

The Editor's Desk

No alibi

Now and again, the publicists of parish and civic groups call us to express disappointment that their press releases were not included in a given issue of the Courier-Journal. Our usual refrain is, "I'm sorry, but we ran out of room. We'll be happy to put it in next week, though."

Unfortunately, people are sometimes unwilling to believe that answer. Certainly, they tell us, we must have been able to shorten some other item in the paper in order to open up some space.

Well, now I have proof that "no space" isn't just an alibi. Even so, I'm not really pleased. For sitting on my desk right now is an absolutely stunning "Editor's Desk" column about the role of the Catholic press. That column ate up a good four hours of staff time before we realized — guess what — we don't have enough room! In order to get it in, we'd have to cut it or "A Closer Look" to shreds.

Well, it's better to give adequate space to one column than to print two in shorthand. So, until next week, I'd better keep it short. Here's wishing that each of you is starting the new year on a happy and peaceful note.

Victor Bartolotta Jr.

A Closer Look



A question of help

The question always surfaces in one way or another: "Why are poor people poor, and to what extent are they to blame for their poverty?"

A popular notion asserts that most poor people in this country are loafers, welfare cheaters and lazy people who would just as soon take a free handout instead of work — despite statistical evidence that only a very small number of welfare recipients cheat.

Recently, the American bishops addressed the condition of the poor in America in their so-called "economics pastoral." Earlier drafts were harsher in their criticism of capitalism, but the core of the pastoral's message reminded us all of our responsibility to be our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

In opposition, lay Catholic theologian Michael Novak and former Secretary of the Treasury William E. Simon (a Catholic after whom the University of Rochester's new business school will be named) publicly criticized the bishops' final draft of the economics pastoral. A third prominent Catholic, University of Rochester President Dennis O'Brien, took a position that could hardly be called supportive of the bishops.

But whether you favor the bishops or their opponents, the plain fact is this: the major principles the bishops proposed in their economics pastoral are reflections of the biblical tenets expressed by Jesus and the early Church. The bishops are talking about charity and justice — the type of Christian charity and justice that inspires one person to help another simply because the latter is in need.

O'Brien, who says the Bible has "virtually no sense of economics whatsoever," would be well-advised to read a little of what the Church has taught on poverty and justice during the last 100 years. Of particular note is Pope John Paul II's *On Human Labor* (1981), which uses Scripture as the catalyst that defines economic justice and the glue that keeps it functioning.

Novak and Simon correctly identify the capitalist system as the reason for the unprecedented wealth of millions of immigrants and others who worked hard for what they have. But the flip side of such a competitive system is that some people lose, because the rules of the game permit the winners to take all and then some.

Former St. Bernard's Institute professor Joe Torma was fond of calling the poor "the inevitable losers in a competitive society." Torma was referring to America's competitive economic system, which allows individuals and corporations to acquire as much wealth as they desire, leaving others with little or nothing.

Capitalism may have brought people unparalleled wealth, but it has also helped create a permanent underclass, by providing so few economic checks and balances, so few regulations for the rich and so few safeguards for the destitute.

At the present time, 21 percent of the American people have annual incomes lower than \$10,000, while 12 percent — or 7.3 million families — live in poverty.

We live in a finite world. The number of natural and created goods we possess is limited. In America, every person — regardless of the advantages of education, wealth, or status — competes with every other person for natural and created goods necessary for survival and happiness.

The rules of the game may be the same for everyone, but that hardly makes for a fair match. The strongest survive and end up with the lion's share of the goods desperately needed by the less fortunate.

Acting as protector of the poor, the Church states unambiguously, "If a person is in extreme necessity, he has the right to take from the riches of others what he himself needs" (*The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* #69).

Capitalism, despite some limited benevolent aspects, is flawed, because it fails to protect those who lack what they need to survive. The Church, on the other hand, exists to ensure that the poor are cared for.

If many people within our society and our world lack what others so abundantly possess, we must examine our Christian responsibility to the poor on local, national and international levels.

The poor have enough critics. They don't need any more. Like us, the poor are sinners. Like us, a few are lazy. But, also like us, they need opportunity; they need education; they need our time and our money. In short, they need our help.

Letters

Disputes 'witness' value of writer

To the Editor:

In his defense of the atheistic government of Nicaragua (C-J Letters, December 11: "Nicaraguan visitor 'bears witness' to lack of repression"), John Milich attempted to blame the Church, not the Sandinistas, for the persecution of religion in Nicaragua.

The fact that Mr. Milich has traveled to Nicaragua and has been given the red-carpet treatment cannot justify his praise for a government that has been compared to the Third Reich.

Regarding the violations of human rights by the Sandinista government, a report was issued earlier this year to the international League for Human Rights.

This report was compiled by people like Ligia Bolivar, formerly of Amnesty International, and Joseph Onek, who was an aide to Senator Kennedy.

In their "Report on Human Rights Defenders in Nicaragua," gross violations of human rights were evident.

