

Christian charity precludes vengeance of death penalty

To the editors:

In response to Father Collins' letter of August 9 criticizing the Sisters of Mercy stance against the death penalty:

Father refers initially to a statement of Pope Pius in 1952: while freeing the State government from the responsibility in sentencing a man to death, the Pope states: "It is reserved to the public power to deprive the condemned of the benefit of life in expiation of his fault." Our present Pope repeatedly condemns the taking of human life in executions, and makes appeals to governments who continue this practice.

Father Collins goes on to say Catholics are being misled in thinking they are against Catholic doctrine if they approve the death penalty. The Old Testament clearly states in the Fifth Commandment "Thou shalt not kill." In the New Testament Jesus said, "I have not come to change the Law." In dealing with those who have broken the Law, Jesus calls upon us "to be merciful as your Heavenly

Tier vocations aided by Knights

To the editors:

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Knights of Columbus in our latest endeavor to promote the Southern Tier Vocations Discernment Group.

August 12, six seminarians preached in area churches during the Masses. There was an information session that afternoon with Bishop Clark, Father Tom Valenti, the seminarians and inquirers. The afternoon concluded with a cookout served by the Elmira Knights of Columbus Council # 229 and the Horseheads Knights of Columbus Council # 6158. The Knights of Columbus have traditionally promoted vocations, and we are happy they rallied to the cause. Area pastors have commented, too, on the fine preaching done by the seminarians. They were: John Bell, Paul Bonacci, Lee Chase, Lance Gonyo, Brian Jeffers and Mike Volino. Mickey McGrath, a seminarian, was ready and willing to preach, but was preempted by a previously arranged visiting missionary.

We appreciate the inspiration these seminarians generated. Pastors unable to utilize the seminarians are interested in hosting them as guest homilists in the future. We look forward to more encouraging results based on the fine work of the seminarians, the Knights of Columbus, the support of the pastors and the prayers of the people in the parishes. We ask that prayers continue for those inquirers who attended the event and are considering Priesthood. Finally, we thank Bishop Clark and Father Tom Valenti for their presence with us.

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter was signed by Father Michael Brown of St. Mary's Church in Elmira and Father Patrick Connor of St. Mary Our Mother Church in Horseheads.

Father is merciful." We can show our mercy in the sentencing of these criminals, not by committing the identical crime of killing, but by removing them from society to a place where they would be humanely treated. To those who would cry out with vengeance, "But look what he did to another human being," I say the old directive "An eye for an eye" was rejected by Jesus when he called upon us to be merciful. He did not condone the killing of an adulteress who had broken the Jewish law.

Again in the Old Testament, when God was directing His chosen people, he commanded that anyone who broke the Law

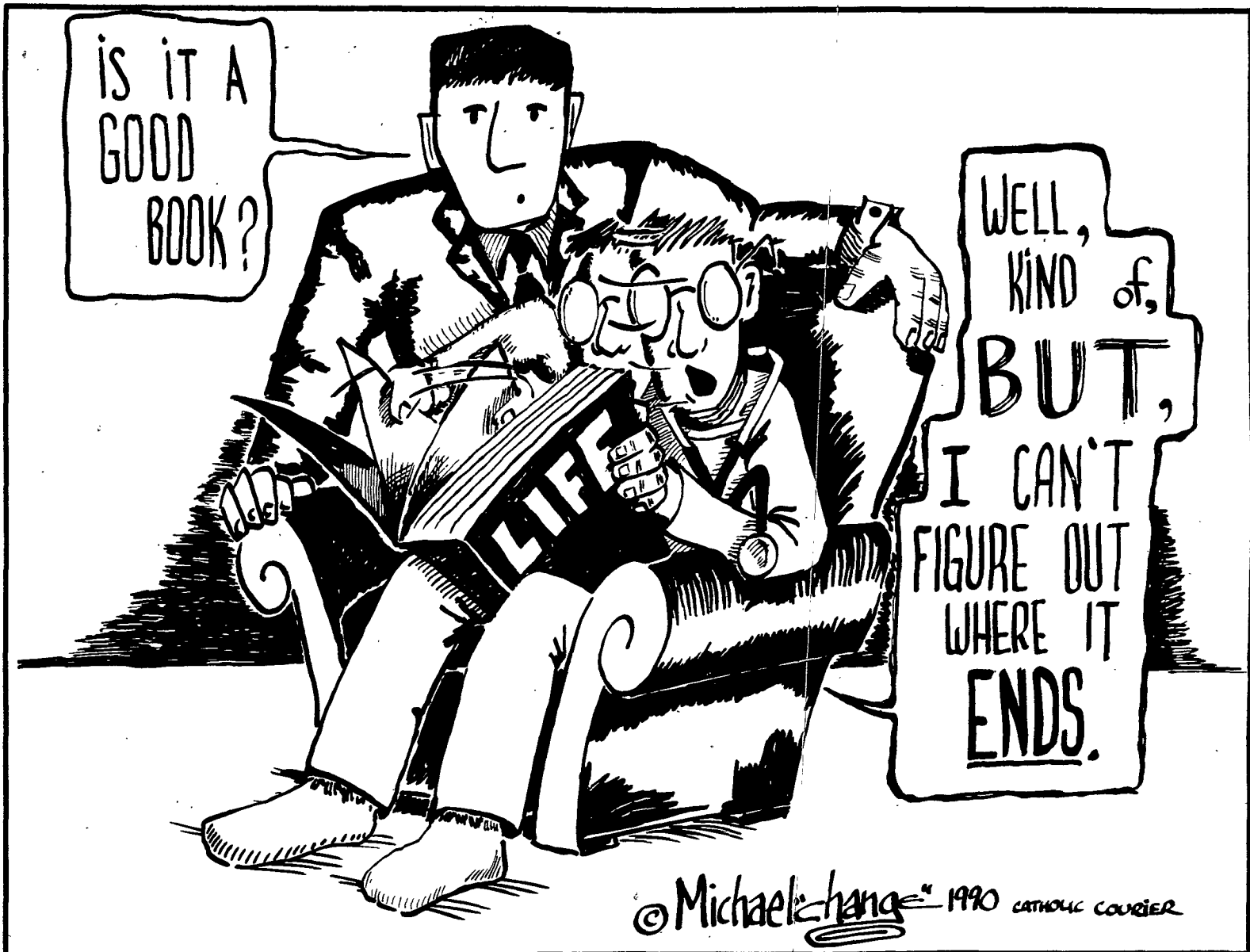
should be chastised and if such conduct continued he should be removed from their midst. This does not condone killing the criminal; taking the life of another human being has always been an abomination in the eyes of God.

