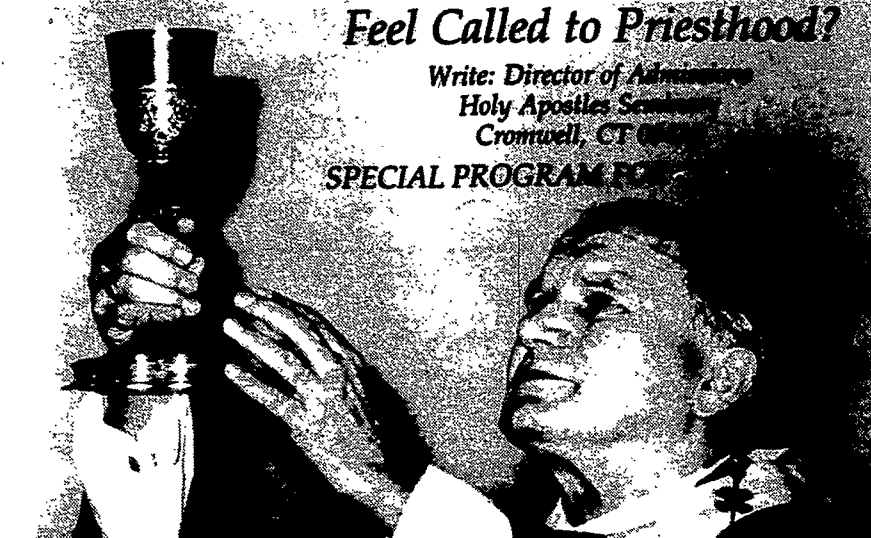


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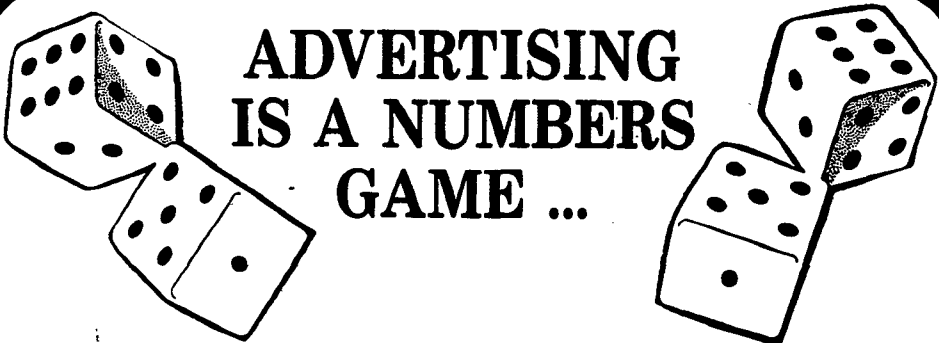
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Columnists

Just who do I call my neighbor?

By Cindy Bassett

To: Theophilus*
 From: Luke

Huge crowds turned out to see Jesus everywhere that he went to preach. However, not everyone who came wanted to become his real followers. You see, Theophilus, the Pharisees and experts in Hebrew law were certain that Jesus had come to destroy the laws given to Moses by God long ago. So they were always asking Jesus questions in an attempt to trick him. But there is much more to being a follower of Jesus than reciting laws ...

"Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life in the kingdom of God you preach about?" a young lawyer in the crowd stood and asked Jesus.

Jesus knew exactly what was in this man's heart, so he posed a question to him in reply. "What do the laws of Moses say about this?"

"It is written in the law that we should love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. And that we should love our neighbor as we love ourselves," the young man answered.

"You have spoken well," Jesus said. "Go and do this and you shall live forever."

But the lawyer was still not satisfied, and so he asked Jesus, "Just who is my neighbor?"

This time, Jesus did not answer him directly. Instead, he turned to the crowd and told this story:

"A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho by way of a certain road that was known to be very dangerous. There were many places where robbers could hide in ambush.

"Sure enough, this man was overtaken by robbers. Not only did they take all of his money and possessions, but they beat him and left him for dead along the roadside.

"A short time later, a priest came along. Even though the fellow was badly in need of his help, he went right by. So, too, with a Le-

The Bible Corner

vite who hurried along to the duties that he needed to perform at the temple. The poor man was as good as dead now.

"A few hours later, a Samaritan was traveling along this same road. When he saw the man lying there, he stopped. After he had bandaged up his wounds, this Samaritan put him on his donkey and took him to a nearby inn, where he waited on the man.

"Before he left, the Samaritan went to the innkeeper and said, 'I will come back in a few days. Here is some money. Get this man anything that he needs. When I return, I will pay you for any additional expenses.'"

