



Fr. Haring errs in bending theology to the popular will

To the editor:

In line with your gracious — if not condescending — letters policy of letting your “discerning readers” agree or disagree with the opinions of letter writers, I congratulate Mr. William T. Hammill for his letter in the Feb. 9, 1989, *Catholic Courier*. His letter was instructional and a much needed corrective to Father Bernard Haring’s dishonest position on birth control. My purpose here is to extend some of Mr. Hammill’s points.

Mr. Hammill’s reminder “that the church has more to fear from the ‘enemy’ within than all others” has been given a solid foundation in recent historical scholarship on American religion. James Turner’s *Without God, Without Creed* and Theodore Bozeman’s *The Gentlemen Theologians* show that it was the clergy, and not intrusive Enlightenment scientists, who gutted religious orthodoxy and forced it out of the public square.

That Father Haring never advances a theological argument against birth control is Mr. Hammill’s second and central point. Father Haring bends theology to the popular will by reciting the tiresome arguments about the unpopularity of *Humanae Vitae* and the undocumented flight from the Church it caused. But meeting Father Haring here on his sociological grounds for a moment, we could turn the spear on him. There is abundant evidence to suggest that people are ultimately drawn more towards the Orthodoxy that makes demands on them than the diluted theology that panders to their “needs.” The most recent and amazing instance of this pattern was on the occasion of Father John Emerson’s recent visit to the U.S. to recruit seminarians for

the new Society of St. Peter’s. This society was established by Pope John Paul II for those who broke with Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre last summer, and remained faithful to Rome. In three weeks of his unpublished visit 10 men applied to Father Emerson. In contrast St. Charles Borromeo’s seminary, which serves a big chunk of the Middle Atlantic States and accommodates 650, received 15 seminarians.

But returning to Mr. Hammill’s central point, where indeed is Father Haring’s discussion of the intrinsic theological questions raised in *Humanae Vitae*? What of the pursuit of truth, unfashionable though it may be today? If Father Haring erred then certainly the official paper of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, which insists on its devotion to “objectivity,” could have offered a corrective to Father Haring’s position or not have printed it. Truth and objectivity would have been somewhat better served by printing alongside the article on Father Haring an article about Californian Bishop Donald Monro’s Christmas appeal to Catholics to reject “the contraceptive mentality,” or something on the new critical scholarship in defense of the Church’s teaching by Catholic moral theologians like William D. May, published for the occasion of *Humanae Vitae*’s 20th anniversary. But it seems that the *Catholic Courier* would rather have its readers do its work for it. One hopes that the new *Catholic Courier* will concern itself more with questions of theological and journalistic integrity than with “graceful” new logotypes.

Dominic A. Aquila
Cedarwood Terrace
Rochester

Some parents avoid Catholic schools because of liberal teachings

To the editor:

The closing of Catholic schools in this diocese and the nation has generated much concern. Two letters to the (*Democrat and Chronicle*) recently have valid points. Edwin Sayers (Feb. 3) extols the values and education that Catholic schools gave, values that immigrant and second generation parishioners sacrificed for. Linda Sick (Feb. 4) addresses those Catholics that put materialistic goods before the education of their children.

There is another category of Catholics however, that do not send their children to Catholic schools because they dare not;

they do not know what unorthodox, liberal teaching is being imparted to their children. It is better for them to teach their children the truths of the Catholic Faith in the home, rather than to have to undo the corrupt teaching given at the Catholic school, and then to teach the truth.

Examples of this liberal teaching, to name just a few, is the downplay of sin and moral responsibility, the rise of feminist theology, and most important, the failure to teach that the Eucharist should be approached with great reverence, with purity of soul, and that there are severe consequences to the soul of receiving Christ unworthily.

Let’s also bring up the current practice of using altar girls in direct defiance of the Pope, but in complete accord with our Bishop.

A child’s questioning mind, rightly reasons that if it is okay to defy the Pope on small matters, it is permissible to defy him on other more serious matters, such as chastity, birth control and abortion. Our schools today are implicitly teaching our children to pick and choose what teachings of the Church they want to adhere to.

I have been fortunate, because my son attended schools that still adhere to the teachings of the Church and obedience to the

Pope. Holy Cross School and Aquinas Institute rate high marks in these categories.

Please do not judge all Catholics with children for the closing of our schools. Maybe God has a hand in this; schools that teach values and obedience contrary to His Will, do not have His blessings. Our Pastors and Bishop would do well to listen.

George R. Parulski
Lakecrest Avenue
Rochester

Are Catholics keeping tabs on representatives’ voting records?

To the editor:

Are the Catholics of the diocese watching how their congressmen voted in the 100th Congress on issues supported by NETWORK, a national Catholic social justice lobby?

According to NETWORK, Rep-

resentative Frank Horton (R-N.Y.) voted against the position favored by the Catholic social justice lobby seven times. For instance, Horton voted in favor of the death penalty and in favor of increased defense spending. Increased defense spending takes funds away from the poor.

Director thanks paper, donors for assistance

To the editor:

Heartfelt thanks to you and the *C-J* staff for the excellent presentation of the “100 Neediest Cases” in this year’s *Catholic Courier*/Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal.

The desperate need of many families and individuals in our diocesan community was sensitively presented in the series and generously responded to by your readership.

We would also like to thank the 1,667 donors for a total to date of \$70,272.05. These funds enabled us to meet the emer-

gency needs of our less fortunate neighbors, not only at Christmas time, but also year-round through regional sites of the Office of Social Ministry in the 12 counties of the diocese.

Need is certainly not seasonal. Anyone wishing to support the emergency assistance program can address their gift to the Christmas Appeal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

Again, thank you all!

Father John A. Firpo
Director, Division of Social Ministry

Father McBrien needs to sharpen memory about Califano

To the editor:

Father McBrien’s advice to Democrats to listen to Joe Califano should be backed by a better memory. Califano was pointed to with great pride as the Catholic head of (Health, Education and Welfare) in the Carter administration. Then he began referring to moral Catholics as “knee-jerk

reactionaries,” and departing from Catholic doctrine. As a Catholic Democrat I said then and say again now, “better to be a knee-jerk than a plain jerk.” McBrien should also recall Califano’s fate: he resigned under fire.

Kathy Crane
Martinot Avenue

Catholic Courier Letters Policy

The *Catholic Courier* 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: *Catholic Courier*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, New York 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.

