

Editorial & Opinion

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Father Jim Mooney's death on Monday of this week marked the end of the brief but powerful priestly ministry he offered on earth to his God and to all of us. By my counting, he died 283 days after his ordination. For almost all of that time the cloud and pain of cancer were with him. For all of that time he shone in his courage and determination to live every moment in union with Christ for the sake of the people whom he loved.

People who knew Jim thought he was a special person. We saw in him a simplicity that allowed him — even impelled him — to seek the truth and to speak the truth when he made it a part of his heart. He possessed the kind of vision and inner peace that enabled him to see the goodness of each person and, somehow, to address that goodness in such a manner that people were able to grow in his presence. Jim had a sense of priesthood that placed him in the midst of people. What he learned of God in their midst helped him to be an excellent servant — a leader for today's Church.

Even when he was physically separated from the community, Jim had a strong relationship with the people he was ordained to serve. He often spoke of the strength he drew from the friendship and prayer of the people at St. Ann's, St. Charles' and St. Andrew's. And I know that he offered his pain and his whole person in union with Christ suffering for the children of the world.

As I remember Jim Mooney this morning, I think of

Along the Way



his beloved father who has suffered so much because of Jim's illness, and I thank God for Mr. Mooney's deep courage. I remember his sisters who were so attentive to him in his special need. I pray for the people of the three parishes mentioned above, in thanksgiving for all that they taught Jim about the Lord's love and with the hope that our gracious God will comfort them in the loss of their dear friend. Most of all I thank God for giving us a priest like Jim, even for so short a time.

I am convinced that the blessings God will give us through Jim's share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ have only just begun. I am convinced that Jim will be a source of Easter blessing for us all, because he so generously and courageously shared the passion of Jesus, our high priest.

And my prayer is that the first fruit of his priestly serv-

ice will be that more men like Jim Mooney will step forward to serve our community of faith in the ordained priesthood. Our need is real and will become greater as the years go by. And I assure you that the life, while frequently demanding, is always joyful and life-giving for those who have eyes to see the goodness of God acting in the hearts of God's people.

I ask you to think about the ordained priests you know and the priesthood you experience in the contemporary Church. What is your reading of that vocation in the Church at the present time? Is it something you find appealing, constructive and life-giving? And if it is, what makes it so for you? Is it unattractive or forbidding to you? And if it is, can you put into words exactly why that's so? Do you talk about priesthood as a vocation of work and significance when you gather in family conversation? Do you know any priests personally and well? Do you pray for them and that others will step forward to take their places when their years are over?

You will render a service to our community if you will pray and think about questions such as these. I am going to ask Jim Mooney to pray for vocations to priesthood in our local church, and I ask you to do the same.

If in the course of that prayer, you have any questions about our vocation programs and possibilities, I invite you to telephone Father Tom Valenti at (716) 328-3210. He will be glad to assist you.

Peace to all.

Letters

God provides to those whose eyes are open

To the editor:

As I was listening to WHAM at 6 p.m. on the Friday evening news, February 12, 1988, I heard what was very disturbing news to me and should be for others. I heard, during a national syndicated interview of a prominent cardinal, that the Church plans to import priests from Africa and other Third World countries. There were also other interviews during which those persons interviewed responded, "God will provide."

