

Editorial & Opinion

Response 'scoped' the issue

To the editor:

Your response to my letter (C-J Sept. 22) was disappointing in that it scoped the issue in a limited way by referring to it as an event covered by your reporting. The issue is larger than a particular event — it is the general tendency in your publication to discard or allot but casual cognizance to the conservative Christian point of view.

As an example, on an important subject like theology you offer only what Father Richard P. McBrien expounds. Though Father McBrien is chairman of the theology department at Notre Dame University, he has authored two volumes on *Catholicism* in which serious doctrinal errors have been found by both the Australian and American bishops.

Father McBrien's columns have an adroitness in their expositions designed to impress the reader with a commonality that reduces the spirituality of an event. In this process, he often is not above depicting the conservative Catholic (Christian) as an obtuse personage.

For confirmation of the above examine Father McBrien's September 22 column "Distinguishing temptation from sin." He goes about as far as he can and succeeds in advancing one more step to the illusion that would mythologize a sense of guilt. This is done by emphasizing the humanity of Christ to the detriment or obscurity of his divinity — His Oneness with God.

If Jesus Christ is one with God as He states, "If you had known me, you would also have known my Father, and henceforth you do know him, and you have seen him" (John 14:7), then Father McBrien has taken a long step in desacralizing the entire event of the redemption with his column.

By portraying Jesus as uncertain about himself, to be subject to the upheavals of sexuality as Father McBrien does in his column is to exhibit a theology that does not accept God as perfect. His theology ignores Jesus's birth from the Blessed Virgin, that He was not the heir of Adam's sin and therefore not subject to the weakness of fallen man. Logic alone dictates that a perfect God, the Creator of man and the universe, would not behave thus.

We must understand that Jesus as the second Adam represents humanity in its original uncontaminated form. His human nature is not marred by concupiscence. Although He is fully human — as well as fully God — and although during His earthly life He truly experienced human feelings and underwent temptation, He never once granted internal assent to temptation; never once did He fantasize about sin or betray His divine mission.

Sexual fantasies such as Father McBrien apparently attributes to Jesus in his column are more than mere "temptation," they constitute actual sin. Jesus Christ said that impure thoughts are sinful and defile people: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, immorality, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man" (Matt. 15:19-20).

Finally let us refer to what Father Ronald Lawler, a distinguished scholar and theologian declares: "Jesus, the Son of God, is in His human nature perfect man. He is fully God and fully man. Christ was entirely without sin all the days of His life on earth. 'He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips' (1 Peter 2:22). 'He is one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning' (Hebrews 4:15, 7:26; 1 John 3:5). Indeed to know who Christ is, that He is God and the Son of God, is to realize that He is entirely in-

Letters

capable of sin because of the divine dignity of His Person?"

(Father Lawler continues): "The Gospels indeed portray Christ as undergoing temptation, but never as feeling any inclination toward evil such as we in our concupiscence experience. Rather He was assailed from without by Satanic malice. In His agony He felt sorrow and fear, and a desire to escape the cross the Father wished Him to endure. Yet this clear sign of His true humanity involved no evil intent or disobedient will. Rather in spite of every strain, His human heart was steadfastly fixed on his Father's will. "Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Declaring that His Father remained always with Him, Jesus said: 'I always do what is pleasing to Him' (John 8:29). (Father Ronald Lawler, *The Teaching of Christ*, Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1983, pp. 91-94).

Yet Bishop Clark persists in serving the theological fare of a Father McBrien in our diocesan newspaper. Is there no room "at the inn" for the substantive fare of another theologian of national repute to counter McBrien?

In this regard, may I suggest featuring the reprinting of the weekly general audience homilies of the pope from *L'Osservatore Romano*, English language edition. They provide excellent theological insights to the true foundations of our Faith.

William T. Hammill
Clardale Drive
Rochester

Writer finds candidates tied on respect for life

To the editor:

