

C-J Opinions

Reader questions implication of quote attributed to priest

To the Editor:

In reading Teresa A. Parsons' story "Seminar breaks down walls between gay Catholics, Church" (C-J Oct. 23), I can't help wondering about Father Nugent's quote: "We're not constantly harping that sex outside of marriage is wrong ... Why should we expect God to give the gift of celibacy to all gay and lesbian people when He doesn't give it to all heterosexual people?"

God tells us that *all* are a sinful people—no exceptions. I do hope that Father Nugent reminds young people that sex outside of marriage is still a sin. I'm not saying that he doesn't, but the priests who don't are doing a disservice to God.

Sin is still sin! It hasn't changed! Some priests might ask why they have to remind (people about sin)—haven't (the people) got a conscience? (But) when people go the way of the world, their conscience is dulled. They see the world doing it (sin), and it seems OK. That's why the pope, the bishops and the priests are supposed to warn people of the dangers of going the way of the world.

Father Nugent's quote seems (to indicate that) he's not quite sure if God helps every-

one. I'm sure there are some former gays and lesbians who God has helped to heal out there in the world today. If you read in the Bible about Sodom and Gomorrah (in chapters 10 and 19 of Genesis), what seems to be the sin that God is displeased with (is) sins of the flesh. God is a patient God; God is a loving God. But don't press Him too long; He is still God.

We should not close our doors to these people or any other people; again, we're all sinners. Why do some Catholics have to be reminded that God saved everyone from hell by dying on the cross for their sins? It's what a person does with the knowledge of being saved by God that matters. A person cannot go on in sin and say, "God saved me, so therefore I can go on sinning." It doesn't work that way! Once they (sinners) admit what God has done for them, they have to act upon it. God wants them to reject sin, pray and also come to Him for help. God does not place sin upon you; the devil and you do that.

If they cannot admit (that their action) is a sin and begin to reject it, then they have a problem. Yes, some people do not want to admit they are sinners and, perhaps, are the ones

judging others.

What we must be careful of is the people who want to put our stamp of approval on sin. This is one of the ways the devil is working in our present-day Church. I believe this is why our pope is slow in certain changes in the Church, or perhaps I should say (that he is) very cautious.

What do I mean (by) "stamp of approval"? Some examples could be the following: ... abortion ... divorce ... government policies that are wrong ... and all kinds of sins.

I have been a Catholic for quite a few years, and I can remember different priests reminding us that the devil uses the world as his playground. Why don't more Catholics realize (that) that is what is happening today in our Church? He sure seems to be doing a lot of damage to some Catholics who seem confused. Have you ever heard the expression, "When confusion walks in, you will find the devil?"

Dorothy Rieg
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Catholic media ignores Nicaraguan Church

To the Editor:

On September 23, 1986, exiled Nicaraguan priest Monsignor Carballo stated that the Catholic media has given insufficient attention to the Church's sufferings in Nicaragua. The Courier-Journal *did* run a story in July on Sandinista attempts to silence the Church.

Monsignor Carballo believes Catholics in the United States have an obligation to denounce the sufferings of the Nicaraguan people through prayer and letters to the media that will tell the real story of ordinary people who are hungry and repressed. He quotes St. Paul: "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."

Monsignor Carballo says the lack of food and medicine in Nicaragua is due to the Sandinistas' emphasis on all that is military. As in other communist countries, the members of the government have taken over the best homes and have their own stores. Cubans have taken jobs from Nicaraguans. Responding to reports

from pro-Sandinista groups such as Witness for Peace, he expressed amazement at "...Americans who go to Nicaragua for three days or so and come back as experts in Nicaraguan affairs." He adds, "It is a surprise to me that these same people have never protested the fact that I was thrown out of my country by the Sandinistas. The U.N. declaration on human rights says any person has a right to come and go into or out of his own country. This reveals a lack of rights under the Sandinistas."

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops has formally asked for prayers for the Church in Nicaragua during Masses offered the weekend of November 22-23. Let us all raise our hearts and voices for those who suffer persecution there.

Margaret Finucane
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Finds seamless garment approach impractical

To the Editor:

Someone once said, "We have met the enemy, and he is us." After reading Victor Bartolotta's article "Pro-love, pro-life" (C-J, Nov. 13), his half-baked utopic—Marxist?—perception of pro-life political candidates and their movement deserves comment from this

Appreciates column on life

To the Editor:

I am writing to thank Victor Bartolotta for his November 13 column, "Pro-love, pro-life." He accurately points out the interrelation of the life issues and their roots in Jesus' inclusive, embracing love, which transcends "innocence" and sees every creature as holy.

Readers interested in further information about unifying life issues or participating in activities that embrace many life issues may write the local chapter of the national Prolifers for Survival, P.O. Box 16352, Rochester, New York, 14616. Also, the diocesan Offices of Social Ministry will provide such information, giving presentations on "The Seamless Garment" speech of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and his vision of the consistency ethic.

Judith E. Kiehl
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"well-intentioned but misinformed" individual.

Bartolotta's pro-life approach embraces the seamless-garment theory drafted by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago. Although nice in theory, it is impractical in reality. The seamless-garment approach would diffuse the focus of the anti-abortion movement, dilute the movement's troop strength and ultimately destroy it. Why else would Planned Parenthood and other such groups be so enthusiastic of it? This is the enemy's goal.

