

C-J Letters

Vocations rely on return to faith

To the editor:

With the decline in priests and nuns, many Catholics question why such a great drop? The answer might well be in the attitudes of many Catholics.

An estimated 30 to 50 percent of all Catholics do attend Mass on Sunday. Some people say it's boring. I say we should be willing to give God an hour a week in thanksgiving for His blessings. Others say they don't like the hypocrisy of some people. We deal the hypocrites every day, so this is nothing new. If this wasn't bad enough, many Catholics do not frequent the sacrament of penance. Many priests sit in the confessionals with much idle time on their hands due to lack of participation. Thirty years ago, confessionals were overrun by people coming in. Obviously some cannot make it to confession because of a job, but do they say a sincere act of contrition. If you have to make a confession, go to the rectory and see your priest.

Unfortunately troubles do not end here. Catholic schools are presently in a state of crisis. Many parents refuse to send their children to Catholic schools and may not always send their kids to CCD classes. How can children learn to honor Our Lord if they are not educated properly? This might be a good place to start.

Also many families do not follow church practices in the home. Instead of saying the rosary after dinner, the family watches "Wheel of Fortune." TV is the center of our household, and God takes a back seat to Bill Cosby and Vanna White. With this we wonder why there is a lack of Catholic clergy?

With fewer priests and nuns, lay Catholics are going to have to involve themselves more than ever before in church affairs. Maybe this might help

bring out the call for vocation.

Also, with the alleged appearances of Mary at Medjugorje, we might like to consider her plan. On this the 70th anniversary of her Fatima appearances we can say that Mary's appearances should not go unnoticed specifically with the messages of both Fatima and Medjugorje. She said that we should say the rosary daily and the whole rosary at that. Yet if it isn't possible to say the rosary then seven Our Fathers, seven Hail Marys and seven Glory Be's would do. But it wouldn't kill us to try and say the rosary. Even if we started out by reciting five decades and working our way up to fifteen would it benefit us greatly.

Our Lady called us to attend confession MONTHLY. We should remember her promise of the first Saturday devotion. All we have to do is go to confession and Mass, say five decades of the rosary, and meditate

an extra fifteen minutes on the fifteen mysteries of the rosary and she would be there at the hour of our death to help us into Heaven with all the needed graces. We have to do this for five consecutive months and we have our ticket to Heaven, courtesy of Our Blessed Mother.

If we want to see an increase in vocations we must amend our lives. We must turn away from sin and repent through the use of confession. Plus we must pray daily, especially the rosary, and with our hearts, in addition to making it to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days.

By the middle of the next century, I foresee a great increase in priests and nuns. This will be due to more men and women finding Jesus in serving the Church in lay ministry.

Peter F. Cole
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Saints found God in nature; sinners imprisoned by self

To the Editor:

God blessed America with two great men, Archbishop Sheen and Thomas Merton. The gifted Merton told us that the mind can easily become a prisoner of its own pleasure. One locks himself up in desire for things that he hates. He looks for happiness and finds only emptiness.

But if one seeks God, His love will warm him as the sun. The saints were not stone-faced individuals, and, even less, stonehearted. They were people of joy, the happiest ones around.

It was not the saints but the Puritans who looked on practically every-

thing as unholy. The saints loved all God's creation; they loved beauty and laughter. Theirs was a continual song of glory.

Sinners are the miserable people, trying to escape from their unhappy prison of selfishness. The saints loved all of nature and its author and rejoiced. They delighted in the pale flower, the clumsy skittish colt, low-flooding clouds, the delicate leaf, the trout in the brook, the great-gashed, boulder-strewn mountain. All things praise God.

Rev. Rawley Myers
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Time to move electric chairs out of prisons and into museums

To the editor:

If proponents of capital punishment ever muster enough legislative votes to override Governor Cuomo's yearly veto of death-penalty legislation, New York electric chair, idle since 1963, will be used again.

