



Editorial cartoon insulted faithful departed, widows

To the editor:

I wish to object strongly to the cynical tone of your article on the issue of Mass Stipends, "Fees spawn confusion" (CC: Feb. 22).

The poorly drawn editorial cartoon was insulting to our faithful departed and to widows. The "pray-o-meter" insulted priests whom you have thus characterized as mercenaries who "pray for pay." In case you were unaware, all specific quantities of indulgences were eliminated by the official Enchiridion of Indulgences on January 1, 1967. Your cartoon even had a communion rail. Has your cartoonist been to church in 23 years?

I agree with your encouragement to educate our parishioners about the nature and purpose of Mass Stipends. Bishop Clark did this in the bulletin announcements for the recent stipend increase which stated: "the opportunity to make an offering for a Mass allows the giver to part of the prayer of the Church and this should be emphasized."

In that same spirit we have educated our parishioners in homilies and bulletin articles over the last few years. As a result of this education, we have seen a change in attitude. For example, our people are aware:

— that Masses given at the time of death should be used first before any further requests, which has had the effect of reducing our backlog.

— that Memorial Gifts to the Church and School are an option which benefits the parish not the priest, which has increased

these offerings considerably.

— that Mass Stipends are the only direct means of support to the priests, which led 80 percent of our people to offer \$10 before it was required.

— that under Canon Law pastors must offer a free "Mass for the People" each week and each holy day, which benefits all parishioners, living and deceased.

— that priests can only accept one Mass Stipend per day except on Christmas; anything more goes to a charity chosen by the celebrant. (I choose Aquinas.)

— that the Mass Stipend amount was last changed in this Diocese in 1954.

If your article had included the above information, you would have done much to clear up the confusion. Instead, you only added to it. The most that any priest can make from Mass Stipends is \$3,650 annually or \$3,070 for pastors because of the "Mass for the People." It takes more than twice that amount to trade in a car these days as priests are not exempt from inflation.

We allowed the inflation of the seventies to cheapen the offering. If the Mass Stipend had been raised periodically, it would be \$25 today, and there would be no backlogs. The answer is not to do away with stipends as strained parish budgets would have to replace the income by raising salaries.

Last week while volunteering at the Tribunal, I thanked Bishop Clark personally for raising the Mass Stipend. He answered: "I thought it was about time after 35 years." I applaud Bishop Clark's decision to ignore all the negative press about Mass Stipends, and to retain the right of our people to have intentions offered, as well as to support their priests. I also encourage Bishop Clark to equally ignore those who try to tell him what he should wear.

Father John F. Gagnier
Parochial Vicar
St. Patrick's Church
Seneca Falls

Words that guide from pulpit are 'breath of fresh air'

To the editor:

This letter is a comment on Elaine D. Ashworth, R.N.'s critique (CC: Feb. 22) of Father David Mura's views (CC: Jan. 25). She also noted that she is a member of the Catholics for Free Choice Organization. Her attitude is defensive and considers Father Mura as "forcing religious views on others." She also admonishes the church to "stay out of politics" and "acknowledge our freedom to follow our conscience."

Remarkable is her failure to realize that it is not the church that dictates "decisions of conscience" but knowledge of God's love for each of us. Even before we're born He knows us. Practicing Catholics know this. Both she and Father Mura spent years in preparing to serve and administer to others in need of their expertise, hers, to the body, and his, to the soul. It is impossible to treat one without the other. Both she and Father Mura have an awareness of this

as is evidenced by the letters.

It is evident that she is caught up in the social norms of trying to serve two masters. Justice is done to neither. It isn't conscience that is followed — that's God's tool — but worldliness, a deliberate disobedience of moral codes. Father Mura is not addressing "Freedom of Choice" but the choice to kill and the apathy toward the act as is witnessed today. Both, being Catholics and Christian, are aware that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Father Mura has every right to question matters of conscience.

Floundering Catholics is a happening that's come about because the Pulpit has been silent. It's like a "breath of fresh air" to listen to words that guide, and not disguise, in our homilies. The example we give speaks louder than words. "By their fruits you shall know them" church-goers hear often.

Father Mura's letter attacks the apathy

toward immorality present in today's society. It cannot be an acceptable way of life in any generation, especially now. We have the freedom to choose for God or against Him. There is no in between!

Nurse Ashworth would do herself a favor if she'd experience one of Father Mura's homilies.

Marie D. L. Benson
Penn Yan

Priest likens cartoon to Nazi propaganda

To the editor:

The John Kastner cartoon on page 19 of the *Catholic Courier* (Feb. 22) was in very bad taste and I feel an insult to the priesthood. It reminded me of the cartoons coming forth from the Nazi propaganda office of Dr. Joseph Goebbels back in the '30s and '40s when he was vilifying the Catholic Church in Germany and Austria. Shame on you!

Father Frederick W. Bush
Church of the Holy Spirit
Webster

EDITOR'S NOTE: It is the nature of editorial cartoons to be somewhat harsh, overstating their cases in order to compel readers to re-examine their own views. The cartoon in question was not intended to ridicule priests or pious widows (as another letter on this page asserts), but to ask whether the current system of Mass

stipends and stole fees creates a sense among the faithful that Masses can be bought and owned.

Thus, the cartoon was merely a graphic representation of the remarks made by several priests quoted in the page-one article, "Fees spawn confusion." We acknowledge, however, that the cartoon's intent might have been clearer if an appropriate caption had been added.

Priests' sabbaticals proffer poor example

To the editor:

While reading the January 14 *Courier* about our priests' appointments, I was amused and dismayed by all the very expensive assignments to places like Italy, Africa, California, Brazil, etc.

The Church is always talking about our shortage of priests and our priests are taking six-month or one-year vacations or working vacations. Is this where our Bishop's Appeal money is going? Not many people in our Diocese have jobs that will send them to these exotic places. I personally would like to go to some resort to improve my perspective on life or even my golf game.

It doesn't seem fair that parishes have to run raffles, bingo and to close schools because we are short of monies and our priests give us the example by taking long trips to improve themselves.

They look like our politicians to me.

Thomas A. Enright
Seneca Parkway
Rochester

Does Operation Rescue escalate violence?

To the editor:

As a Catholic hoping to see the end of abortions, I am concerned about three aspects of Operation Rescue.

First is a possible escalation of violence as the "sides" to the abortion choice debate become consolidated. Recent pamphlets and letters to the editor make strong arguments that much greater violence would be morally justified to save the lives of unborn children.

Next is an apparent contempt for the legal system and the rights of others. This is shown by refusing to cooperate with civil authorities, refusing to pay penalties for breaking just laws, and denying people access to legitimate medical services.

Finally, there is a lack of unity of mind and heart in the Faith Community as to the methods of Operation Rescue.

Perhaps the proponents of the movement are prophetic leaders who will spur the consciences of all good people to rise up against the Abortion Holocaust.

Let's hope they will not be held account-

able for acts of violence committed by those trying to uphold the Law of the Land. Let's hope that by disregarding progressively "bigger" laws, they do not precipitate our own hometown version of Northern Ireland or Lebanon.

I do believe the only thing that will effectively stop abortion is conversion; that prayer is the most effective way to change people's hearts, followed by meaningful dialogue. The Laws of the Land are a necessary basis and common ground for dialogue. Violence and a self-righteous "us vs. them" attitude will only harden hearts.

Acting in the context of the consultation, prayer, support and cooperation of the Body of Christ is sound assurance that the Holy Spirit is originating our efforts. Apart from the True Vine, no movement, no matter how well-intentioned, will bear fruit.

John F. Toth
Stonehill Drive
Rochester