Those of us in the "true" pro-life movement feel we are at war. Abortion is nothing less than the crime of crimes, claiming internationally 50-60 million lives a year. The history of humanity has never experienced such atrocity on such a scale. Today no other cause even comes close in scope or magnitude.

I hope and pray that people like Bartolotta see the light before it's too late. Our just God is patiently watching His human experiment in its darkest hour, while Satan is in his glory. Abortion will come to an end either through the judicial or legislative process, or through civil war, nuclear war or Armageddon. The choice is ours; the time is now.

Stephen J. Fisher
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Honeoye Falls

Parents express thanks after son's recovery

To the Editor:

In a time when there is so much apathy, and everyone is busy looking out for himself, it is really heartwarming when you experience the unexpected kindness and generosity of family and friends. Recently, our family experienced this sort of outpouring of love from our families and friends. When our 23-month-old son had to go into the hospital for heart surgery, which we had been expecting, the support that we received from our families and friends was tremendous!

Our son, who has Downs Syndrome, attends a parent/infant program at the Mary Cariola Children's Center. The teachers, therapists, caseworkers and staff are really great. The support that we received from our friends — including the mothers in our parent/infant group

— at Mary Cariola was really overwhelming, and it is what helped us make it through our son's surgery and his recovery.

So many of our friends, including some special people from Parties Galore and More along with neighbors and our families, were always there for us, sending all kinds of get-well wishes for our son. We really appreciate all that they've done! The love and concern that everyone had for our son and our family was tremendous; and we want to thank everyone.

Last, but not least, we wish to thank our son's doctors, the staff doctors and the excellent nursing staff in the pediatric unit at Strong Memorial Hospital. Their concern and excellent care helped our son on to a speedy recovery.

To everyone, you've touched our son's life and our lives with your kindness, and we thank you!

Mr. and Mrs. John Himmelsbach III
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Rochester

Victor Bartolotta Jr.

A Closer Look



Some of the facts

At 65, Roman-collared Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle hardly looks the part. Yet some people are casting him as a radical or at least as a person who warrants a special "apostolic visitation" from the Vatican. The pope has appointed an auxiliary bishop in Seattle to correct alleged unorthodox practices that Archbishop Hunthausen had allowed to occur.

In spite of extensive media coverage, little has been written to adequately present the archbishop's conception of the "facts." What we do know of the issues comes exclusively from the media's broad or general descriptions of the areas in which the archbishop has been questioned.

The New York Times reported that the archbishop had been chastised "on misuse of marriage annulments, over-liberality in the liturgy, permitting abortions to be performed in Catholic hospitals, affiliations with homosexual groups and improper education of the clergy together with use of inactive priests as teachers."

But last week when the archbishop distributed two prepared texts, we learned something new — his side of the story.

In his statements regarding the apostolic visitation, the archbishop said he objected to but went along with the Vatican's insistence on secrecy.

However, wrote the archbishop,

"Secrecy does not work in matters of this sort." He explained that secrecy inhibits respect for persons within the body of Christ.

Because of such secrecy, the archbishop was never given a "bill of particulars" or the specific reasons for the apostolic visitation. Moreover, Archbishop Hunthausen to date has never been told who was interviewed in his diocese during the visitation, the questions which were to be asked of these people, nor the responses given.

Archbishop Hunthausen writes: "The shroud of secrecy spread even further, to what I have to regard as one of the most devastating points of all. I have never been allowed to see the formal visitation report, including the testimony against me and the appraisal made by Archbishop Hickey. All the witnesses were placed under secrecy, not just guaranteed confidentiality."

In response to the charges against him, Archbishop Hunthausen admits minor problems in the tribunal office, where an employee had worked without proper credentials. He also admits that some sterilizations occurred at one hospital but that the practice began before his arrival, occurred a number of years ago and has now ended.

To the charges that abortions were performed in Catholic hospitals, Mr. Russell Scarce, spokesman for the Arch-

diocese of Seattle, told me that the report by the New York Times was an "erroneous statement." Scarce says the abortion question was "never an issue in the apostolic visitation. It was simply a misstatement."

Responding to other charges, the archbishop admitted allowing members of the homosexual group Dignity to celebrate liturgy on a number of occasions at the cathedral church. The practice of allowing Dignity members to use diocesan churches is a frequent occurrence in other dioceses, the Archbishop added, saying that the practice has ended in Seattle.

He also stated that due to an oversight, the wife of an unlaicized priest was admitted to church employ. In another case one laicized priest was allowed to function as a Eucharistic minister, and a second laicized priest served as a lector. Changes have been made.

It has been suggested that the Hunthausen situation can be easily compared to the case of Father Charles Curran or that this situation may have something to do with a lack of allegiance of the pope. I have a hard time linking the Hunthausen case to the Curran case and a harder time perceiving support for Archbishop Hunthausen as a lack of support, allegiance and respect for the Holy Father.

Moreover, in these matters, I believe protection of one's identity and dignity ought to be a primary goal.

In the interest of justice, I also believe that in these matters people have a right to form their own opinions but, first you ought to know some of the facts.