

Editorial & Opinion

Gifts of various groups demonstrate God's spirit at work

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark
Friday, May 27.

I write early this morning. When I finish this column, I'll leave for a breakfast meeting with a friend and then will go on to celebrate the eucharistic liturgy with the class of 1988 at Cardinal Mooney High School.

The seniors at Mooney will be quite excited today, as such groups always are when they observe the rites that signal the end of their secondary school education. It is fun to be among them, not only to observe their joy but to be charged with their enthusiasm and charged with their life. There is something wonderful about our young people, which leaves me more hopeful about life whenever I have the opportunity to be with them.

But young people are not the only ones who possess such gifts. I think of three other groups I've been with this week who were special reminders to me that God's spirit works among His people in wonderful, if sometimes very quiet ways.

I think first of a gathering on Thursday of my seminary classmates from the Diocese of Albany who gathered at St. Edward's in Clifton Park to enjoy a celebration just among ourselves of 25 years of priesthood. Twelve of us were ordained in that class, and 11 attended the reunion.

Along the Way



I have served outside my home diocese for the last 16 years and had not been together with that group for at least that long. It was a wonderful experience to be with them again. We celebrated the Eucharist together, enjoyed a lasagna supper prepared by some kind parishioner, and spent the evening remembering the people and events through which our friendships first were formed. It was a joyful experience to enjoy, once again, the easy friendship we have had for so long and to catch up on the beautiful ways in which beloved co-workers have been trying to love the community in which they serve.

The second group I think of, I met more in circumstances of work than in a leisure setting. It was yesterday at an all day gathering of the central committee of

our five-year financial planning group. I won't list all of their names here, but I will say that they are an extremely able and committed group who represent an even larger number of persons who have worked tirelessly for over two years to offer solid guidance about how we will best move into the future.

People ask occasionally if we enlist the service of volunteers on diocesan projects. The group yesterday was an excellent example of the enormous amount of time and energy so many of our men and women offer freely for the common good of our community of faith. We all owe them our great gratitude for all that they contribute to us.

Last but not least, I think of my nieces. I didn't see them all on my brief visit to Waterford for our class reunion. I saw Jane, Mary Ellen and Kathleen, spoke with Grace on the telephone and, unfortunately, lost out completely to Margaret's demanding babysitting schedule. You often ask about the kids, and I am grateful for that. They are all wonderful, but you'll have to accept that as coming from one who believes that uncles were invented to spoil their nieces and to defend them fiercely whenever they are put upon — as frequently they are — by their parents and grandparents.

Peace to all.

Calling deterrence a sin is disservice

To the editor:

Father Gary Tyman's comments (C-J Letters, May 12: "Better dead than Red" discounts God's saving power") stop well short of accomplishing a complete consideration of the principles and reflections intrinsic to the subject of nuclear deterrence.

To portray nuclear deterrence as sinful as Pax Christi does is a disservice of major magnitude.

What are these other considerations that must be used if we are to have an equiponderate, significant outlook and conclusion?

They comprise 1) application of the criteria of the just war theory as set down by the popes and by the various conferences of bishops, to nuclear weapons, and 2) to follow legitimate moral principles.

Defense of course is an important segment of the just war theory. If nuclear weapons are used in a legitimate way, i.e. following legitimate moral principles of defense, greater good will be achieved because such weapons will never have to be used: the ultimate sign of successful defense policy as witness the deflection of the "Russian Bear" from nuclear terror for 40 years.

Alternatively if we were to abandon nuclear deterrence, we would be confronted with the situation cited in Joseph P. Martino's recent book, *A Fighting Chance: The Moral Use of Nuclear Weapons*, (Ignatius Press) on pp. 280-281, "The alternative (to thinking about the moral use of weapons) is to concede the use of nuclear weapons to only those who recognize no morality. By doing that we would abandon all that is decent in the world to the dubious mercies of the Hitlers, the Stalins, the Pol Pots, the Idi Amins of history. It would fly in the face of the consistent teachings of the Church from Augustine to John Paul II!"

Letters

One of the most interesting aspects of Martino's book is his discussion of the number of people killed in totalitarian systems in peace time compared to those killed in war (pp. 167-182).

But his most piquant observation is the injury done to the very truth of Christianity with this policy of anti-nuclear deterrence. If the ideal of Christianity is "pure pacifism" then what follows in practice is that Christianity cannot be live. "When people recognize that (Christianity) is impossible, they set no limits on the possible" (p. 278). In other words those who believe that there can be no moral use to nuclear weapons will in actuality be tempted to abandon Christianity because it does not provide either the moral ideal or the immoral practical.

Martino understands Christianity as a religion that is not a mere ideal impossible of existence, but a practical reasoning intelligence that can understand and work out what is moral even in extremely dire circumstances. A position which envelopes moral, practical, carefully based knowledge — founded in good sense, reason, and the clear perception of what is at stake — of what the realities are.

