

Editorial & Opinion

Hundreds pay their last respects to a suffering servant

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Last night and today hundreds of people gathered at Sacred Heart Cathedral to pay their last respects to Father Bob Miller, a priest of our diocese who had served as rector of Sacred Heart for close to 8 years. It was a sad experience in some ways. It is impossible to lose a friend of his character and quality without feeling the loss deeply. It is difficult to lose a priest of his experience, commitment and special gifts without a sense of being impoverished. It is painful to let go of someone who consistently brought such joy to so many in the course of his 32 years of priestly life. People like Bob do not often come our way. Thousands of people will remember him and miss him.

But the gatherings were also sources of joy. They reminded us of God's fidelity and of the wonderful things God did in the heart of Bob Miller through all the years of his priesthood, and in an especially radiant way during the months when he experienced the ravages of cancer. People remembered his courage, his wit, his intelligence, his concern for others and his peace of heart. And most of all, they remembered Bob's offering of the hard experience of those months for the sake of the people among whom he served and whom he loved so dearly.

It was a grace to be with him during that special time. As his body grew weaker the strong core of his spirit came more sharply into focus for all of us. We all had the sure sense that he was daily becoming more like the

Along the Way



Christ to whom he had committed his whole being. And I think we were all touched by the wordless ways in which Bob called us to an awareness of things that really last.

Now his journey among us is over and Bob is at rest with the God who showed him such great favor through the years. We are saddened by his loss, but we find hope in our faith that his life is changed, not ended. And we find inspiration, laughter and new courage in the beautiful memories he leaves us.

As I sit here this evening thinking about the events of recent days, I recall some people who attended and the stories they told about Bob. I remember:

- The woman whose child was the first baby he ever baptized
- A priest of our diocese who wanted to run away as a teenager. He went to Bob, who very gently reminded

the boy of the blessings he had at home

- The man with tears in his eyes who so much wanted Bob to witness his wedding this summer.

- The woman from Auburn who knew Bob when he was a child and who assisted with the preparations for his ordination

- People who came to Sacred Heart from every parish in which Bob ever served to honor the memory of his person and ministry.

- Harold Miller, Bob's father, whose good spirit, faith, courage, stamina and love for his son buoyed all of our spirits.

I shall remember many things about Bob. I am not sure which memories will be strongest as time goes by, but I know the one which puts greatest claim on me now. It is a comment he made after he became ill. Someone asked him if he was afraid of death and Bob replied that he was not afraid of it. He said he was curious about what life with God would be like.

I remember that so well because it speaks to me of his simplicity and the degree to which God's love had driven fear from his heart. In my judgment, that abiding presence of God was the source of the freedom that allowed Bob to give himself so totally for us during his last days of special priestly ministry. I am sure that we will be as much blessed by the way he died as we were by the way he lived.

Peace to all.

Letters

Think of Jessica: save unborn lives

To the editor:

Around April, 1986, a little girl was born in Midland, Texas, and named Jessica McClure. Other than her immediate family and neighbors, no one had ever heard of her. Now, after being entombed for two days in an abandoned well 22 feet below the surface, and a spectacular rescue, she is a worldwide celebrity.

