

Editorial & Opinion

Letters

Would priest shrink from opposition to slavery, clericide?

To the editor:

In a pluralistic society such as exists in the United States, individuals must be given the right to freely express their opinions, even insofar as such opinions encompass the determination of a Christian response on a given issue of public morality — and even if they are wrong. From a purely secular viewpoint I agree with this assessment, as it was expressed in the February 3 lecture given by Father Charles Curran, which I attended. In the lecture, Father Curran expressed his opinions on the propriety of legislative and electoral responses to abortion — the "final solution" to the problem of unwanted preborn children — and, again considered only from an objective secular view, he is wrong. Additionally, of course, assurance for Father Curran's Catholic hearers that his position is wrong comes from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's conclusion that Father Curran's views on abortion "violate the conditions necessary for a professor to be called a Catholic theologian."

Father Curran holds that only the morality necessary for people in a particular society to live in harmony with one another should be enforced by the government. Given the alleged "complexity" of the abortion issue, Father Curran believes that a Catholic can legitimately oppose the enactment of legislation restricting abortion and still consider himself loyal to the Church. Furthermore, in Father Curran's view, it is imprudent to vote for a particular candidate solely because of the candidate's position on the abortion issue. As regards abortion itself, Father Curran has stated that unborn human life can be taken only for the sake of the life of the mother or for a value "commensurate with life itself."

While no one would argue that a pregnancy is not a great inconvenience and even a severe hardship in certain instances, there is nothing complex at all about the result of a "successful" abortion for the individual who is its object — quite simply, it is death. The overwhelming majority of scientific opinion, including that of scientists who favor abortion, holds that an individual human life begins at conception. Father Curran would justify the killing of pre-born humans for a value "commensurate with life itself," but he appears not to realize that in the United States, the fact that an abortion has been performed demonstrates that the mother of the unborn child has made the fatal choice for a "commensurate," or equal-in-measure, value. In Communist China, on the other hand, where compulsory abortions are performed in furtherance of the government's "one-child" policy, mothers are not even permitted to attempt such a measure if they have already reached the "quota" — the government "decides" for them. One wonders: does the alleged overpopulation of a country — where resource distribution is the real culprit — justify such governmental intervention in furtherance of a "commensurate" value, under Father Curran's view?

Clearly, if a society is to live in harmony, it must first live. Based solely upon scientific grounds, Father Curran's argument against pro-life advocacy in the marketplace and in the legislative arena thus collapses in upon itself. Father Curran warns against supporting political candidates based solely upon their opposition to abortion, but would his counsel be identical with respect to other "single issues" such as slavery — certainly a complex issue in the pluralistic society of the 1850s — or, for a graphic example closer to home, the drawing and quartering of clerics?

It is my belief that Father Curran would not shrink from boldly standing against involuntary servitude or clericide in his desire to serve the Truth, notwithstanding the fact that some people might disagree with him. Similarly, I pray that Father Curran will one day fearlessly proclaim — instead of a tepid tolerance of abortion in the name of "pluralism" — compassion, not curettage; abnegation, not aspirators; sacrifice, not saline injections; Divine Life, not satanic death.

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... is the absence of stimulation
that allows us to perceive ourselves

J. Kestner

In areas of disagreement, look to scripture

To the editor:

I am writing in response to Father McBrien's essay of January 28 (C-J Essays in Theology: "Underground ecumenical movement"). In reflecting on his comments, I see considerable truth in his description of the conflict between moderates and traditionalists.

I am, by his description, a traditionalist. And, yes, we can be quite pharisaical if we allow ourselves to be directed by the "flesh" and not the spirit. In areas where there is disagreement, we all need to be brought to the place Paul describes in Philippians 3:15 and 16, "All of us who are spiritually mature must have this attitude. If you see it another way, God will clarify the difficulty for you. It is important that we continue in our course not matter what stage we have reached."

However, many moderates and liberals have taken the sabbath approach by compromising with the world. Indeed some promote the values of the world such as those things (Father McBrien) mentions: premarital sex, pornography, condoms, homosexual rights and legalized abortion.

