

## Editorial & Opinion

### Free needles no solution

To the editor:

Decisions are being made in several cities to pass out free, sterile needles to intravenous drug users in hopes of curbing the spread of AIDS that occurs when drug abusers procure or share contaminated needles.

In my opinion, such programs will simply provide new needles, many of which will be shared, and will thus promote intravenous drug abuse and the spread of AIDS, frustrate the goals of a society supposedly at war on drugs and obstruct law enforcement in those states, including New York, which otherwise prohibit possession of needles not medically prescribed, e.g. for insulin-dependent diabetics. The AIDS crisis suggests the need for stronger enforcement of such laws rather than establishing programs that weaken these laws.

New York City's free needle program will cost at least \$250,000 a year. The money would be better spent if used to expand drug-treatment programs.

"Shooting galleries" — gathering places where drug users share heroin and needles — remain ever-present in many cities. Certainly, "shooting gallery" participants by now know the AIDS risks. Obviously, the sick nature of drug addiction precludes rational behavior on the part of those who continue to share needles.

Most intravenous drug abusers are apt to commit murder, robbery, prostitution, you name it to maintain their habit. Should we provide intravenous drug users free heroin as an inducement not to commit crimes? Nonsense.

### Until Vatican rectifies accounting, writer donates only to local church

To the editor:

As a child of the Great Depression, I learned early in life the importance of making every penny count and that one should never live beyond one's means.

To our sorrow, we know all about deficit spending in the United States. Now we read about its happening in the Vatican. When problems started in 1976, why weren't steps taken immediately to correct the situation? Instead, spending continued and the facts were hidden from us until they were in such dire straits they had to appeal for help, notably from American Catholics.

Was no lesson learned from the Vatican bank scandal? Strict accounting of monies received within the Church is just as important — perhaps more so — as in the private sector. If a business were run that way, the stock holders would soon cry out for a change in management!

What good does it do if we continue to pour money into the Vatican and spending continues? A case in point is the colossal amount spent on the pope's visit here. Granted, most of that money came from people here, but the Vatican expenditure was tremendous, as well as for the papal visits to other countries.

I can't help but think that our pontiff's purpose could have just as well been served, and

### Columnist should write on odd circumstances of theologian's suicide

To the editor:

After having read Father Richard McBrien's column on the suicide of the conservative Anglican priest (C-J, Essays in Theology, Jan. 28: "Underground ecumenical movement"), I just had to write this letter.

Father McBrien should now do a piece on the suicide of the priest that worked for him in Notre Dame's Theology department.

On August 31, 1987, Rev. Niels K. Rasmussen, OP, was discovered in the basement of his house with a bullet wound in his chest and a .357 magnum lying nearby. Father McBrien was present when the police arrived to find the body amid (what Fidelity magazine described as) "an array of guns, whips, other weapons, handcuffs and unusual paraphernalia" (According to Fidelity) Father Rasmussen left a note stating that he wanted no Christian burial and Notre Dame followed by having two services, the second one being interrupted by a bomb threat.

Notre Dame is the flagship of American Catholic dissent, and Father Richard McBrien is the captain of that ship.

William Smith  
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### Letters

But the purpose for supplying free needles isn't much more realistic. Will the offer of free injections of the addict's drug of choice be the next item on the agenda for drug clinics?

Government has a responsibility to finance research towards an AIDS cure and educational/informational programs to prevent its spread. Drug addicts need help to overcome their chemical dependencies. We need meaningful counseling programs for HIV-positive people and the best possible care of people with AIDS.

Providing free needles is no solution. This permissive approach reinforces chemical dependency and perpetuates the addiction cycle. Whereas the recovery process depends upon the addict becoming "clean and serene," the addict receiving free needles is given another excuse to postpone dealing with his or her drug problem.

The spread of AIDS is just one of many indications that drug abuse in America has reached crisis proportions. The search for realistic solutions must intensify.

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on a modest budget, by his making a series of video tapes, each with a special message for the country intended. The people could then have had a close-up view of him, and an opportunity to listen closely to his message in the comfort and safety of their own homes or churches. The money saved would have fed millions of God's poor.

Last year I protested Vatican waste in a letter to the head of the Propagation of the Faith in New York, which is controlled from Rome, stating that I would withhold my contributions to them until I see some sign of change in Vatican accounting. I had no reply. I also withheld any contribution to Peter's Pence for the same reason. Meanwhile, my charitable giving is confined to the local church, to my parish, the Thanks Giving Appeal, tuition aid for women at St. Bernard's Institute — if the dearth of men entering priesthood continues, women will soon have to run the Church! — and to our own poor and homeless. Here I can see my money at work and know that not one cent is wasted.

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My Dear People:

The song of "Alleluia!" fills the air. The message "Jesus is risen" is spoken once again. The Great Fifty Days of Easter have begun. We have walked with Jesus in his journey from death to new life and find our life's story renewed and refreshed.

With the passing of these Lenten days, our Church has invited us to reflect on the human world in which we live. Sin is a challenge that confronts each person. A faith response often sets the Christian at odds with the world. Yet the consequence of our living faith is the reality that we are to be a people of vision and hope. We are a people who understand that Jesus has overpowered sin and death, and enabled us to be freed from their chains.

Lent of 1988 brought the reality of death to me in the passing of Fathers Pegnam, Mooney, Miller and Maloney. Dealing with the human aspects of farewell is never easy. Christian hope, however, does not leave us isolated or afraid. It allows a deeper faith response and acknowledgment that death does not chain us, but frees us for the new life of resurrection.

Lent of 1988 also gave me the opportunity to visit our sisters and brothers in Tabasco, Mexico. In poverty and struggle against many social pressures, I found hope and a renewed sense of the value of life. Through the ongoing nature of the paschal mystery, human life becomes wonderfully clearer.

I have been in contact with members of our diocesan church in these past days. I have seen in faces and experienced in conversation the dying and rising of individual people. These opportunities also speak of hope and resurrection.

It is my fervent prayer that all enjoy a most joyous Easter season. I invite you in the springlike days ahead to reflect on your experiences of faith, hope, vision and resurrection. It is in just such reflection that we better understand the words of St. Paul: "He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. It is true he was crucified out of weakness, but he lives by the power of God. We, too, are weak in him, but we live with him by God's power in us!"

May you know the presence of the Risen Lord with you.

Your brother in Christ,

†Matthew H. Clark  
Bishop of Rochester