When the electric chair was first used in 1890 at Auburn Prison, the condemned man was badly burned before he finally died. An electrocution expert who witnessed the spectacle declared that the electric chair should be used no more.

Instead, its use became popular and remains the means of execution in 16 states. It involves a current passing through two electrodes, one attached to a leg and the other to the head, which is shaved prior to execution. The electrodes conduct 2,000 volts, on a 60 cycle AC/DC current. Through the condemned person for

a minute. Other charges of the same voltage, for the same amount of time, are administered if needed.

Press accounts of electrocutions in Alabama, Georgia and Florida during the past eight years describe the suffering of those who didn't die until several minutes after the initial shock.

Condemned prisoners wear a hood to prevent witnesses for observing some of the prisoner's reactions to the ordeal — e.g. fractured lenses of the eyes, charred blue tongues and facial distortions resulting from convulsions.

In 1982, the Arkansas legislature completed a study of various death penalties, concluding that "electrocution is an extremely violent means of inflicting death — the victim urinates and defecates and his tongue swells,

the body sometimes catches on fire, and the smell of cooked human flesh permeates the chamber." Max Howell — combat veteran of World War II, Arkansas state senator and a believer in the death penalty — once witnessed an electric-chair execution and regards it as the most horrifying thing he has ever seen. Arkansas re-

cently became one of several states to allow for death by lethal injection, which is painless and non-disfiguring.

For the most part, I believe the arguments against capital punishment outweigh reasons for its use, but even if I favored the death penalty, I'd still be concerned how executions

are carried out.

In 1970, New York's electric chair was moved from Sing Sing to the Greenhaven Correctional Facility. Now is the time to move it to a museum.

Joel Freedman
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Medjugorje confirms Blessed Mother's role

To the editor:

Father Cuddy's column had a good example of true devotion to Mary. At Medjugorje, where Our Blessed Mother has been alleged to have appeared to several children, the people have experienced a religious renewal. They attend daily Mass with rosary and Benediction. They welcome pilgrims with open-hearted charity. They fast and pray and go to confession often. They truly believe that God has sent His Mother to them to help them. We can learn much from them.

In a recent letter to the Courier-Journal (C-J July 30: "Marian 'exaggeration' worries Pittsford pastor"), there was mention of exaggerated devotion to Mary. The best answer to that letter is to look at the people of Medjugorje. They are living their answer.

The best letter about Mary's role has not been printed in the Courier-Journal. It seems a shame that the Courier-Journal does not have room for this absolutely stupendous explanation of Mary's role in our salvation. I am referring to Pope John Paul II's letter of March 25, 1987, "Mother of the Redeemer." It is available from the Daughters of St. Paul, 50 St. Paul's Ave., Jamaica Plain, Boston, Mass. 02130.

Another splendid explanation of Mary's role is to be found in Chapter 8, (of the Vatican II document) *Lumen Gentium*. The whole chapter

is worth studying and praying over. For example: "Thus, in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace.

"#(62) This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation

and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation."

Joan M. Rand
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Sacramentals provide saving grace

To the editor:

(I am) responding to Father Hohman's letter (C-J July 30: "Marian 'exaggeration' worries Pittsford pastor") replying to Ted Crosby's June 25 letter. Father Hohman states, "Jesus is Savior of the world. He and none other . . ." I don't believe there is a Christian alive who does not know that Christ died that we may spend eternity with Him — that the gates of paradise were opened through the shedding of His blood. However, He did not take away our free will. We are not given a free pass, but must merit salvation.

Mr. Crosby quoted St. Dominic's citation that: "It is through the rosary and the scapular that I will one day save the world." Through proper uses of these sacramentals many graces will be given — making reparation for sin in the world and many souls will be saved. It's unfortunate that

Father Hohman is seemingly unaware of this long-standing Catholic belief.

In Our Lady's apparitions at Fatima, which have been approved by the Church, Mary appeared holding both the rosary and the scapular. In the ongoing apparitions in Yugoslavia, Mary has requested daily praying of the 15 decades of the rosary. These apparitions are currently being studied by the Church.

