

Editorial & Opinion

Turbulence in the Church indicates new life, growth in faith

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Sunday morning, January 31.

In a few hours I shall leave for Dallas, Texas, to attend meetings of two committees of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. The vocation committee meets from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. tomorrow; the committee preparing the draft of our Pastoral Letter on the Concerns of Women begins at 3 p.m. and runs through the evening. I shall return on an early-morning flight on Tuesday, arriving home at 1:30 p.m.

While I am not much in the mood to make the trip on Super Bowl Sunday, I am happy to serve our conference in two areas of such major importance to the life of the Church. Service on such committees as these has been a significant learning experience for me, because it affords opportunities to learn about the lived pastoral experience of local churches from all parts of our nation. I have found that such exposure has broadened my horizons and has given me a deeper sense of the variety and vitality of the Church's life. I find it also to be an excellent complement to the view of the Church I enjoyed during my years of study and service in Rome. From that point of view, one is drawn to an appreciation of the common and deep bonds of faith and charity that unite the local churches.

At the present time, such an awareness of the local churches and the church universal is not idle musing. It is a central theme for theological reflection, which is of critical pastoral importance in this age of the Church. Such books as *The Limits of the Papacy*, by Patrick Granfield; *The Bishops of Rome* by J.M.R. Tillard, OP; *Vatican and the American Hierarchy* by Gerald P. Fogarty; *The Papacy Today* by Francis X. Murphy, C.S.S.R.; and *Magisterium* by Francis Sullivan, SJ, are examples of the treatment this theme is receiving in academic circles.

Besides books such as these, which draw attention to the theme of the relationship between the Church univer-

Along
the Way

sal and the local church, we have experienced a number of events and issues that raise similar and important questions. I think of Agnes Mary Mansour, *The New York Times* advertisement regarding the abortion question; Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen and the Church at Seattle; Father Charles Curran and the Catholic University; the pastoral study of religious life in the United States; and a similar study of our seminaries. In a slightly different vein, we have the current discussion about the bishops' statement on AIDS and another discussion about a proposed policy to guide procedures to deal with questions disputed between bishops and theologians.

There is considerable diversity among those issues. Some are obviously more important than others. Among the things these issues have in common, however, are that they have all been controversial and they have all illustrated the tension that exists in our Church as our people try to deal with very complex questions in an age of instant communication.

I meet people very often, if not daily, for whom the existence of such tension is a cause for discontent — even of shock. And I must confess to you that there are moments when I wish that such tensions could be driven away by an act of the will or at least be solved rather

easily. In more realistic moments, I am aware that such resolution is not possible. More than that, I do believe that it is in facing such questions with all of the patience, wit, common sense, sense of our history and faith in our God that we can muster, that we find out more about the Lord and build up the Kingdom of God.

Let me add a few closing lines for your encouragement:

1) The existence of such tensions is not new. Indeed, these tensions are inseparably a part of the history of the Church and have very often been sources of great growth when they have been addressed by people of faith.

2) These difficult experiences are not "way out there." They exist in us and in our efforts to work on the school question, in the changing vocation picture we are experiencing, in the great demands placed on our limited resources, in our ever-continuing effort to absorb into our bones and to live out the inspiration of Vatican II.

3) Some people think that pain, tension, uncertainty and disagreement are signs that something is wrong with us and the way we do things. That is always possible, of course, but these feelings can also be part of the daily dying we must experience if we are daily to grow to new life. For that growth to new life, we need to pray for the charity that will hold us together at the deepest level of life, even when our rough edges are exposed by the difficulties of the day.

4) I remain deeply confident that we as a local church are healthy and growing precisely because so many women and men of vision, courage and deep faith are engaged in the slow, difficult work of building the Lord's Kingdom. And I am deeply grateful to all of you for that.

I'll be back from Dallas by the time you read this — and the Super Bowl will be over. If all goes well, I'll be in the hotel in Dallas this evening just before kick-off time.

The score? Washington 31-Denver 27.
Peace to all.

