

Editorial & Opinion

Committee polishing draft of pastoral on women, Church

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

It is good to be home after a long week of meetings in Washington. Since this newspaper has already published stories about the main items of business on the agenda of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, I shall not repeat them. But I would like to say a word about the progress of the conference's committee — of which I am a member — charged with drafting a pastoral letter on the Concerns of Women in the Church and Society.

As I recall, we met for the first time three years ago this week with our full committee and all consultants to begin the work on the pastoral letter. It has been a long process to be sure, and at times it has been difficult. But we have now come to the point at which we are preparing to present our work for the necessary approval of the conference's administrative committee, which will meet in March. We must have the document to the committee one month in advance of that meeting, which means that our committee must complete the current phase of our work by early February. We shall meet one more time — in Dallas in early February — to put finishing touches on the draft we shall present to the committee.

Along the Way



If the committee members approve the draft, we shall publish it, asking each diocese in the country to review it and to suggest additions and deletions for the improvement of the work. Some details need to be worked out for the process by which we shall ask for diocesan input. We are certain that a consultation of the people will improve the letter. The problem is to develop an efficient and fruitful way to evaluate the massive amount of feedback we expect.

As matters now stand, I believe we have a solid piece of work to offer to our brother bishops and to our community of faith in the United States. There are some parts of the letter I hope will be changed in

the process to follow, and there are some sections I hope will be left just as they are. But as members of the drafting committee, we are at the service of the conference and must follow its direction.

I write about this issue this week not only to update you on some work important to all of us, but also to commend it to your Advent prayers. There is something of God's inspiration coming to birth among us as we become more and more aware of how sexism can diminish the life of society and the Church. We shall arrive where God wants us to be in this matter through an ongoing conversion of heart. And it is for that gift for all of us that I ask your prayer in a special way.

Let me extend to you and to all of your family and loved ones my very best wishes for the Thanksgiving Day holiday. I hope that the day is one of peaceful, joyful restoration for all of you!

The person who is truly thankful is a blessed individual, because she or he is open to the God from whom all blessings flow and to neighbors with whom our blessings are to be shared. From such bonds, lives find purpose and strong human communities are built. Peace to all.

The Editor's Desk

Indoctrination hour

Lacking the ambition to face the unseasonably wintry weather last Saturday, I settled in for an afternoon of television. Unfortunately, the tube had little to offer, and I found myself watching a cartoon.

A chain of toy stores had evidently bought all the commercial time during the 30-minute show, bombarding viewers with an incessant stream of repetitive messages. Each of the ads began with grandmother telling the blonde cherub seated in her lap a fairy tale about a giraffe who took a little girl on an amazing adventure through toyland. The little girl, of course, was welcome to take all the toys she wanted.

From the fairy story, the commercials cut to promotions for any of several products — a Mickey Mouse doll that talks; a Goofy doll that also talks, but only if you already have Mickey; a magical doll that seems to understand and respond to whatever her owner says; and several character dolls that can hop and pop to music.

The ads, of course, did not say how much the piper charges for the dance, but the store's Sunday circular listed them at \$40-\$60 — each. And if that's not bad enough, think about the TV-laser outfits that will not only zap \$75-\$150 from parents' wallets, but will also teach the children how to zap the enemy with nary a quailm.

Parents, I am sure, experience the joy of Christmas most profoundly through the eyes of their children. It's too bad that joy must be dimmed by the decision that precedes that dawn — whether to buy into a commercial "wonderland" offering everything a child could want regardless of the moral or financial cost, or to suffer the disappointed looks of the little ones as the shiny ribbons tumble to the floor.

C-J Letters Policy

The Courier-Journal wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome all signed, original letters about current issues affecting Church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the Church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions of the letter writers.

We reserve the right to edit all letters. Mail them to: Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY, 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.

PEACE

...is understanding hunger



Letters

God's handiwork

To the editor:

I was so enlightened after reading the column by Bishop Matthew H. Clark (C-J November 5: "The prescription for a healthy spiritual life — balance") that I re-read it over and over. Then to be so unhappy for the individual who wrote to the editor ("Likens McBrien's theology to renovated sanctuary") about his discouragement of the newly renovated St. Mary's Church.

On October 18, I purposely attended St. Mary's 11:30 a.m. Mass, although it is not my parish, to see for myself what had been done to the interior. Through my eyes, I saw great openness and beauty. But in my heart, I will never forget the beauty and peace of the Mass itself. The deacon gave the most profound sermon and ended it with the congregation listening to a beautiful song as we all sat silently looking down at our hands, as he asked us to do.

How many times have we taken the time to sit quietly to reflect what a gift God has given us? I urge those who read this to take a few moments to look at your hands. I'm sure you, too, will say, "Wow, these hands have been through a lot of trials. Thank God for them!"

Bea Livernash  
Amsden Drive  
Rochester

Protest legal killing, not warheads

To the editor:

I would like to ask those who were arrested at the Nevada test site on November 8 how many human beings were killed by a nuclear warhead in the last 24 hours? Every 24 hours of every day in this country alone, 4,000 unborn children are literally torn apart in abortions. This is reality. This is not some possibility. This is not an estimation. It happens every single day in hospitals, abortuaries, doctors' offices and in some birth control facilities. It is here with us in this city. You don't have to travel far to find a place that legally kills unborn children.

I urge these folks that took the time and effort to go to Nevada to protest the warheads to join us who protest weekly at places where they kill kids. You won't have to worry about plane fare because it is here in our community.

Mary Ellen Frisch  
Gillett Road  
Spencerport

It won't be as much fun because our protests don't turn into celebrations. We don't do the "hokey-pokey." We pray for the kids who are being offered up to the gods of convenience.

We meet at Genesee Hospital on Saturday mornings at 9 a.m. We pray the rosary at Highland Hospital at 9:30 a.m. every Saturday. If you would really like to get on the front lines and really save lives, Project Life provides instructive classes on sidewalk counseling. Their number is 235-1611. When the reality of the violence of abortion is stopped, I will be glad to join you in protesting warheads. As Mother Theresa said, "Abortion is the greatest destroyer of peace today!"

Reader appreciates 'less legalistic' approach

To the editor:

What a pity that so many of your writers to the editor seem to miss one of the main themes emphasized by Christ during his public ministry. How many times did Christ chastise the Pharisees for their insistence on the letter of the law to the exclusion of the spirit of the law?

Those writers to the editor who so frequently decry the Father McBriens of the Church — yes, the Holy Roman Catholic Church — seem to be under the delusion that salvation is only attainable if one blindly accepts and follows the dictates of the conservative hierarchy of the present-day Church.

All too often that conservative element sounds like Pharisees, for as the Pharisees did, they cry out that the law is the important key to salvation: "Obey! Obey! And you will be saved."

Unfortunately, many find that obeying is going against their consciences, and all of you know what the Church teaches about going against your conscience, or do you?

For the sake of all of us who find that Father McBrien does offer in his column a more spiritual and less legalistic approach to salvation, do not even think of cancelling his column.

Franklin T. Brayer, M.D.  
Lake Lea Road  
Rochester

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