Contrary to the statement of Cardinal Krol, I do not see how a Catholic Christian could favor the death penalty. I favor the opinion of Cardinal Bernardin who sees all good laws governing people as a seamless garment; there must be consistency in the reverence for human life created by God — whether we are dealing with abortion, the death penalty or euthanasia.

Regarding Father Collins' objection to a sentence of "life-without-parole" because of danger to other prisoners — humane treatment of all prisoners demands rigid regulation to protect all from the violent acts of another prisoner regardless of the crime for which he was imprisoned.

Let us concentrate on the restructuring of our penal systems and institutions where large numbers of human beings are incarcerated in conditions that perpetuate crime. In the reshaping of warped lives, vengeance cannot have a role.

Mary V. Brown
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Article on gays provided forum for 'whiny rhetoric'

To the editors:

CATHOLIC ? COURIER JOURNALISM has reached another new low with the publication of your latest homosexual promotional in the August 23rd issue, entitled, "Gays strive for complete acceptance by church." The article is replete with typical homosexual whiny rhetoric about "lack of compassion and acceptance" of the gay lifestyle by the Catholic Church. It also distorts Scripture regarding the sin of homosexual conduct.

It is obvious that compassion and understanding are not only what homosexuals are after. They want their sinful conduct to be accepted as normal and good.

Few people would deny the Bible clearly states that fornication is a sin. The dictionary defines fornication as "two people, not married, joining in sexual union." That clearly places homosexual conduct in its proper category, sin. Further, the Old Testament is clear on the issue and Our Lord, without ambiguity, proclaimed that he did not come to change the Law. He also gave His Church the power to speak in His Name and the New Testament speaks clearly and infallibly that those who engage in homosexual practice, "are deserving of death." See Romans 1-18.

It is difficult to understand why the (Catholic Courier) would allow homosexuals to present their case for the acceptance of their sinful lifestyle on the front page of the paper, in view of the fact that Scripture, tradition and current Church teaching clearly proclaim homosexual conduct dis-

ordered, sinful and deserving of eternal damnation. The teachings of Charles Curran notwithstanding, of course. Holy Mother Church is forever understanding and compassionate of sinners. From all of us, She asks contrition, reparation and a sincere effort to avoid falling into sin, in return for reconciliation. There is no other way to salvation for us sinners. Pretending that homosexual conduct is in some way good and wholesome is a dangerous posture. Scripture speaks of the serious consequences in store for those who teach falsely, especially those who mislead and those who cause the little ones to be separated from Him. Ezechiel 33, 7-9 looks like it applies here.

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Hopes newspaper won't drop Father McBrien

To the editors:

I hope that this newspaper will not drop Father Richard McBrien's weekly column. There have been several letters from people who are in favor of doing that, and they seem to want us all to follow the Church without questioning anything. Should those of us born and raised as Catholics simply follow Church teachings blindly? What about people born into Protestant or Jewish families — should they blindly accept what their churches teach?

We must examine what is being taught, and as Christians we compare what is taught with what Christ taught us. We must question, study, and try to understand all teachings, and come to a genuine belief, and not just fearfully accept Catholic Church teachings on the basis of the old idea that only Catholics can be saved.

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