

# Father Curran

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Such accusations have come to the forefront in one pro-choice's organization's legal claim that the U.S. bishops public-policy arm, the United States Catholic Conference, should lose its tax-exempt status because its pro-life efforts violate the separation of church and state.

Responding to a question about this case, Father Curran said the real purpose of the suit — which is now awaiting Supreme Court review — is "merely to get the United States Catholic Conference to open up their books and say how much money they have spent" on the effort.

"Now, I think that's a legitimate request," Father Curran remarked. "I think we should honestly be willing to say what we do with our money?" But he was quick to observe that the case has deeper consequences. The National Council of Churches had filed a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of the USCC because "they are afraid that if you say churches can't get involved in the abortion movement, some people might say you can't get involved in the war question, you can't get involved in the peace question, you can't get involved in the economic question," he explained.

Although Father Curran said those who disagree with the bishops have every right to do so, he challenged them to exercise prudence and "avoid sending out a boomerang that may ultimately prevent (all) churches from speaking out on public-policy issues."

And within the Catholic Church itself, Father Curran asserted, the bishops should admit that it's legitimate for individual Roman Catholics to disagree with their support of a human-life amendment.

"Frankly, I don't think at the present time

that you can get a law prohibiting abortion, just from a purely pragmatic viewpoint," he said, "and therefore, I am opposed at the present time to working for such a position."

Although the theologian chided the National Council of Catholic Bishops for failing to acknowledge that Catholics might in good faith disagree with the bishops' emphasis on the amendment, he praised the NCCB for several of its other public-policy stands. Prime among these was the self-restraint the bishops have demonstrated through the statements they have issued every presidential-election year since 1976.

Father Curran pointed out that "Political Responsibility: Choices for the Future," the bishops' October, 1987, statement anticipating the 1988 election, clearly sets the boundaries within which the U.S. Church will address election issues and candidates.

Quoting from the document, he said, "the bishops specifically do not seek the formation of a religious voting block, nor do we wish to instruct persons on how they should vote by endorsing or opposing candidates. We urge citizens to avoid choosing candidates simply on the basis of narrow self-interests. We hope that voters will examine the positions of candidates on the full range of issues, as well as their personal integrity, philosophy and performance."

"It seems to me that this is the prudential way of doing it," Father Curran commented, noting that the document goes on to list not one but 14 important social issues the bishops think voters should consider.

Likewise, the priest-professor praised the bishops for recognizing that it would be imprudent for the organized church to endorse a political candidate. "To their great credit, the U.S. bishops have recognized this in all the statements they have made since 1976," Father

Curran said.

He pointed out that this year's document is far stronger than its predecessors because it also rules out opposition to individual candidates, especially when such opposition stems from the candidates' positions on a single issue.

"Unfortunately, in past elections, individual Catholic bishops have opposed particular candidates because of their position on one issue," he reminded the audience. "It seems to me very clearly that (such opposition) is in opposition to what the bishops themselves have

said in the past and now are saying very pointedly here . . . They have closed the loophole."

Father Curran further praised the bishops for stating that individual Catholics should avoid single-issue voting. "It seems to me that in the light of the complexity of the issues we face, that it would be imprudent to vote for someone just on the basis of one issue," he said. "I also think that this can tend to be terribly divisive in our society, as we tend to cater to special interests that are involved with only one, particular issue."

## Schools

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voice in the process of changing their school. Sister Theresa Ruty, RSM, the principal of St. James, pointed out that this year's change is actually the second phase of a two-year process.

Toward the end of the 1986/87 school year, enrollment figures indicated that only seven seventh-grade students and 15 eighth-grade students would attend the school during 1987/88. Consequently, parents requested that the seventh-grade students be moved to either St. Ambrose or Blessed Sacrament for 1987/88, but that students entering eighth grade be allowed to continue at St. James.

"If they'd had to go to a junior high last

year, and a high school next year, that would have meant three moves in three years," she explained.

To ease the transition for Annunciation students who will be moving to Blessed Sacrament, Annunciation parents met with parents and the principals from St. Philip Neri and St. Andrew's — two schools that are already sending their seventh-and eighth-grade students to Blessed Sacrament. "(The meetings) helped the (Annunciation parents) to understand what was going on and to feel easier about the change," Brother Walsh explained.

Such efforts may help to offset whatever feelings of sadness and uncertainty parishioners might have. As Sister Kathleen Lurz, SSI, St. Thomas More's principal, observed, "Change is always difficult, but I think we're continuing to work for good, quality Catholic education."

## Cenacle offering Lenten series

The Cenacle Center for Spiritual Renewal, 693 East Ave., Rochester, is presenting a six-week series on the spirituality of the 12 steps. Conducted by Ann Maloney; Sister Ellen Frawley, r.c.; and Sister Margie Mayk, r.c., the six sessions will take place Mondays, Feb. 22

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