

# The Editor's Desk

## Touching the future

Our centerfold this week contains three items focusing on the celebration of Catholic Schools Week, which is now underway.

These items — a feature story on a program for gifted/talented students at St. Mary's in Waterloo, a preview of the speech to be given by Elinor Ford at tomorrow's Catholic Schools Dinner and a letter from Brother Brian Walsh — combine to illustrate the great strengths of Catholic schools as well as their fragility.

As noted by Ford, former superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of New York, the primary strengths of Catholic education are the values it instills in students and the emphasis it places on striving to excel.

That point is brought out in the feature story on the Renaissance Program at St. Mary's School. Rather than allowing gifted or talented children to become bored by the regular curriculum, two teachers volunteered to conduct a special after-school enrichment program.

This program offers its participants a variety of challenges they might not ordinarily encounter in their regular classes. They are encouraged to excel and to have fun in the process. In addition, they are being exposed to a variety of disciplines that include the arts, politics and economics. One hopes that their field trips and projects will make these students more aware and responsible citizens.

Each of us can think of unique or innovative programs being offered by Catholic schools. From remedial programs to enrichment, from special counseling to athletics, Catholic schools have a real contribution to make. And beyond their educational aspects, Catholic schools teach children about Jesus and his Gospel, about values that will help them to create the peaceful future we want them to have.

For all of these reasons, Elinor Ford asserts that *all* education — both public and private — suffers when Catholic schools close. "Every time a Catholic school dies in America, the opportunity for the nation to reach its full potential dies a little, too," she remarks.

Yet there is more to it than that. Catholic schools are important to each other as well. The Catholic system is a chain, and as Brother Walsh has noted in an amusing anecdote, one weak link weakens all the rest.

So, as we celebrate Catholic Schools Week, let us express pride not only in *our own school* but in the entire system. Let us work together to preserve each Catholic school, for in doing so we serve all the others and society as well.

Victor Bartolotta Jr.

## A Closer Look



### A journey beyond the veil

Trying to find the truth about every aspect of life, we often come to roadblocks beyond which we cannot journey. This is especially true of our human desire to possess definitive answers about life and death.

At times, truth seems to burst upon our souls, encircling and refreshing us. Then, slowly, it fades, leaving us with what seems like only a morsel of revelation.

Death is perhaps the best example of how such truths are so frustratingly partial. Recently I attended the funeral of a friend whose name was Christine. The priest began the eulogy by saying, "Death is a mystery."

"How dare he begin like that?" I thought to myself. "The bereaved want to hear something more definitive. Tell us, Father, precisely where our beloved friend is. Tell us what she is doing. Tell us what she is experiencing!"

As I impatiently waited for the priest to say something more, I began to think about the events that preceded my friend's death. Two weeks before she died, I had sat with her in a church hall packed with people and chatted about life. Though neither of us knew it at the time, that chat was her final goodbye to me, our last conversation in this life.

A week before my now-deceased friend was stricken, my daughter, looking for something to wear, had chosen the very dress my friend had given her. But it was a summer dress and had to be returned to the closet. Where these events were merely coincidences?

With these thoughts in my mind, I listened to the priest continue his sermon, and this time I heard him say the things I wanted to hear about death; there is life after death; the dead are at peace and at rest.

My friend Christine had been saved by the blood of Christ, but she also was experiencing the fruits of her labor on earth. Her husband, her attorney-daughter and her sons remain as a legacy of her work on earth.

In spite of our anger and frustration with what we consider to be partial truth or knowledge, we can reflect on God's purposely veiled message: "But my ways are not your ways." Though our journey to truth must continue, we can discover happiness and peace through the realization that God has full knowledge of those things we understand only partially.

The book of Hebrews says that "hope extends beyond the veil through which Jesus our forerunner had entered on our behalf." That veil is, of course, the veil of death which Jesus willingly — though not without hesitation — crossed on our behalf.

