey, OSB, made an interesting and revealing statement.

Abbot McCaffrey said that Pope John Paul II was "embattled and assailed by bullets on all sides. More damage is done to the Holy Father by 'free debate' on the subject of the teaching authority of the Church than by assassins' bullets."

Since Vatican II, there has been a serious decline in vocations and Church attendance in the United States. Could it be that the self-appointed interpreters of the Holy Spirit have been in fact interpreting a spirit other than holy?

Robert Bart
Ithaca

U of R alumnus 'outraged' by presentation of movie

To the Editor:

As an alumnus of the University of Rochester, I was outraged and offended by the university's decision to show the movie

"Hal Mary." I have seen the spokesman on television and have read the newspaper's account of the university's position concerning academic freedom and the desire to use the university as a forum for exploring controversial subjects. However, freedom and openness must be tempered with responsibility — first to God, and then to a timeless set of moral standards.

This movie and the university's decision to

show it are attempts to trivialize and degrade our Lord's Mother and His birth. I believe the university has erred in its decision and that an apology is in order.

As for me, I must be true to my conscience. I can no longer financially contribute to the university until an apology is offered. I also urge other contributors to the university to consider a similar response, and if you do, please inform the university of the reasons.

David M. Niklewicz
Brenfield Circle
Rochester

Victor Bartolotta Jr.

A Closer Look



A child's voice

"Don't stop the children from coming to me." Jesus said. Why was Jesus so intent on spending time with little children? Did a child's perspective on life somehow refresh our Lord? Did Jesus spend time with children to minister to them or to be ministered to by them?

Here are some examples of conversations I've had with my four-year-old daughter, Lynn. See if you can discern why Jesus "wasted" time with the children.

On parking for the handicapped: "Dad, is this where the handy people park?"

On why she can't eat and doesn't like carrots, broccoli, onions, celery or any other vegetable: "They make me shake."

On a sock that has been accidentally turned inside out: "I have to uninside this out, Dad."

On tuna fish, after I explained how it ends up in the can: "Daddy, did you have to catch the fish?"

On a hot day in July: "Daddy, can you turn the heat down?"

On the sewage treatment plant that is producing the foul odor we smell: "Where does it grow? I can't see it."

On our friend Theresa's hair, after her permanent: "Dad, Theresa got a 'firmarv' in her hair."

On sighting deer: "I ynn, did you see them?" I asked. "Yeah," I ynn replied, "but it's not deer season."

On requesting a particular snack: "Dad, can you make me a banana?"

On my having to take medicine: "Do

you have to eat your medicine now?" On why my strained back hurts: "Did your back hurt when you strangled it?"

Lynn, at grace before a meal: "Thank you God for this day. Thank you for Daddy. Thank you for my bread and noodles. Thank you for my juice. Thank you for Daddy's juice. Thank you for my spoon. Thank you for my tork. Thank you for my napkin. Thank you for Daddy's dish, and napkin. Thank you for..."

"AMEN!" I interject, ending my torture and saving a meal that will now taste as if it were prepared in the freezer rather than on the stove.

Lynn, at the public library, is around the corner watching movies in the media room with other children. She is supposed to stay there for an hour. Suddenly, after 10 minutes she appears at the newspaper rack where I am reading.

"I ynn, are you done already?" I ask her, irritated that my reading time has ended so abruptly.

"Wait a minute, Daddy. I just want to tell you something," she says.

"OK, what is it?" I say impatiently, still scanning my *Christian Science Monitor*.

"I love you," she says, and suddenly nothing else is important to me but my sweet little brown-eyed girl with three white barrettes in her hair.

"I love you too, honey," I say and, as she skips back to the media room, I feel my chest tightening with emotion.

I think now I know why Jesus spent time with children. I've learned a little bit of how God ministers to us adults through the soft tones of a child's voice.