Letters

Writer dismayed
by teen's views

To the editor:

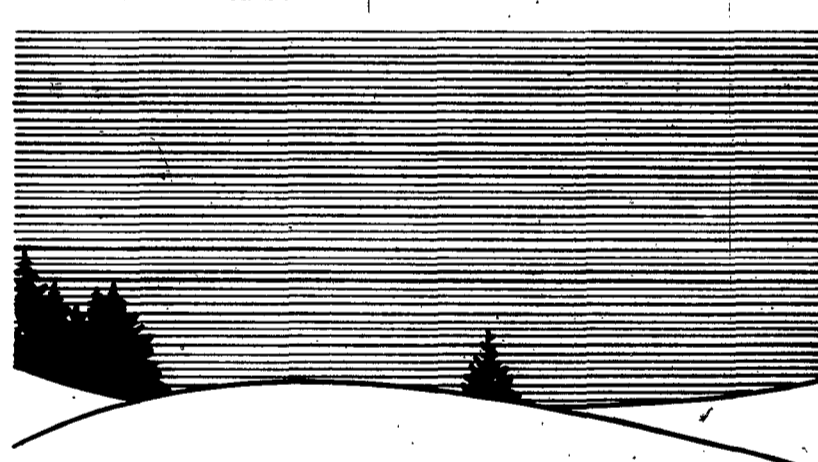
We usually enjoy reading the "As Teens See It" column of the C-J, but were dismayed to see in the January 7 issue that all three teens said, "No, a candidate's personal life should not influence voters in the campaign for the presidency." To quote one of the respondents, "... his personal life will most likely not affect the way he performs in office."

What these teens don't realize is that a person's character — the essence of who he is — pervades both his personal and professional life. If he lies to his family or friends, he will very likely lie to the public. If his judgment is poor in his personal life, it will not be the opposite of that in his professional duties.

Your character is the pattern for your behavior both personally and professionally.

Mr. and Mrs. John Greve
Lawton Drive
Pittsford

PEACE



...is the vast and beautiful stillness of winter



Vicar for religious points to philosophy behind sisters' compensation plan

To the editor:

In your article on diocesan salary increases (C-J January 14: "Committee pegs diocesan salary increases at 6 percent"), the brief paragraph concerning the changes for women religious contains several significant errors. The following statements are inaccurate:

- 1) "because many more religious are living outside convents"
- 2) "and using personal cars"
- 3) "The diocese will allocate a \$1,750 car allowance..."
- 4) "diocesan contributions... will be raised \$50."

Some sisters who formerly lived where they worked, particularly teachers in the Catholic schools, may not be living in communities at their place of ministry, but are not "living outside convents." Many are traveling to ministries such as St. Martin's Kitchen, hospital chaplaincies and diocesan positions at the Pastoral Center which do not provide housing.

The term "personal cars" referred to in the article is incompatible with the (sisters') vow of poverty. Presently, cars are used for personal needs and ministry by an individual and/or community, but are owned by the congregation, parish or diocese. As of July 1, 1988, women religious congregations in the diocese of Rochester will assume the cost of transportation, i.e., the purchase or lease of a car, insurance, repairs, etc. With congregational ownership, cars will not be labeled "ministry," "school" (or) "community" cars, but will be congregational cars, and shared in community as needed. For a sister to use a car for personal needs, for community needs or for ministry needs does not make it a "personal car."

The employer, not the diocese, will pay the congregation \$1,750 not as a car allowance, but as a dollar amount exchange for an "in kind" benefit. Car expenses will no longer be the responsibility of the employer and/or parish.

The employer of the women religious will increase the present retirement benefit of \$1,000 to \$1,500. This is inaccurately described as "a diocesan contribution."

It is very discouraging to have years of study research and committee work so inaccurately described in three sentences. Such a sensitive

issue and difficult decision needs to be specific and carefully researched. Otherwise the mission and commitment of religious today are trivialized and misrepresented.

Sister Muriel Curran, SSND
Vicar for Religious

Service agency thanks volunteers for efforts

To the editor:

I wish to thank the literally dozens of people who answered our call for help in delivering Meals on Wheels over the holidays. With so many of our regular volunteers out of town visiting their own families, there were many vacancies to be filled in order to get the meals to our homebound and elderly patients.

The response was fantastic! Calls came from all parts of the county — people off from work, home from school vacations; several

businesses that expected to have a slow time over the holidays; as well as those who just wanted to give their time and efforts in the spirit of Christmas. We were able to use nearly all who called, and some are able to continue on a weekly basis. We are genuinely appreciative of the generous and loving response from this community.

Christine Wallington
Director of Volunteer Services
Visiting Nurse Service

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