

Editorial & Opinion

Diocese supports 'strong and proud' mission tradition

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

I am grateful to you for the warm support you have given my decision to take a sabbatical leave to study the Spanish language at Cuernavaca, Mexico. As I told you when I first made the decision, I did so with some misgivings. Should I take several months for this purpose? If I should, is this a good time? Is it fair to ask already hard-working co-ministers to take on extra duties in my absence? Should I be doing something that so few people would ever be able to do? In the end, I decided that it would be a very good decision because it would be fruitful for me as a person and as a servant of our community of faith. Thanks so much to all of you for your encouragement.

The prospect of beginning that program in mid-October has come more alive for me this week as we prepare for diocesan Mission Sunday. On that day we pray for and extend our support in a special manner to sisters and brothers from our diocese who serve among our friends in Brazil, Chile and Tabasco, Mexico. For more than 20 years now our Sisters of Mercy have served in Chile and our Sisters of St. Joseph have served in Brazil. Our time of service in our sister diocese of Tabasco has been shorter, but our collaboration with them already numbers more than 10 years.

It has been my great privilege to visit our missionaries and the people they serve several times since I became your bishop. It is always a joy to be among them, not

Along the Way



only because they are warm and welcoming people but also because they are such powerful, living reminders of so much of what is good about the Church, our community of faith.

They remind us:

- That we are all missionaries by virtue of our baptismal vocation and our common call to be loving disciples of our Risen Lord.

- That the power of God operates most deeply in our human weakness and that we are blessed to be in the presence of people we describe as poor, because they show us so profoundly the loving face of Christ.

- That nothing is absolutely sure in this life, save that God will always love us and will never stop calling us to deeper life.

- That we all still have much to learn about Jesus,

the Church and the Kingdom of God, and that our friends in Latin America are quite willing to share what they have with us.

- That when we offer our spiritual and material gifts to our companions on the journey, we walk with surer stride and clearer vision.

- That we are all called to ongoing conversion every day that we live, and that we are most docile to God's converting grace when our concern is directed toward others rather than toward ourselves.

The record of support for our diocesan missionaries by the people of our diocese is a strong and proud piece of our history. I ask you please to honor and strengthen that life-giving tradition by your generosity on diocesan Mission Sunday. Please hold especially in your prayers our missionaries who extend the life of our local Church beyond our own borders and who remind us so powerfully of the bonds of faith and charity that join us to our sisters and brothers in Latin America.

Finally, let me ask you please to make a generous financial offering to the diocesan mission collection, which will be taken up in your parish church this weekend. Because it is so much needed and because it will be put to such good use, I ask you to make a gift that is truly sacrificial. If we are all willing to do that, we will offer a large piece of hope to friends very much in need. In doing so, we will inevitably enrich our own lives. Peace to all.

Letters

Funeral conflict shows Church must wake up

To the editor:

The recent death of my uncle, Mr. Henry Sidoti brought to my mind the terrible CRISIS we have in the Roman Catholic Church — and in particular our diocese.

My uncle died on the Sunday of the week "all" priests were at the Convocation '88 — near Syracuse. Father Ron Stacey said he'd come back for the funeral. I said I'd try to find a priest myself and call him back.

I called my friend, Father Raymond G. Heisel at (Mother of Sorrows), to see if he was free on Wednesday to celebrate my uncle's funeral Mass at St. Andrew's. He couldn't. He was already booked for three major duties that day. He suggested Father Paul Cuddy at Holy Trinity, Webster. He called me back and said, "Yes" he was available for a 11 a.m. Wednesday funeral Mass. However, he couldn't come for the prayer service at Falvo's the night before because he was saying Mass at the Hill Haven Nursing Home that evening.

My Aunt Jean, the Sodoti, Messare, and Rafter families are all grateful to Father Cuddy for helping us celebrate my uncle's death with a Mass.

My question: What will happen when our "retired" priests really are able to retire and enjoy the fruits of their labor in the priesthood?

This is truly a crisis. We must explore other persons for ministry. When are we, as Church people, going to wake up???

Anne Messare
Scrantom Street
Rochester

Priest is 'a perfect gentleman'

To the editor:

We wish to thank Bishop Matthew H. Clark for encouraging Father Charles Curran to spend some time in Ithaca. We have heard Father Curran speak as a homilist, as an invited speaker, and have visited with him on a one-to-one basis. We have found him to be kind, caring, articulate and totally open to dialogue. He is a perfect gentleman, an international scholar and a credit to the priesthood.

We totally support his views and hope that God gives him the courage and fortitude to "stay the course."

He has many empathetic and sympathetic friends.

John and Joan Novak
Slaterville Road
Ithaca

'Better dead than Red' discounts God's saving power

To the editor:

The May 5 edition of the *Courier-Journal* carries a letter from Robert Bart of Ithaca ("Better to risk nuclear war than to live under communists"), in which he criticizes Pax Christi-USA (re: C-J article of April 21) for describing the policy of nuclear deterrence as a sinful situation and evil. Mr. Bart argues that it is better to risk nuclear war than to live under a communist regime. This thought, that it is "better to be dead than Red," expresses human fear, but it denies Christian faith. Our faith in God, who is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, leads us to experience the goodness of God's creation and to have eschatological hope. Both the goodness of divine creation and our hope in God are denied by nuclear deterrence.

