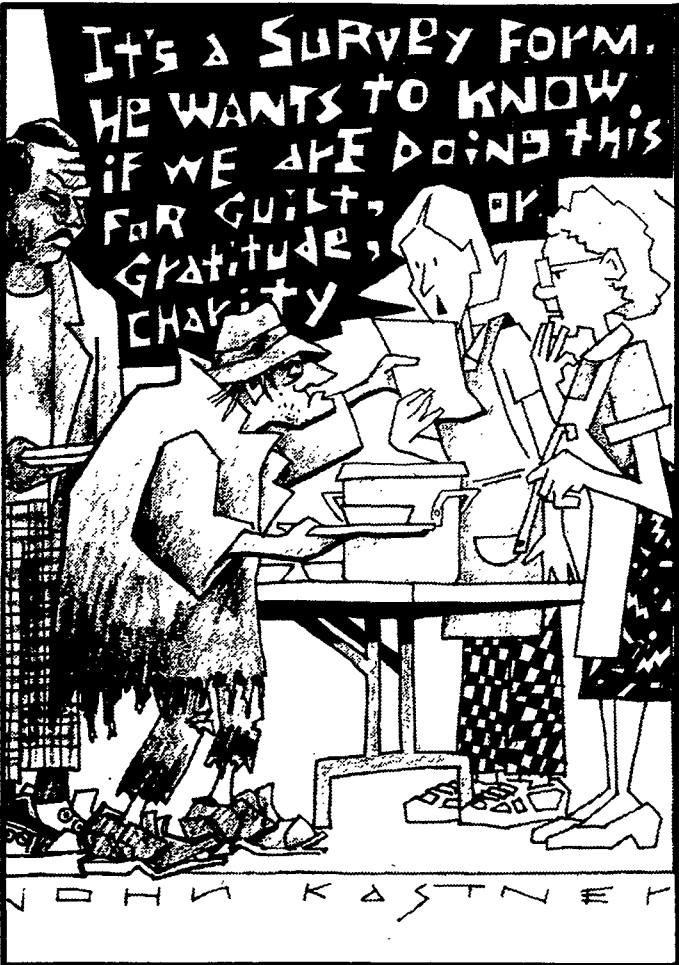


OUR VIEW



Taking the outcast to heart

"The biggest disease today," Mother Teresa once said, "is not leprosy or tuberculosis, but rather the feeling of being unwanted, uncared for and deserted by everybody. The greatest evil is the lack of love and charity, the terrible indifference toward one's neighbor who lives at the roadside, assaulted by exploitation, corruption, poverty and disease."

The woman who spoke those words would most likely approve what hundreds of volunteers at Blessed Sacrament, St. Bridget's and Corpus Christi parishes have been doing for the past eight Rochester winters.

Night after night from November through April, they came in twos and fours to be with the outcasts of our society — the homeless.

Volunteers cooked meals, washed laundry, offered medical checkups, a friendly smile or a word of concern, an avenue out of the waking nightmare that life without a home can be.

Volunteering is no checkbook charity. To work a shelter shift is to inhale nasty odors, to accept abuse and ingratitude from angry voices, to confront ugliness and pain, and sometimes, to tolerate boredom and question the value of one's efforts.

Yet, dozens of volunteers kept at it, night after night, year after year, keeping alive efforts intended to be only temporary. They earned no money, seldom saw much "progress" except in the growing number of needy people lined up at their doors, and endured sporadic criticism for acting as a Band-Aid to systemic problems.

Mother Teresa has been accused of the same

failure. Among her defenders was columnist Colman McCarthy, who wrote: "She possesses the rare fidelity to a sacredness that affirms each individual wherever that individual may be, and not where Mother Teresa, or the head of a social agency or the director of a jobs program, thinks he should be."

The world needs activists to work for change, but it also needs people willing to offer only love and asking nothing in return. At the shelters, such individuals seem to embody Christ's presence — kneeling to trim the painfully overgrown toenails of a man whose last bath took place too long ago to matter, gently combing and cutting a guest's hair, taking to heart someone's late-night tale of woe instead of merely hearing it.

Like Mother Teresa, two of the parish shelters are preparing to retire. Their programs have grown enough to severely tax the ability of volunteers to oversee them. Some are tired, and some are discouraged.

Before the end of the next November-April shelter season, the Catholic Family Center hopes to open the Francis Hospitality Center, a 24-hour-a-day, year-round shelter funded by state grants. At that point, organizers have indicated, Blessed Sacrament and St. Bridget's shelters will close.

Francis Center will offer homeless people a lot that the parish shelters lack. What center organizers can never replace, but hope to preserve, is the loving witness of voluntary service.

— The Editors

Grave evil of abortion demands proportionate response

To the editor:

In ... the *Catholic Courier* March 8, 1990, Mr. John F. Toth raised questions about Operation Rescue in an editorial letter entitled, "Does Operation Rescue Escalate Violence?" ...