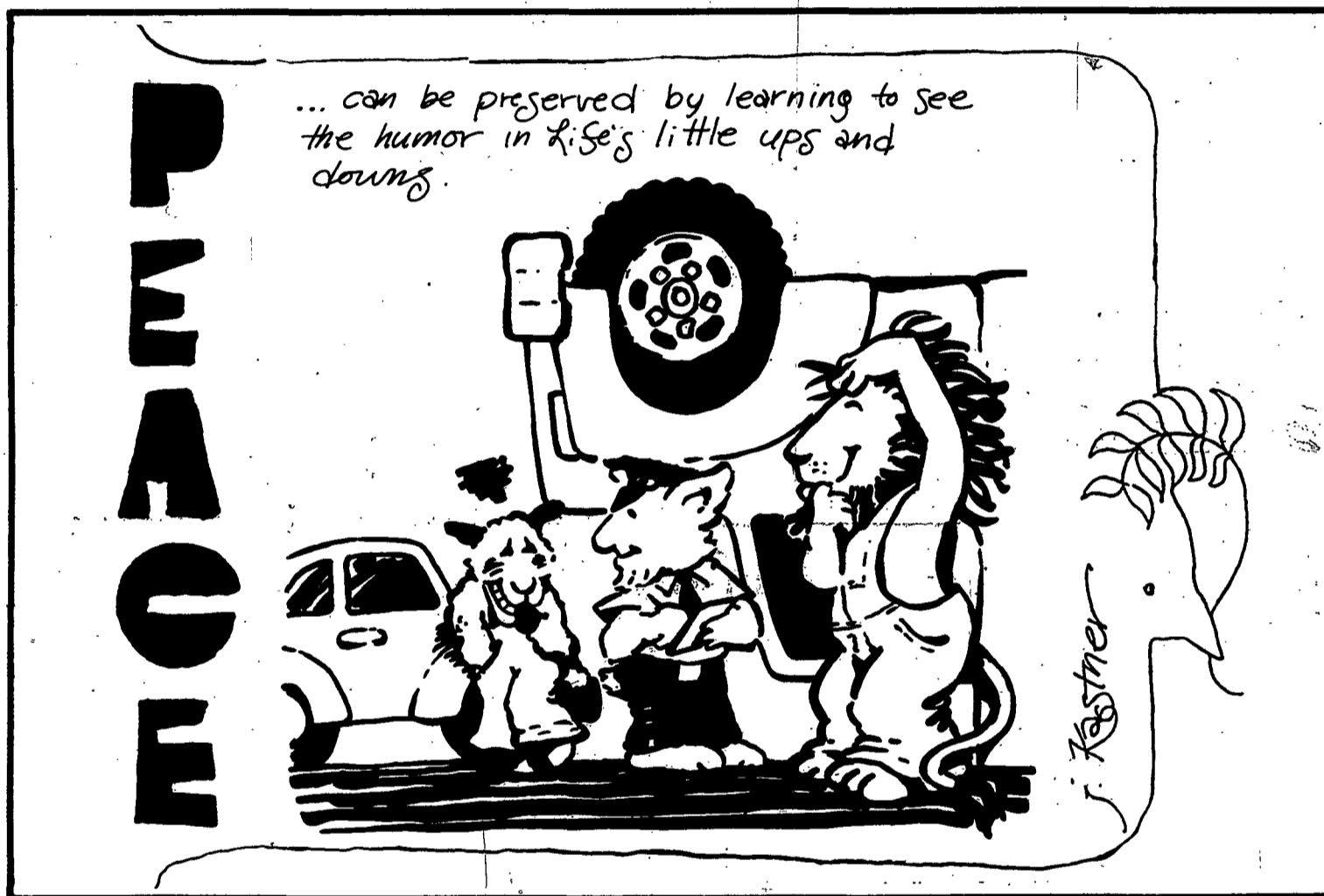
It is most upsetting for the Church hierarchy to respond to the priest shortage in this way. Do they not remember past history when the Church placed priests in parishes which were not of their cultural upbringing? This caused many problems then, and it will cause severe problems now and in the future. How can the hierarchy be so blind?

They say, "God will provide." I say God is providing if only they would open their eyes. Let us look at and take seriously the many gifts the people bring to the community. We call ourselves the Body of Christ. If this is true, let us ordain the many wonderfully gifted people whom God is calling forth to serve His people. The Church already has married ordained clergy in its permanent deacons, and this is a good beginning. However, the change should not stop at this point. There are many women and men being called to ordained priesthood, of which some are married.