Jesus paused, then turned again to the lawyer, and asked, "Which of these three men was a neighbor to the man who was robbed?"

"Why the Samaritan, of course," the lawyer replied. "He was the only one who showed any mercy."

Who is our neighbor, Theophilus? Everyone we meet in our journey through life. Jesus' followers will not be known by their ability to recite God's laws, but rather by the love they have for everyone they encounter.

* Theophilus was an important Roman government official living in Antioch who wanted to know more about being a follower of Jesus Christ

Scripture reference: Luke, Chapter 10:25-37.

Meditation: A true neighbor reaches out to others in need with no thought of reward for himself.

Candidates and 'legalized murder'

By Father Richard P. McBrien

Even though our bishops have consistently urged Catholics not to vote for political candidates on the basis of one issue alone, many Catholics will do exactly that this November.

Such Catholics have been saying, or strongly implying, that a vote for Governor Michael Dukakis is a vote for abortion, while a vote for Vice President George Bush is a vote against abortion. For them, the issue is that clear-cut.

Just as in 1984, when conservative Catholic guns were lobbing heavy artillery on Geraldine Ferraro, her opponent George Bush's own ambiguous record on abortion was left unexamined and uncriticized. That should not be allowed to happen again this year.

If some Catholics are to vote on the basis of a single issue, contrary to their bishops' urging, then they should be challenged to do so in a fair-minded and morally consistent manner.

If they're going to charge that Michael Dukakis supports legalized murder because he opposes making abortion a crime, then they have to acknowledge that George Bush also supports legalized murder because he, too, opposes making abortion a crime, at least under certain circumstances.

George Bush favors legalized abortion in the cases of rape, incest, and danger to a mother's life. In taking that position, he departs not only from the language of the Republican platform, but also from the clear and unmistakable teaching of the Catholic Church.

When challenged recently by the press to explain the discrepancy between his own relatively liberal position on abortion and that of the national platform, Bush replied: "The platform states the position of the platform, but nobody in our party takes a litmus test that says that everybody has to agree on every issue."

When a reporter persisted by asking him to reconcile the differing views, Bush shot back: "Well, go read the platform. I've given you the Bush position, try and figure it out" (*New York Times*, September 10, 1988).

Bush's own awkwardness on the abortion issue was previously evident in the 1980 and 1984 campaigns. In 1980, while running for the GOP presidential nomination against Ronald Reagan, Bush held the position to which he has now returned eight years later; namely, that abortion should be legal in the cases of rape, incest, and danger to the mother's life.

Once nominated to be Reagan's running mate, however, George Bush changed his position to bring it into line with Reagan's.

When President Reagan and Vice President Bush ran for re-election in 1984, the abortion issue occupied a much greater role than it has thus far in 1988. In 1984, as in 1988, Bush's

Essays in Theology

personal position was subject to press scrutiny.

On Sept. 11, 1984, Bush told reporters in Columbia, S.C., that he would personally approve of abortion in the case of rape, but that he wouldn't favor the use of public funds to pay for such abortions. The press noted that he had taken the opposite position in 1980.

Bush said that he was hesitant to take questions on abortion, and that he wanted to exercise his right as an American "to remain silent."

When asked if he thought his credibility had been damaged by his assertion that his position on abortion had not changed, when indeed it had, he said: "No. There's an awful lot of things I don't remember" (*New York Times*, September 12 and 24, 1984).

According to official Catholic teaching, every single abortion is immoral. There are no exceptions. The fetus inside the body of a raped woman or of a woman violated by her own father or of a woman whose life would be endangered by a continued pregnancy is just as innocent and has just as much right to life as any other fetus.

George Bush, however, believes that the law should not protect every innocent fetus' right to life. He would make some exceptions. It follows, therefore, that both of this year's presidential candidates favor "legalized murder." Their differences are only a matter of degree, not of kind.

Consequently, for those Catholics who intend to cast their ballots this year on the basis of the single issue of abortion, their vote for Bush has to be labeled for what it is: a vote for the lesser of two evils.

The choice this year is not between one candidate who favors abortion and another who opposes it. The moral and political reasoning of conservative Catholics might be taken more seriously within the Church if they would acknowledge this to be the case. And their credibility would rise even more substantially if, in the uncompromising defense of all innocent human life, conservative Catholics were to hold Bush's feet to the fire with nearly as much determination as they hold Dukakis'.

But this assumes a capacity for fair-mindedness and moral consistency — qualities that seem to be in short supply on the Catholic right, especially during political campaigns.