

# C-J Opinions

## Writer challenges procedure on extra-diocesan coverage

To the Editor:

May I be allowed to paraphrase Shakespeare, even though he did not speak within the Diocese of Rochester, and you did not cover it personally. "There is something rotten in the Diocese of Rochester." I shall limit myself at this time to explain what I mean by focusing on three issues.

First, the Courier-Journal failed to inform their customers about the New York State Right to Life Committee meeting in distant Binghamton, New York, one diocese over from ours, at which the most important moral issue since slavery was talked about, discussed and action encouraged — namely, abortion, the slaughter of over a total of 14 million innocent, pre-born babies, since it suddenly became a constitutional right of a mother and a doctor to deny the basic human right, the right to life.

For the benefit of said customers, I should like to inform them that the political action committee of the state Right to Life endorsed Denis Dillon for governor on September 27, by a split vote. Andrew O'Rourke, the Republican-Conservative candidate for governor, appeared before the PAC meeting in Albany on that date and matched Dillon, the Right to Life Party candidate, on every issue concerning abortion, i.e., opposed to Medicaid funding for abortion, support of a Human Life Amendment, support of the Hyde amendment outlawing federal funding of abortion other than to save the life of the mother.

The only real difference is that Dillon, being the candidate with an overlying moral issue as the reason for existence of his party,

naturally talks against abortion all the time. O'Rourke, being a major-party candidate discussing many issues, does not talk about it as much or as eloquently, as many would like. However, at the statewide meeting of about 400 people in Binghamton on October 4, there was much discussion of the wisdom of the PAC's (choice of) supporting a candidate who admits he has no chance of winning, when we have a major-party candidate who has a chance, especially if those against abortion united behind him. There was serious conversation concerning Dillon's withdrawing and O'Rourke's speaking out more forcefully.

Second, the diocese appointed Father James Lawlor to the board of directors of St. Bernard's Institute, an educational facility. Father Lawlor, pastor of St. Mary's Church in downtown Rochester, has publicly — both in the secular and Catholic press — supported his friend, "brother" and former teacher, Father Charles Curran, in his dissent from the teachings of orthodox Catholicism.

Third, writing one day after Columbus Day, I mention my lack of an answer from anyone at the Courier-Journal to a month's-old inquiry about an article in the Courier-Journal (July 7, 1986) that implied that Puerto Rico was already Catholic before Columbus, a curious fact the background of which I am sure all Americans, particularly those of Italian or Spanish descent among your customers, would be interested in exploring.

Marie Jesmer  
Wyndale Road  
Rochester

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Although we at the Courier-Journal do thank the writer for bringing the details of the Right to Life PAC meeting to the attention of our readers, we must clarify parts of her letter, which we find to be a none-too-funny "inside joke."

Ms. Jesmer came to our Buffalo Road offices last week to discuss the possibility of our publishing a post factum article on the state Right to Life convention. She offered us copious written material — including a program of the convention — which she hoped we would somehow convert into a news article on the noted speakers and other highlights of the event.

I explained that it is journalistically unethical to fake coverage of an event we did not attend — hence her above remark about Shakespeare. Ms. Jesmer then inquired, with a distinct tone of chastisement, why we had not attended this important event. I reminded her that we had given extensive coverage to last year's convention, which was held in Rochester, and explained that we are far too busy to start covering events that take place beyond the huge 12-county area encompassed by the Diocese of Rochester.

Again, my answer was not satisfactory, and she asked, somewhat demanding, that we reprint an article on the convention that had been written by an Elmira daily newspaper published by the Gannett Corp. I informed her that to do so was not only unethical, but illegal — a violation of federal copyright law.

We are only legally able to reprint those articles that are published by member newspapers of the Catholic Press Association and

that are carried by the National Catholic News Service. Unfortunately, to our knowledge, NC News did not pick up any article on the RTL convention from the Syracuse Sun, newspaper of the Diocese of Syracuse — of which Binghamton is a part.

Ms. Jesmer then suggested that we interview local people who attended the convention and report their recollections of what transpired. The outcome of such an interview, I explained, would go something like this: "Mrs. Jones said that Father Smith said that . . ." I said that I also have ethical problems with such second- or third-hand reporting. We may interview people about their impressions of a given event, but we do not use such sources for factual information.

The above explanation was, clearly, not sufficient for Ms. Jesmer, hence the above remarks. All of us at the Courier-Journal regret that we operate under restrictions of staff time, newspaper space and distance from events. Oftentimes we sincerely wish that we were able to cover this or that event occurring within the diocese, but realize that we are simply unable to do so because of these restrictions. Perhaps someday, when our staff is larger, we will be able to venture outside those 12-county boundaries, but for now, we must concern ourselves with our own diocese and rely on our news service for coverage outside of the diocese.

At the risk of belaboring a point, I'll add two more comments. We would have been happy to publish advance details of the Binghamton meeting — assuming, of course, that someone sent such information to us. We don't have a crystal ball. They didn't send it; we didn't publish it.

## Endorses Judge Walz's 'solid, moral positions'

To the Editor:

Without any direct involvement in the campaign or the candidacy of Judge Herman Walz, I would like to register my support for his candidacy on the basis of what I believe are solid and very moral positions in the area of judicial process.

Many years ago, I asked a law-enforcement official about the possibility of alternative sentencing for some vandals who had destroyed a large portion of St. John Fisher College's lawn. I suggested that they might be sentenced to repair the damage in the sight of the whole community. The official indicated that he thought the idea impractical and unrealistic.

Now I discover a judge who has already begun the process of alternative sentencing and will have the opportunity to use it at a higher level if elected.

Judge Walz advocates demonstration by appropriate means that crime — even "small crime" — has consequences. He also is keenly conscious that prison cannot be the only form of sentencing. In many other ways Judge Walz shows a great sensitivity to make our judicial system fair, compassionate and leading to rehabilitation.