He mentions that only conversion will stop abortion. I fully agree. He goes on to say that prayer is the most effective way to bring this about. I, too, believe in the incredible ways that prayer can work change in hearts and in ways which go far beyond us. I spend much time on my knees because I know this and have experienced this truth so often. Nevertheless, I am also firmly convinced that prayer, in a world such as we have, needs and authentically includes

action. Otherwise, there would have been no incarnation and God could have simply effected our conversion spiritually from heaven; there would have been no need for Him to become one of us and act on our behalf. The Church has always taught that prayer and action go hand in hand and authenticate each other. ...

Secondly, this editorial letter implies that those who participate in Operation Rescue have an "us vs. them" attitude. Trying to follow the ideals of St. Francis of Assisi who saw all as brother and sister to him, as well as knowing my own sinfulness and weaknesses ... I find it very disconcerting to be judged automatically as having such a mentality. It is not mine, nor do I find it

reflective of those I normally meet who are associated with the rescue movement.

Thirdly, this editorial letter hints that the rescue movement is "apart from the True Vine." To me, "True Vine" refers to the Lord and to the Church, and since I am a Catholic, this means to the Catholic Church with its values, its beliefs and its traditions, which it has reflected on, experienced, developed, articulated and acted upon. In this and other recent letters, as well as the *Courier's* March 1 article on civil disobedience, there were no references to the Biblical and historical traditions regarding civil disobedience which the Church has already valued and accepted. The Scriptural reference we have,

for example, in Acts 5:29, justified in part the attitude of civil disobedience as coming from Peter and the apostles themselves. ...

Augustine said, "An unjust law is considered no law," and Aquinas, quoting Augustine and referring to Acts 5:29 says, "Such laws may under no circumstances be obeyed." ...

We say abortion is gravely evil and a heinous crime that has killed millions upon millions of innocent human lives. Yet, we have suffered very little on behalf of these human lives. And so I ask myself and the community, what is the proportionate response to such an evil? What is a human life worth? When can we say we have done enough to protect and stand up for her or him?

If abortion laws are null and void, as our tradition seems to indicate; if abortion is a grave social issue as our tradition states and we are to develop resistance to it; if we are encouraged to follow the examples of Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi and the apostles, what can all this mean but that as people of God we would not only approve, but in justice be called to civil disobedience as one approach in dealing with the many evils of abortion, specifically as a community which is Catholic? ...

Father Anthony Paul Mugavero
Spencerport Road
Rochester

Unjust government bears blame in Northern Ireland

To the editor:

Mr. Cullivan's article about North Ireland (CC March 15) leaves me with great concern which I would like to share. I enjoy any attention given to North Ireland if it goes beyond using the violence to sell newspapers. North Ireland is a place where the violence has always overshadowed the injustice. Reading this article the average American would think that this is a religious squabble between Catholics and Presbyterians where the democratic government is not to blame.

Democracy? In 1968, you had to own property to vote in Northern Ireland. If you owned three houses you had three votes. All renters, poor Catholics and poor Pres-

byterians had no say in their government. 1969: One person — one vote is instituted. The nationalist population (people of all faiths who want the political border between the two Irelands dissolved) had a voice in government. 1972: The Stormont is dissolved, all power is moved to Westminster England. Nationalists have the right to vote and nothing to vote for. 1990: The Secretary of Northern Ireland, the highest position in the land is an appointed position which can be changed without notice at any time. This happened six months ago when Peter Brooke became the new Secretary without any prior notice.

Free speech? Members of 13 political parties are forbidden from giving an interview to the press ... Social Democratic and Labor Party members are allowed to complain; Sinn Fein party members are not! ...

Pacifist Stance? John Hume does not speak out against violence! He rarely mentions violence unless it incriminates the Sinn Fein. When British police beat confessions from men like Gerard Conlin he stays silent. When the Ulster Defense Association auctions off articles of clothing worn by convicted killers he stays silent ... Members of the Ulster Unionist Party have condemned this violence much more than John Hume. ...

Truth? Americans who are concerned about Northern Ireland might look to the American Protestants for Truth about Ireland, 215/643-1323. They publish a monthly newsletter of events that exposes

the true nature of the conflict. Americans who would like to help might contact Doors of Hope, 201/444-4786, which is run by Father Desmond Wilson in Belfast and has a newsletter written by Father Maurice Burke.

I would like my children to be proud of their Irish Protestant Heritage. The Orange in the Tri-Colors stands for men like Henry McCracken, Theobald Wolf Tone, Thomas Russel, Thomas Neilson. The Orange does not represent the likes of Sir John Hermon or Ian Paisley.

Michael F. Larson
Ontario

Priests share affiliation

To the editor:

Question: What do the following most senior priests in years of ordination in the Rochester diocese have in common? Monsignor Francis B. Burns, 67 years; Father Howard W. Geck, '66 years; Father Michael Wurzer, 64 years; Father George C. Vogt, 62 years; Fathers Thomas F. Brennan and Benedict A. Ehmann, 60 years.

Answer: They all taught at St. Andrew's or St. Bernard's Seminaries. Father Ehmann taught at both.

Father James P. Collins
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