And, precisely because Jesus had entered through this veil, we also can enter through it. When our earthly shells have aged and weakened, we shall, with God's help, softly push aside the veil leading into the next world, a world in which the answers that now so frustratingly elude us will finally be revealed.

A few days ago, my friend, Christine, pushed aside that veil and — joining my friends Jim, Bob, Barb, Maxie, Mike and Billie — entered into God's world of peace and rest and joy.

## Letters

### Bible not meant to be an economics textbook

To the Editor:

I feel that there must be a reply to the column of Victor Bartolotta Jr. (C-J, January 8, A Closer Look: "A question of help"), in which he attacks laymen who are unhappy with the bishops' pastoral on the economy.

Let me start out by making one thing clear. Most people do not doubt that they have a social responsibility. Bishop (Matthew H.) Clark just raised more than three million dollars to fund the Diocese of Rochester without too much effort. The current budget of Monroe County provides over 300 million dollars for the unfortunate and needy. Yet according to many people, we are doing nothing.

We don't have very many Catholic laymen who are attempting to make sense in a moral way about economics and politics. Vic Bartolotta has attacked three of the best. (University of Rochester president) Dennis O'Brien expressed his frustration with the Bible. The Bible seems to say that an economic activity is wrong. If a person accumulates any wealth, he is a candidate for hell. Obviously, we need an exegete to explain the Bible in light of our knowledge of economics in the year 1987. The Bible was never meant to be an economics textbook.

Michael Novack is a brilliant scholar. He studied philosophy and theology in Rome and then, after a career change, came home and

devoted himself to studying the history and structure of the American system of economics and politics. Religious writers have never accepted the American system. This is why some economists think that the bishops missed an opportunity to hold the American system up as an example for the world. Instead, the bishops seem to advocate a state-driven economy and a political system that downgrades individual liberty.

In the year 1776, the areas north and south of the Rio Grande River were roughly equal in material ways. In the 200 (ensuing) years, the situation has changed mightily. Why? Is it because our economic and political system was designed (by) men like Adam Smith, John Locke, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson? These men created a system different from the old regimes of Europe. They put their faith in an incentive-driven, market-oriented economy — a society in which justice, liberty and freedom would be all-important. And it has worked.

(Victor Bartolotta) has some false ideas about wealth. (He says) that one man's good fortune comes at the expense of some other man. That sounds very much like the ideas that the "Club of Rome" has preached. We have here in Rochester a perfect example to refute (this) statement.

About 30 years ago, a man whose family owned a photo supply house

saw the need for some device that would copy letters and documents. He searched for and found a crude system called electrostatic imaging, which nobody else wanted. But he believed that he was right, and he put all the money he could raise into perfecting it. He made a beautiful product, developed a big company and became wealthy. His name was Joe Wilson.

(I challenge Vic Bartolotta to) prove to me that anybody has been made poorer by Joe Wilson's success. (Indeed); a lot of beautiful homes in Webster and Penfield would not be there, except for the wealth created by Xerox.

When God created man, He put him in paradise and provided him with everything that he needed. But when man sinned, God took everything away from man and threw him out of paradise. God didn't even give man clothes, and for centuries, man existed in terrible poverty. In the year 1800, there were fewer than 1,000 people in all of Germany who had incomes of more than \$1,000 a year. It is only since the Industrial Revolution that large groups of people have been able to raise themselves to a condition in which they have adequate wealth. Poverty, not wealth, has been the general condition of the human race throughout its history.

Gerald E. Keenan  
Ridge Road  
Webster

### Writers' homosexuality cross-references at cross purposes?

To the Editor:

(I am writing) in response to Thomas D. White's letter to the editor (C-J letters, Jan. 8: "Quotes Bible on homosexuality"), which was written in response to Teresa A. Parsons' article on homosexuality (C-J, Nov. 6: "Vatican letter seen as another rejection of gay Catholics"). I believe Mr. White could also have been responding to Sandra A. Behnke's letter to the editor (C-J letters, Dec. 18: "Men, not God, say gays are sinners").