There are so many women who are trained, and who have master's degrees in theology with the additional practical experience in dealing with people. It would be a disgrace for the Church to continue to shun them for celibate men. To import priests from another country who are not from our local community is a repeat of a past mistake. A priest, a minister, is to come out of that local community: it is a call from that community because of the gifts he or she has and not a placement.

The Church is also training married men as permanent deacons in many of its dioceses. Many of these men have leadership qualities and most of all love to serve people — to be Christ for others. Why not ordain some of these men to priesthood? In my own parish there are many religious, married women and men who are qualified. The Church in America needs to look at the people here to find the gifts it needs. For God has given us the gifts and all we need to do is to open our eyes and hearts to the Spirit of God, and there we will meet Him face to face.

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Writer offers distinctions on types of civil disobedience

To the editor:

A distinction needs to be made in response to commentary on so-called civil disobedience which occurred in Washington on January 22. Civil disobedience is a form of public protest in response to a perceived evil which is prudentially considered persuasive, but which specific act is not mandated by the moral law. Thus the act of pro-lifers protesting on the steps of the Supreme Court and incurring arrest was a form of civil disobedience. This is to be distinguished from an act which flows from a moral obligation which cannot otherwise be met.

Such is the obligation which is incumbent upon each of us to protect innocent human life if it is within our power to do so. Those who sit-in at abortion "clinics" act with this intent and according to this mandate. If instead of pre-born children, unwanted three-year-old children were being put to death at "clinics," most of us would not hesitate to block the doors so the children could not be led to their death. Those pro-lifers who oppose such action in the case of pre-born children should explain the principle which distinguishes these two cases.

Justification for neglecting this principle might include: 1) conflicting and equally or more compelling responsibilities; 2) ignorance; 3) incapacity. However those who would neglect the principle and deter others on the grounds that it is less effective than political advocacy and harms the reputation of the pro-life movement, have the burden of proving these points, since they would excuse themselves and others from what is in principle a duty incumbent on all. They should demon-

strate: 1) that sit-ins cause the indifferent to become more pro-abortion and 2) that the political process of changing the law can reasonably and imminently be expected to redress the wrong of abortion, and that sit-ins impede this end.

If they cannot meet this burden, they should at least not speak against this response of rescuing those being led away to death (Proverbs

24), and secondly consider whether they in reality are excused from this moral obligation. In a speech to pro-life leaders in March of 1986, Pope John Paul II admitted, "In these matters, I take Mahatma Gandhi as my mentor." Perhaps we should take the pope as ours.

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Why hasn't hierarchy spoken out about band?

To the editor:

A situation arose not too many days ago which should have aroused many areas of our Catholic diocese especially our bishop and the diocesan office, but to date all there is silence. Too often we Catholics find ourselves in a sea of lethargy and can't seem to get out of it. Just recently we heard a lot about a rock group which is using our Holy Mother's name as the group name. It's offensive, or should be, to devout Catholics who hold the Immaculate Mother in reverence. Most rock groups throughout the country are well-intentioned but some insult our senses with their surrealistic tastes, and now we see a disregard of what is dear to our religion. Using Mother Mary as the name for a rock group is insulting and degrading to our Holy Mother but the final straw is the throwing of condoms out to audiences. The reason its said is to help in the effort to curtail the problems brought about by AIDS. The immature audacity of it. How low can people get when striving for attention

and profit?

If it wasn't for a parish priest and three nuns plus the publicity in the local papers, we would still be traveling the silent road of no concern. Imagine, only three nuns and one priest looking out for our Catholic welfare? It's a sad day for the diocese. It's no wonder that so many are leaving the Church and no wonder that we find the morality of our people going down the drain.

So many protest groups have sprung out the woodworks in recent years but how many are for the good of our Church. Catholics of the diocese stop and look at what's going on throughout our diocese and others throughout the country. You can learn much by subscribing to Eternal Word Television and to the good publications available in your parishes. To be silent in our age conveys the word that all is right, a dangerous attitude. What do you say?

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