Articles cause reader to wonder about meaning of 'Christian charity'

To the Editor:

Two articles in the Courier-Journal have caused me to wonder what we mean when we use the term "Christian charity."

The first article appeared in the August 14 issue, regarding the Catholic schools' struggle to deal with teen pregnancy ("The teen pregnancy conundrum: Catholic schools struggle to reconcile doctrine, reality"). Aquinas Institute (policy) states, "The greatest degree of Christian charity will be exercised by the school according to the following policy: Their policy goes on to state that before the pregnancy becomes obvious, tutoring or an educational program for pregnant teens is arranged and the student may return (to Aquinas) after the child is born. Clearly, a pregnant teen at Aquinas is asked to leave when it looks as though she is pregnant. Is this Christian charity? What if the student wishes to stay at her high school?

It seems to me that Christ's degree of charity reaches out to all, even those facing difficult struggles and those in need of healing. He doesn't send them away.

The same can be said for the article in the August 21 edition ("Toledo pastor tells student to change views on abortion"), about a Toledo, Ohio, pastor who will not allow 11-year-old Sarabeth Eason into school in the fall unless she changes her position on abortion. Along with her parents, she had spoken in favor of

the right to abortion. Where is Christian charity in this situation?

What kind of mixed messages do we give our young people who — whether we like it or not — are faced with decisions in this area? It would be simple if teens would stop getting pregnant, but this isn't a problem that is easily solved. If we say, "Leave school when you are pregnant," and "Leave school if you favor the right of women to have an abortion," will teens turn to adults at school when such decisions need to be made?

Without condoning teen pregnancy or abortion, how can we deal with the teens who are pregnant, those who believe that women should have the right to abortion, or even those who have an abortion?

I applaud such schools as Nazareth Academy for their innovativeness and for exercising real Christian charity. Not only do they allow pregnant teens to stay in school, but they also have taken the giant step of openly seeking grants to help their pregnant teens and to educate all their students to make wise decisions regarding their sexuality.

I think we need to take another look at the judgments we pass on to students and at our Christian charity.

Nancy R. Werner
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Pittsford

Questions Curran's position on beginnings of human life

To the Editor:

In your C-J Opinions of July 17, "Seeks Clarification of Curran Statement," a right to life asked for "a Courier-Journal editor's note or comment" on this matter so vital to the unborn. His question was in regard to individuation occurring 12 or 13 weeks after conception. You said Father Curran contends life begins at the time of individuation, between the 14th and 21st day after conception.

The Church teaches, as it has through the ages, that life begins at conception.

As Curran tells it, "My position (on abortion) can be succinctly stated: truly individual human life begins at the time of individuation which occurs between the 14th

and 21st day after conception." An enigma such as this is really disturbing.

As I read it, science maintains: a) when the sperm of the father joins with the egg of the mother, in that union life begins in a process of chromosomes and genes to maturity; b) that in a single-cell being, for instance the amoeba, in the act of existence, the individual amoeba's life is born then and there and separated from its single parent.

Questions: 1) Do we, maybe, at conception obtain life, then in a gradual process transform to individual human life — in a sense, a tadpole life to a frog life? 2) Are we not separated from our parent at birth?

William T. Constable

Nurse praises Kraai tribute

To the Editor:

I was very pleased to read the lovely tribute to Dr. John Kraai (A Closer Look, Aug. 14) by Victor Bartolotta Jr.

My first meeting with Dr. Kraai was years ago in the old Northside Hospital. Later, I saw him again in the present Rochester General Hospital.

What a beautiful epitaph: "Dr. Kraai will be best remembered for his untiring service to his patients." God is a loving, forgiving, understanding Father. John Kraai is at peace.

Mrs. John R. Scowcroft, RN
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Pittsford

Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writers' signatures, full addresses and telephone numbers. They must be **brief, typed (double-spaced, please) and no longer than 1½ pages.**

Letters should be mailed to: Opinion, Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

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.