The biblical story of creation (Genesis 1:1-2:3) expresses the Judeo-Christian belief that God created the universe and that God's creation is good. The willingness to risk universal destruction expressed by the deployment of nuclear weapons in a strategy of deterrence denies divine creation, or at least proclaims that only certain human creations — such as particular economic, social and political structures — are good. Those who

prefer to be "dead rather than Red" do not believe the biblical proclamation of the goodness of God's creation; rather they profess a central tenet of Marxism — that economic structures are primary and determinative.

Speaking to the Religious Consultation on SALT in September 1979, a week after his U.S. Senate testimony on the SALT II treaty, Cardinal John Krol (recently retired archbishop of Philadelphia) spoke of the issue in terms of Christian eschatological hope. At one point he said:

"This does not mean we accept as inevitable the conquest of the world by a totalitarian system. The history of certain countries occupied during World War II shows that there are other means of resistance which are in keeping with the nature of human beings. The history of certain countries under communist rule today shows that not only are human means of resistance available and effective, but also that human life does not lose all meaning with the replacement of one political system by another. History goes on and political systems are subject to change. As long as life exists there is hope, hope that God's grace will enable suffering and oppressed peoples to endure. A nuclear holocaust would wipe

out hope. Therefore, we must resist tyranny and aggression by every human means, but not act in an irrational and suicidal way, and thus forfeit the grace which God will otherwise give us to enable us to persevere."

The cardinal is willing to risk another Hitler or Stalin rather than risk that a nuclear holocaust would close the future and destroy hope. His is not a totally spiritualized, post-historical, post-earthly hope in life after this world — a hope that gives up on creation — but a radical hope in God's transforming power in this world as well. On the other hand, those who prefer to be "dead rather than Red" slight the saving activity of God and have no hope. They accept the Marxist view of the progress of history expressed in the Brezhnev Doctrine, that once a country is socialist it will never revert to another system.

Our fears regarding totalitarian governments certainly have a basis in reality. Even so, the Christian response is not to threaten to abort the world. Our faith shows us that we are to become God's agents in working for human mutual understanding, cooperation and solidarity (Matthew 5:33-48).

Father Gary Tyman
Empire Boulevard
Rochester

Columnist should do survey on priestly garb

To the editor:

Father McBrien's "Essays on Theology" do need a more appropriate title, as suggested by one of your readers. This recent column on the Roman collar (C-J April 7: "Do collars make the priest?") is neither an essay nor theology; rather it is, like so many of his articles, a critical analysis on human thinking.

To name a few more appropriate titles: "Psychology for the Limited Catholic Mind;" "A Challenge to Common Sense;" or "A Guide to Intellectual Process."

Some of the replies reported were rather silly, and not worth mentioning; however, there are many people out there with more intelligent answers, if (Father McBrien) were to make an official survey himself. Of course priests like doctors is a full time job — and not emergency.

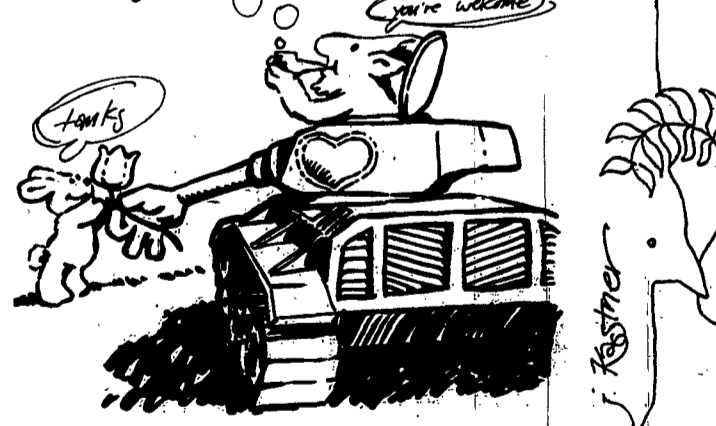
The Roman collar is an important means of identification. Would he have a general or an admiral cast aside his uniform and wear T-shirts or plain slacks? What is an officer of the law without his uniform and badge? Would Father McBrien have the pilot of a large passenger liner dressed in blue jeans? Why do judges wear robes? Even the little boy scout is proud of his uniform for what it represents. The old saying that "it is the uniform that a soldier salutes — not the man," sums it all.

Father McBrien ignores the fact that all these people are special, just as he is. Would he consider it appropriate if someone were to address him as "Dick" or "Say you ...?" Moreover there is no such thing as an off-duty priest in the real sense.

Frank Constantine
North Ft. Myers, Florida

PEACE

... is a war in which love is the only weapon and fear the only casualty.



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