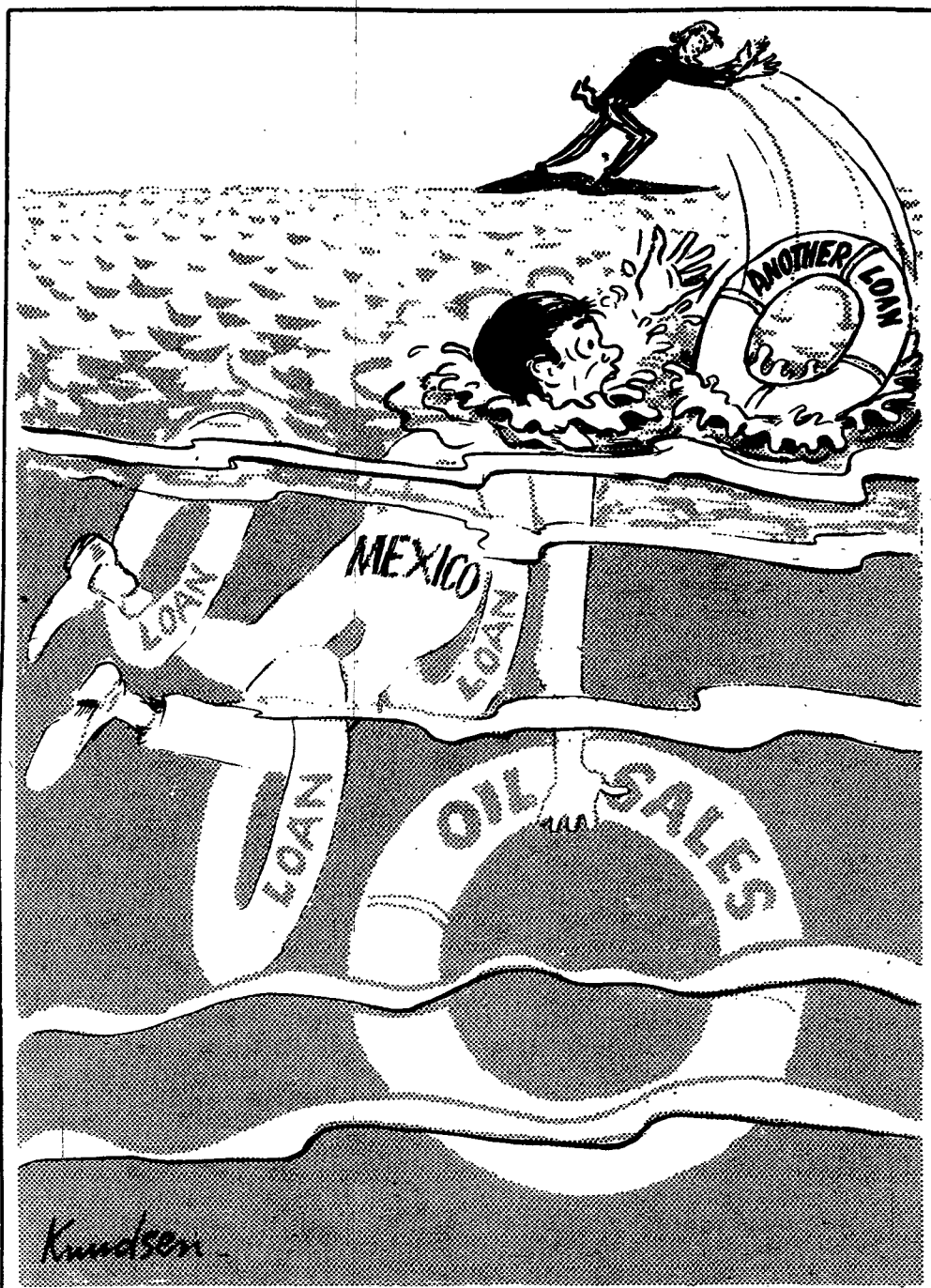
On the issue of "respect for all life," I find Bush and Dukakis TIED! Bush may be against abortion in some cases, but he is for abortion in the case of rape, incest and the life of the mother. Bush is for capital punishment. Dukakis is against capital punishment.

Since I am trying to be a Christ-centered Christian, I cannot accept the taking of life in either case. Only God has the right to take life, be it a baby of a rape victim or a hardened criminal!

An educated voter is not a one-issue voter. We as Christians should learn to look at the broader issues when voting. The poor and homeless have never been in worse shape since the keeping of statistics. Our national debt has been tripled in the last eight years. We now owe more than any other nation. These two facts alone will have a grave effect on ALL quality of life in the future.

It seems as Christians we should spend less time letting politics divide us, and more time trying to change the hearts of people about ALL life issues.

Jean Premo
Dewey Avenue
Rochester



The sinking life preservers

Deacon von Hagen was inspiration to everyone

To the editor:

Friday morning, October 7, was a sad day for the Rochester diocese, as Donald von Hagen, the first permanent deacon in the diocese to die, was laid to rest in Bath, N.Y.

Deacon Don was an inspiration to all who knew him. Following 22 years of service in the Air Force, he moved to Bath with his wife, Bettie, and their family. He was employed as a champagne technician by the Taylor Wine Company. He and his wife were active members of St. Mary's Church, and Don was a member of the Knights of Columbus, where he held several offices in succession. He had such profound influence on the K of C that they recently dedicated their hall to him at a dinner-dedication attended by about 300 people from the area.

Six years ago, Don applied for and was accepted into the Permanent Diaconate formation program at St. Bernard's Institute in Rochester, and following four years of study, was ordained at Sacred Heart Cathedral on May 30, 1987. He was then assigned to St. Mary's in Bath as their parish deacon.

Don carried his ministry to all in need, not only within the St. Mary community, but to the Bath Veteran's Hospital and to the nursing homes in the area. In addition to his liturgical duties at the Church, he regularly visited the shut-ins and the sick at home, bringing them not only Communion, but a friendly, uplifting visit as well. In all of his work, he touched the lives of people in a gentle, loving and profound way. The love and respect of the entire community was evident as the K of C hall was dedicated, at the funeral home, as he lay in state in the Church, and at the Mass of Christian Burial celebrated Friday, as great

crowds came to pay their respect, as Bishop Clark presided.

He was a man of great love, faith and strength, who was not afraid to witness to the power of Jesus in his life, who lived out the Gospel values daily, who unselfishly ministered to all in need, all while he carried out his daily responsibilities as husband, father and grandfather in his own family.

Before his ordination, it was discovered that he was suffering from colon cancer. He underwent an operation and then chemotherapy for it, but the disease progressed relentlessly. In spite of it, he carried out all his diaconal duties and responsibilities, never complaining, as he drew on the strength and grace he received from God. He carried on his full ministry even when he couldn't drive any more, right up to his last month of life. The great love and care he shared with others is a legacy he left to all the people he served, and is an inspiration to his fellow deacons. Following the model of Jesus, he lived a life of unselfish service to others and gave his all, to the moment of his death. He faced his imminent death without fear, and without doubts that he was to pass into eternal life.

As one body, we mourn his passing; as one, we remember the great gift he was to his family and Church; as one, we are inspired by the great love and unselfishness of Don, and give thanks and praise to the Father for calling forth such as Don to show the love of the Father and Son for all humankind. We are sure that the Father has already said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Deacon Eugene Edwards
and the Diaconal Class of '87

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: Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY, 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.

PEACE