I urge readers to study his positions and vote accordingly.

Father Louis J. Hohman  
St. Louis Church

## Reader seeks less bickering, more tolerance toward others

To the Editor:

We Catholics might do well to heed the words of St. Paul in Philippians 2:3-5, in which he said: "Do nothing out of contentiousness or out of vainglory; but in humility let each one regard the others as his superior, each one looking not to his own interests but to those of others. Have this in mind in you which also was in Christ Jesus."

If it is true that in a Christian community "it is by their love you shall know them," we are becoming a bit difficult to recognize. The letters we write are more often filled with parochial bickering than with Christian

witness.

Perhaps it would be a good time for all of us to reread "In Imitation of Christ." We might speak a little less of our worldly rights and a little more of the spiritual freedom bought with humility, obedience, charity and love. It is my prayer that God will soften our hearts, quiet our tongues and forgive us our trespasses much more than we forgive those who disagree with us.

O. Serle  
Pultneyville

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** To that prayer, we at the Courier-Journal add a resounding "Amen!"

## 'Crisis of conscience' prompts switch in donation recipients

To the Editor:

I have just come from a Sunday Mass dedicated to Right to Life by the bishops of the United States. Our pastor delivered an eloquent sermon on the subject and urged all to action.

I now have a "crisis in conscience." Do I support my alumni fund drive at St. John Fisher College, when the college invites Gov. Mario Cuomo to speak at the installation of the school's new president and will give the

governor an honorary degree, knowing full well his position or lack of position on abortion? Do I support Bishop Clark's Thanks Giving Appeal, knowing his support of Father Curran?

I think not. This year, my money will go directly to the Right to Life Committee.

C. J. Prevost  
Dunmow Crescent  
Fairport

## Gospel offers no 'padre perks'

To the Editor:

The October 2 issue of the Courier-Journal carries an account of a new advertisement for vocations to the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The advertisement features the character Father Guido Sarducci, whom I used to enjoy on the television show "Saturday Night Live." I pray that no one answers that ad. Its discussion of "padre perks" presents an image of priest as privileged person. This false image of priesthood is opposed to the

priest's vocation to incarnate Jesus' gospel message of service. The priest should be the last person to seek "a free lunch."

Even when it drops the satire and attempts to appeal to an authentic motivation for ordained ministry, the ad is still out of line. It speaks of "helping your fellow man." Jesus also served women.

Father Gary Tymon  
25 Empire Blvd.  
Rochester

**Victor Bartolotta Jr.**

# A Closer Look



## There is still time

Charlie Liteky, 55, is dying. The former priest and Congressional Medal of Honor winner, along with three other military veterans, is fasting to the death to protest America's policies in Nicaragua and Central America — particularly the \$100 million in aid that Congress soon expects to send to the contras.

Charlis Liteky is a person of varied background. From that perspective alone, Charlie is an intriguing person. But the thing that overshadows everything else about Charlie is his commitment to justice and to life. Charlie possesses a singleness of purpose, a kind of self-sacrificial commitment and intensity found among few people. In that sense, Charlie Liteky is like a Martin Luther King. He is like a Mother Theresa. He is like a prisoner of war who silently submits to his death out of greater love of country.

If others in Central America die before their time because of injustice, then, Charlie Liteky has decided, he also will die. If people in Nicaragua are killed because America sends guns and ammunition and advisers to the contras, then Charlie Liteky has decided he will allow the natural process of starvation to kill him. His planned-but-natural death through fasting will expose the contrived-and-unnatural death through warfare of innocent people who are killed because of our country's policies in Central America.

From Washington, D.C., where Charlie and the three others are fasting, my brother-in-law, attorney Mark Venuti, wrote to me about a prayer vigil he attended on behalf of Charlie and the other fasters. Writes Mark: "We went to the vigil, where about 100 people were gathered on the steps of the Capitol. Charlie Liteky led the way, and it lasted until 7 p.m. It was mostly spontaneous prayers and stories told by those assembled — about their hopes, dreams, what they were doing in their communities for the cause of peace, and the effect that Charlie and the other fasters

were having. Belinda (Mark's wife) and I were deeply moved; several times I felt tears start in my eyes. The people were doing their best to react in love, not anger, to pray for the conversion of the Ronald Reagans, not for their destruction.

"I have been going back almost every night, and I hope to continue to do so. I feel a beginning — the swing away from fear and hatred is starting; it will take some time, but it has begun. The veterans received hundreds of letters each day; the slow conversion has begun."

Like any death that results from the deliberate act of a human being, Charlie Liteky's pending death might seem ridiculous or foolish. Perhaps Jesus' death could be likewise categorized. As they now plead with Charlie, they pleaded with Jesus before he died: "Lord, don't do it! It doesn't have to be done this way! Let's compromise!" But, how does one compromise with another party whose motives, however they can be rationalized, ultimately lead to the death of blameless human beings?

By the time this is published, Charlie Liteky and the three others who fast with him — Duncan Murphy, 66; S. Brian Wilson, 45; and George Mizo, 40 — may have slipped into states of irreversible starvation.

Time remains, however, to save Charlie Liteky and those other innocent people — both the fasters and Central Americans alike. Time remains to urge our representatives to reverse Congress' near-decision to send aid to the Nicaraguan contras. Time remains for us to make personal choices about our lives and about what we want to do, from the example that Charlie shows us with his life. There still is time to plan for the day for which Charlie Liteky and others place their lives in jeopardy. That day, which is worth sacrifice, is the day when the brilliance of God's justice and mercy will force our eyes to open into a world that offers freedom and safety to all people — not because they are Americans or Russians or Nicaraguans — but simply because they are alive.

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