Some of these violations were: the deportation of seminarians; shutting down the Catholic Church's newspaper; the seizure of Catholic and Protestant church property; and arbitrary detentions of between 3,500 to 6,500 Nicaraguans at any given time.

In addition to receiving billions in military aid from the Soviets, Cubans and Libyans, Nicaragua is also a haven for the PLO, Red Brigade and German terrorists.

Cuban teachers have been imported to teach atheism in the schools, and neighborhood spy committees have been set up to weed out enemies of the revolution.

To further this goal, the only op-

position newspaper, LaPrensa, has been shut down.

John Milich's lame excuse that "every nation, including the United States, has done similarly in wartime" won't wash. Using that logic, the United States should close all newspapers supporting the Sandinistas.

Unfortunately, supporters of the Sandinistas like Mr. Milich would have a similar censorship here in the United States.

Already, guest speakers at various universities have been prevented from speaking out by Sandinista supporters. Unless our higher institutions of learning and the news media remain free from this kind of censorship, the errors of Marxism will continue to undermine our free society.

Robert Bart
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Quotes Bible on homosexuality

To the Editor:

In response to Teresa A. Parsons' article on homosexuality (C-J December 18: "Diocesan committee studies Vatican letter on homosexuality"), let's the word of God speak for itself.

1) "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; such a thing is an abomination," Leviticus 18:22.

2) "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them shall be put to death for their abominable deed; they have forfeited their lives," Leviticus 20:13.

3) "For this cause, God has given them up to shameful lusts; for their women have exchanged the natural use for that which is against nature,

and in like manner the men also, having abandoned the natural use of the woman, have burned in their their lusts one towards another, men with men doing shameful things and receiving in themselves the fitting recompense of their perversity. And as they have resolved against possessing the knowledge of God, God has given them up to a reprobate sense, so that they do what is not fitting . . ." Romans 1:26-28.

4) "Or do you not know that the unjust will not possess the kingdom of God? Do not err; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor the evil-tongued, nor

the greedy will possess the kingdom of God," 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

5) "The man named all the cattle, all the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field; but he found no helper like himself.

"The Lord God cast the man into a deep sleep, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib which the Lord God took from the man, he made into a woman, and brought her to him. Then the man said, 'She now is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, for from man she has been taken.'" Genesis 2:20-24.

Thomas D. White
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Questions students' views on birth control

To the Editor:

Four students at Aquinas answered this question in Equal Time (C-J Echo, November 27): "What are your views on school birth-control clinics?"

Their answers did not assure me that they are awake to the truth that must be known about birth control and its clinics.

Birth control operates on the immoral principle that the end justifies the means. Birth control obeys the principle of making pleasure the

sole end or purpose of the sex act and (of making) contraception — chemical or mechanical — the means to that end. Those contraceptives . . . frustrate the act of reproduction and the continuation of the race. Any birth-control clinic can encourage young couples to live together without the blessing of sacramental marriage.

A birth-control clinic attacks and degrades marriage. It destroys the uni-

ty that should prevail between husband and wife. It does so by making sexual pleasure the sole purpose of love making and negates the fulfillment of the sex act . . . A birth-control clinic must be stigmatized forever as an opportunity for cooperating in another's sin. Anyone (involved) in the evil (that) birth-control clinics support . . . always promotes sin. Such a clinic does so by counsel or advice, by supplying motives or by demonstrating how to use contraceptives.

Why should a school — public or private — tolerate, much less allow, a birth-control clinic within its walls?

John Overlander
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Liberals imbued with anti-religious views

To the Editor:

Liberals use the ploy of religious neutrality to cover up their viciously anti-religion attitude. They sanctimoniously talk about separation of Church and state as though this were a desirable thing mandated by the Constitution.

There is no such thing as neutrality. One is either for or against. If one is not for, one is against. If one is for religion, he wants a judicious leavening of it in the state — or anywhere

else. If one is against religion, he wants it nowhere.

The Constitution is used to fake out religion. Nowhere does the Constitution mention the separation of Church and state. The founding fathers were steeped in religious attitude. Liberals want religion out of society for the same reason as communists do — to destroy any threat to their authority.

God help us if they succeed.

John F. Starkweather
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Thanks for used copies

To the Editor:

I would like to express my heartfelt and grateful thanks to all the kind readers who sent me used copies of the Courier-Journal, other Catholic literature and pious articles of all kinds. Due to heavy postage, I am unable to write individual letters. I request (readers) to continue sending the above regularly. I request all my friends to consider this note as my personal letter of thanks.

I wish you, your staff and all your readers a Christful Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: For a fuller understanding of the founding fathers' views on religion and the provisions of the U.S. Constitution, we direct interested readers to the essays of Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay as published in "The Federalist Papers."



Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writers' signatures, full addresses and telephone numbers. They should be sent to: Opinion, Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, and no longer than 1½ pages. 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.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space reserved for letters, we publish only original letters address to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent to other publications or persons. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.