Paul goes on to say in that same chapter, verses 17 and following, "Be imitators of me my brothers. Take as your guide those who follow the example that we set. Unfortunately, many go about in a way which shows them to be enemies of the cross of Christ. I have often said this to you before; this time I say it with tears. Such as these will end in disaster! Their God is their belly and their glory is in their shame. I am talking about those who are set upon the things of this world. As you well know, we have our citizenship in heaven; it is from there that we eagerly await the coming of our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

It is our privilege and duty to identify with the things of Christ which are revealed in Scripture and taught in the Church.

Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 "Can you not realize that the unholy will not fall heir to the kingdom of God? Do not deceive yourselves: no fornicators (those having premarital sex), idolaters (those who live for anything

but God), or adulterers, no sodomites (those who practice homosexuality), thieves, misers (covetous people) or drunkards (alcoholics), no slanderers or robbers will inherit God's Kingdom."

For this reason we cannot sit idly by and allow these things go unreprieved. It should not be done in a self-righteous way for none of us are righteous, but from a sincere concern for the eternal well-being of their souls. People who practice these things to the end without repentance and conversion will end up in hell. Paul goes on to say in verse 2: "And such were some of you, but you have been washed, consecrated, justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." If we yield our lives to Christ, He will give us through the Spirit, the power to forsake these and other sins which is indeed our conversion.

And, yes, by presenting this line of thought I fall into another traditionalist fault, that of deductive reasoning. We rely on Scripture to

develop our doctrines. Peter gives his statement to the reliability of scripture in 2 Peter 19-21 "Besides, we possess the prophetic message as something altogether reliable. Keep your attention closely fixed on it as you would on a lamp shining in a dark place until the first streaks of dawn appear and the morning star rises in your hearts. Just you must understand this: there is no prophecy contained in Scripture which is a personal interpretation. Prophecy has never been put forward by man's willing it. It is rather that men impelled by the Holy Spirit have spoken under God's influence."

In closing, the Scriptures and the Church call us to a holy life in Christ, to the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit which John beautifully states in 1 John 3: "Everyone who has this hope based on him keeps himself pure, as he is pure."

Theodore E. Veit
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Historian recalls story of priest dying 131 days after ordination

To the editor:

Bishop Clark's words of commendation of Father James Mooney (C-J, Along the Way, Feb. 25), who was taken from us a bare 283 days after his priestly ordination, were justified and touching. I was reminded of the way in which Bishop Bernard H. McQuaid, the founder of the Diocese of Rochester, reacted to the death of Father Andrew J. Brennan, one of his priests who also died young in the priesthood.

Andrew was a native of Rochester, born May 6, 1850. Bishop McQuaid ordained him a priest on May 3, 1874, and assigned him as curate of Immaculate Conception Church. But he was soon stricken with "galloping consumption," and died on September 10 of the same year, aged only 24. A priest for 131 days!

The bishop who had so recently raised him to the priesthood now had the sad duty of presiding at Father Brennan's funeral. McQuaid was not a man who wore his heart on his sleeve. But he could not suppress the emotion of the moment. In his sermon, he began, "The young priest lies still in death before us..." That is as far as he could get. His tears finished the eulogy of this man who "became perfect in a short while."

Bishop Clark said that he intends to ask the late Father Mooney to pray for more priestly vocations in this diocese. A prayer to Father Andrew J. Brennan could also promote that cause. May both rest in peace.

Father Robert F. McNamara
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Bishops seem unconcerned about Vatican's debt crisis

To the editor:

The Vatican is in serious need of financial help. I see no real concern on the part of American bishops to alleviate the situation. The obvious source of help, as in many areas, is the United States of America. The sum needed is not that great.

Is it possible American bishops are sitting on their hands in order to exert liberal pressure on the pope? I don't think the people in the pews, whose wishes are largely ignored by the American hierarchy, would like this harmful attitude, if they could find out about it.

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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: Letters to the Editor, Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.



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