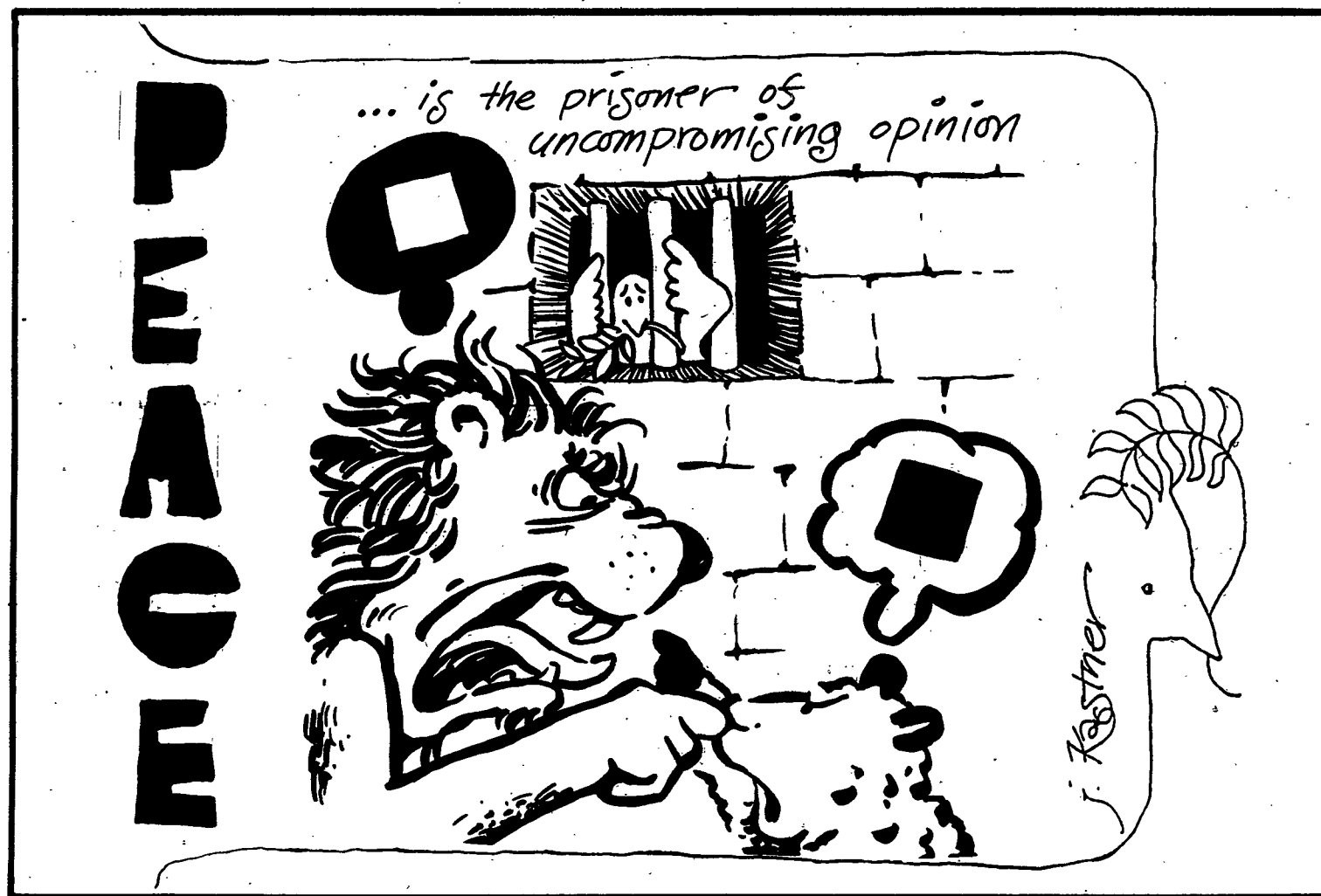
At the time she was born, another rescue took place in St. Louis, Mo., which was largely ignored by the media. Several hundred people participated in an abortion-chamber rescue, or sit-in, where 50 babies a day are routinely killed. There were over 150 picketers, 25 counselors and over 100 people — including my wife and me — who were willing to put our bodies between the abortionists — paid killers — and their victims — mothers and babies scheduled for execution. As a result of our action, the counselors had a little more time and convinced 15 more women to let their babies live. All 15 are alive today and are no different than little Jessica. Yet the world still does not know of the rescue and others that resulted in the saving of thousands of lives.

The media and the public refuses to recognize that millions of babies in America and the world are routinely slaughtered in the womb with a callousness and casualness that defies imagination. Each aborted baby is as human as Jessica, and until ruthlessly dismembered by a paid killer, was as alive in her mother's womb as Jessica was alive in the well. Why isn't there more concern for the innocent victim in the womb? Why aren't there more people willing to help rescue them or at least participate in a routine protest and picket?

One of the 107 people arrested in St. Louis was Joan Andrews. She was the only one not released but was extradited to Florida and sentenced to an incredible five years — solitary confinement — in a Florida prison for another rescue. Where is the outrage by the "dogooders" of this country who tolerate the greatest holocaust in the history of the world and look the other way at the unjust incarceration of Joan Andrews, truly the greatest heroine to emerge since the killing of the unborn was legalized on January 22, 1973?

The world was justifiably thrilled and profoundly grateful when Jessica survived her entombment. Shouldn't we now try to free Joan Andrews and make a more sincere effort to save millions of other Jessicas scheduled to die in the womb?

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Altar boy's example shows error of 'wrongful life' suit

To the editor:

I've never been overly vocal on the issue of abortion; there are so many soapbox crusaders around already! While I am pro-life, even to the point of rescuing spiders in the bathroom amidst my sister's shrieks, I have difficulty finding solidarity with most others due to a slight but crucial difference in philosophies. As it happens, I am also pro-choice. Let me explain: I don't believe in enforced morality. If we educate people, present the alternatives and give support to follow through, we have fulfilled our Christian responsibility. Issuing threats and judgements is taking a giant step outside human jurisdiction. We do more good, instead, by beginning at the start of every child's life with generous amounts of love, fostering both their sense of self-worth and capacity to love others. In that environment, a respect for life will occur spontaneously. We can and must give ceaselessly in the spirit of love, but we mustn't assume the right to make another's moral decisions. If abortion is, as we insist, a moral and not legal issue, we must address it with vigorous preventative measures, not laws. Therefore, the "lawfulness" of abortion ought not to make any difference; Christians have long made a habit of "law-breaking" in the interest of souls.

The January 14 Courier-Journal reported on a case being brought against an obstetrician by a woman who subsequently bore a child

with Down's syndrome. The woman had wanted an amniocentesis hoping to detect a genetic defect which she intended to thwart by abortion. The doctor recommended against the procedure because of the high risk of accidental miscarriage for women of her age. A panel of the District of Columbia's Court of Appeals has decided to allow this "wrongful birth" suit. What a scandalous use of freedom!

Anyone who still believes that there's anything "wrongful" about the birth of the less-than-visibly perfect ought to take a look at the

picture of David Reck that appeared on the Courier-Journal's calendar page recently. Thankfully, Tom and Thelma Reck, with the support of a priest, were able to make the decision to keep and raise their Down's syndrome child themselves. Now, David, the young man, serves Mass daily and helps to keep us mindful of the murderous folly produced by our limiting view of the realm of the Holy Spirit.

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