I would ask Sandra A. Behnke to refer to Mr. White's letter, in which he quoted the following biblical passages condemning homosexuality: Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13; Romans 1:26-28; and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

Ms. Behnke wrote: "When the

Bible was written, everyone assumed there was only one sexual orientation." I would ask her to read (the aforementioned passages from) Romans and 1 Corinthians. Homosexuality certainly was around then, and before that (as confirmed by the passage from Leviticus).

She also wrote that Jesus did not consider homosexual acts as sinful. I can't believe a "Christian" could actually think that. I told some Protestant friends about her letter. (I was too embarrassed to tell them where I had read it.) We discussed it, and we came up with the following words of Jesus as to His view on homosexuality:

"For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed the evil thoughts and fornications; thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of cov-

eting and wickedness as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evils proceed from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). The Bible expands on the word "fornications" and calls them "acts of sexual immorality" — and homosexual acts would certainly fall within that category of sins.

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill." In making this statement, Jesus reaffirmed the moral laws of the Old Testament, including its statements on homosexuality.

I hope that this will enlighten Ms. Behnke, when she asks the question, "Who has classified homosexuality as being sinful down through the ages, God or man?" A closer look at the Scriptures will prove to her beyond a doubt that it was God. The word of God *does* speak for itself.

Jean DeJoy  
Garrow Street Extension  
Auburn

### Madrigalia brought St. Joseph's Park alive with Christmas joy December 22

To the Editor:

St. Joseph's Park was alive with song on December 22, as more than 300 carolers joined Madrigalia in Christmas hymns. The rehabilitated ruins of historic St. Joseph's Church on Pleasant Street in downtown Rochester held warm memories for almost everyone there.

The Catholic Women's Club of

Rochester created a special magic that night by preparing 200 luminaria, garlands for the wrought iron railings and a stunning wreath for the stone walls. The inviting glow from the candles made strangers feel welcome.

On behalf of WXXI FM 91.5, the City of Rochester's Downtown Program Trust Fund and the Landmark Society, I would like to express tremendous gratitude to the Catholic Women's Club, and especially to Eleanor and Frederick Heier, Alice and Hugh Hawkes, Mary Elizabeth and Richard Weidenborner, and Geraldine Moylan. Their efforts helped begin an annual tradition at St. Joseph's Park.

Elizabeth M. Teall  
Director of Promotion  
and Public Relations  
WXXI/RAETA

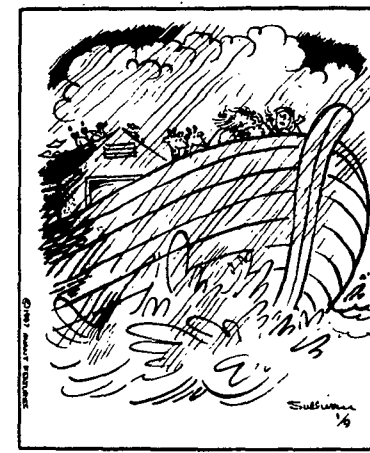
### Saint Peter's Kitchen offers word of thanks

To the Editor:

Because the Courier-Journal assisted us before in publicizing the work of St. Peter's Kitchen, we ask again for space. But this time, we want to say thank you to all who have helped in any way to feed the hungry who come to St. Peter's in great numbers, six days a week.

Thanks to our faithful volunteers, without whom we could not exist. Thanks to you who have given time and energy, food or money. Thanks to our guests, who reward us each day. May God bless you all in this new year, and please keep St. Peter's Kitchen in your prayers.

Ed Gennarino  
Interim Director  
St. Peter's Kitchen  
720 W. Main St.  
Rochester



I KNOW YOU HAVE A LOT ON YOUR MIND NOW, BUT THE KITTY LITTER REALLY NEEDS CHANGING.

## 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.