I think these considerations must be included in any evaluation of the moral acceptability of nuclear deterrence.

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Why no funds for House of Mercy?

To the editor:

In the wake of the recent appeals for Mission Sunday featured in the Courier-Journal (Advertisement, May 12: Diocesan Missions Collection), I have a concern and an opinion. The concern I have has to do with the decision of the Office of Urban Ministries not to provide funding for the House of Mercy, Rochester, N.Y. I believe that there exists a real discrepancy in the local church when it is willing to travel thousands of miles at enormous cost across language and cultural barriers to do missionary work in another country and yet turns its back on the poorest of the poor in our midst. The House of Mercy represents just such a vital link on Rochester's north side. It is unique in the service it renders to Rochester's poorest. The Church has decided to exercise a preferential option for the poor, but apparently the Office of Urban Ministries has decided otherwise.

Recently, in our refectory at the Abbey (of the Genesee, Piffard), a book was read on the life and work of Mother Teresa. I cannot help but make a comparison. If Mother Teresa were to come to Rochester to start a community, she would no doubt start at or near the House of Mercy. She would appeal to the members of

the local church to help her do something beautiful for God. She would insist on serving the poorest of the poor in our midst without distinction. This is precisely what the House of Mercy is already doing and what it stands for. I realize, of course, it looks better in the headlines when we pat ourselves on the back for building up the Church in Chile, Brazil, Bolivia and Mexico.

Last fall the bishop gave his blessing to the House of Mercy, and there was some publicity about that, and yet this spring the blessing is taken back in the form of rescinded funds. I am reminded of Solzhenitsyn's comment in *From Under the Rubble*, "Whole spiritual deserts are eating into our life and laying waste to great patches of it, and it is only in overcoming these that we can win for ourselves true and not bogus prestige. Should we be struggling for warm seas far away, or ensuring that warmth rather than enmity flows between our own citizens" (p.134). I am not against ministry work in any form but it seems to me we need a more consistent structuring of our priorities.

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Religious garb is vocational model

To the editor:

As a supplement to the letter by Frank Constantine of North Ft. Myers, Florida (C-J, May 12: "Columnist should do survey on priestly garb"), I would like to add another dimension.

Needless to say, the Church of today and the future faces a serious crisis because of the lack of needed conventional vocations for both the priesthood and religious. As basic and elemental as it may seem, let me make this case. Today the key term is "role model," the more visible and distinctive the better. Granted, and thank the good Lord, there are many, many good people who by their example fulfill this role in a general sense for their lay brethren. If this theory has any merit at all, why then would it not be correct to presume that the visible and special identification of the Roman collar or the simplified habit of today would have impact on those who might be getting the "calling." Undoubtedly, they are impervious to it and the commitment — or if I might be permitted to use the archaic, sacrifice — that it involves because of the materialism that

abounds in our society of today. Might I therefore suggest again, as prosaically as it may seem, that this identification mark which Mr. Constantine points out in his letter they should be proud of, might well be just the sign they may need to arouse consideration to that "calling." If there ever was any credulity to this term, I doubt that God is making fewer today than in the past.

I shudder to think that those who have heeded this call themselves are now deterred by that other modern label, "peer pressure," of their secular counterparts. They should be proud of their distinction and wear the garb — even modified — that makes them stand out from the rest.

No one expects perfection, but human nature is such that we all need and want someone we can recognize as special and someone to look up to — reminding us more vividly they stand for and with HIM.

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People not aware of whole story on Medjugorje

To the editor:

A couple of letters in your paper and a plethora of chatter about the alleged visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary appearing at Medjugorje, Yugoslavia, made it all too apparent that these good people are not fully aware of the whole Medjugorje story.

The case against these visions is vast and voluminous, so I will pick three. The late Hamish Fraser — editor of "Approaches," Scotland — warned last year that these supposed visions were "a means being utilized by Satan to subvert the message of Fatima." Secondly, the heretical statements supposedly made to the visionary Helena in 1983: "give me the grace to love all men as you loved Jesus Christ ... give me the grace to be merciful towards you ... if, by chance, I should lose your grace, I ask to restore it to me." Catholics will note also the

stupidity of these assertions. Finally the local bishop along with thirty three of his fellow bishops have condemned these events "that merits the depths of hell!"

It must be remembered that Fatima is the last authentic appearance of Our Lady and since then there have been numerous bogus ones. The facts point that Medjugorje is but another. The following by the local Ordinary there will hopefully cool the emotions of many and begin a cautious and through investigation of the events at Medjugorje: "I am firmly convinced that no responsible person will dare to defend the apparitions. The contrary arguments are too strong. It is only to be aware of them."

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