Father Hohman's last paragraph says it well . . . up with praises to God for the grace He has given to Mary to be the example for those who respond to His will? To that I say, "Amen" and add, "If it should be Thy will to defeat the Prince of darkness through the humble virgin, they will be done!"

Lois A. Metherell
Ampor Beach
Hilton



Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Along the Way

Thoughts on the road

Monday afternoon.

When I wrote last week that I would report this week on my trip to Los Angeles to see John Paul II, my mind was moving faster than the calendar. I leave tomorrow morning for the west, will see our Holy Father on Wednesday, and will share with you about that journey in next week's edition of the *Courier-Journal*. I apologize for the confusion.

As you might expect, the days before a time away can get a little bit hectic. September is a busy month anyway, and the days out for this journey make it the more so. I don't mind at all being busy because I find my faith consistently nourished by the people I meet in the course of daily ministry. But like yourself, I tire physically and I can also — if I am not careful about it — forget what I am about and lose awareness of God's ways in my life.

I had an experience of how easily that can happen to me just this morning. I rose bright and early so that I could be on time for an appointment with one of our priests who is kind enough to serve as my spiritual guide. Among the matters we discussed was the way in which the Lord was a person of peace who responded in a non-violent manner to the violence of his time. At times, this meant an acceptance of physical and spiritual pain without attempting to inflict equal pain on his tormenters. In other instances, his non-violent disposition freed him to speak forcefully and courageously about what he judged to be the abuse of God's law.

I found the discussion quite inspiring, and as I left my kind friend I was whistling in contentment at the grace of the moment. I felt very much encouraged by the conversation, and was reasonably certain that today I would be more peaceful than I had ever been.

Then I drove onto 490 West.

When I exited about six miles later, it dawned on me that I had cussed out: 1) two drivers who came up too fast behind me and made me pull right so they could pass; 2) one driver who went so slowly in the passing lane that I had to pull right to pass him; and 3) an uncounted number of construction workers who had the gall to have narrowed 490 West to one lane when I was in a hurry!

While I smiled at the irony of what I had done so quickly after that earlier moment of insight, it made me realize anew how easily I can make myself the center of things, and even worse, how I can expect others to conform to that reading of reality. In any case, I hope the lasting fruit of the experience will be a greater awareness of how easily that can happen in my life.

In sharing it with you, my hope is that it might remind you of ways in which you are prone to react too quickly or too sharply to the unexpected or the inconvenient experiences of daily living. If you are anything like me, you know that such responses do little for those at whom we direct them, and still less for us.

Peace to all.

Letter's aim undone by peevish tone

To the editor:

I am disturbed by the peevish tone of J. David Lortscher's letter (C-J August 6: "... reject Fr. Cuddy's folly") attacking Father Paul Cuddy for views expressed in his column of July 23 ("Where There's a Will . . ."). That column had discussed gifts intended for the education of priests, as that question is affected by the succession of St. Bernard's Institute to the former St. Bernard's Seminary. Leave aside correspondent Lortscher's gratuitous and impudent disparagement of Father Cuddy's motives and mindset. Ask only why, in the six times that he mentioned Father Cuddy by name, was it always "Paul Cuddy" or "Cuddy," but not once "Father Cuddy"? Yet in mentioning Harvard professor Sister Marie Augusta Neal, the writer does not once fail to accord her the

respectful title of "sister." Does the "new kind of priest" — among whom Mr. Lortscher apparently now numbers himself — have difficulty recognizing the respect due to the "old kind" of ordained priest?

If Mr. Lortscher hoped by his attack on Father Cuddy to persuade this reader of the merits of St. Bernard's Institute, I must tell him that the fractious tenor of his argument got in the way of his message. He would profit from emulating the civility of Deacon Eugene Edwards, whose contemporaneous letter also took issue with Father Cuddy's column and whose message was more persuasive for being more respectful.

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