

Consistent life ethic forms foundation of morals

To the editors:

The February 21 article, "War Activism Stretches the Seamless Garment," in which some of us members of the Faith and Resistance Community were quoted, raises good questions and seemed balanced and fair. I have a concern, however, regarding the use of the word "philosophy" in the article's second sentence in connection with a definition of the consistency ethic, namely, as it is called, "a philosophy promulgated in the early 1980's by Chicago's Cardinal Joseph Bernardin."

It is important to make clear that the "Seamless Garment" teaching, taken from John 19:23, where Jesus' tunic is symbolic of His absolute integrity, His Shalom, is not an invention of Cardinal Bernardin but the reflection of the fundamental and pervasive creation theology of Hebrew scripture and of early Christianity, as developed in Genesis 1 and 7-9, in the Levitical Holiness Code, in the wisdom writings and in the creation-centered Christology of Ephesians and Colossians, most notably: It is thus that no less a theologian than St.

Thomas Aquinas can proclaim "Every creature participates in some way in the likeness of the divine essence." Since all life is purposeful and divinely made, it is not difficult to connect the unborn child to the rejected elderly patient or the person on death row or to victims of war or to the unjustly treated hungry and homeless, or indeed, all of creation, which God has blessed and personally has redeemed. As Gregory Bateson asks, "What pattern connects the crab to the lobster and the orchid to the primrose, and all four of them to me?

And me to you?"

The synthetic vision is radically Hebraic and Christian and constitutes the real meaning of Shalom, Jesus' parting gift: harmony, wholeness integrity. In "The Healing Power of Peace and Non-violence", Bernard Haring quotes the Jewish writer P. Lapide:

"The biblical shalom means not only peace, as so many think, but above all, uninjured wholeness, compact unity, the antithesis of schizophrenia and alienation of self. Indicated is an indivisible integrity which means, from within, harmony of hearts on the way to a being-with-God, and in all directions solidarity and concord within one's nation and among all nations: expression of harmony as intended by God."

The "consistency ethic," then, is the essence of our scriptures and Church's mainstream theology and moral teaching.

By clearly illuminating and "reviving" this foundation that we already, "from the beginning", possess but are not often aware of, Cardinal Bernardin has reminded us that a "Seamless Garment" vision is most of all an attitude, one which calls us to compassion that nonviolently embraces, defends, and ministers to all beings as manifestations of Original Love.

Judith E. Kiehl
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Nation's greed sets it against Christianity

To the editors:

"We have about 50 percent of the world's wealth but only 6.3 percent of its population. Our real task ... is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford the luxury of altruism and world benefaction. We should cease to talk about vague, unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standard and democratization." Excerpted from a statement by George McKennan, State Department planning chief, 1948.

I was born the year McKennan made those remarks. I was raised a Catholic and educated at St. Andrew's School on Portland Ave. The above statement bears no resemblance whatever with what I was taught about the meaning of Christianity. Yet the whole time I was learning about faith, hope and charity, the National Security Council and the CIA were busy seeing that nothing interfered with the

economic interest of my nation guided by the philosophy described above. When I learned the economic facts of life I can remember asking myself, "Who is lying, my teachers or my government."

There has been much hoopla recently about victory and peace, yet President Bush awaits a new "intelligence authorization" bill. The first one offered him 30,000,000,000 dollars — estimated — to wage covert wars using foreign governments and private mercenaries — effectively legalizing deals like Iran-contra. Bush vetoed it because he found the provision requiring him to inform the congressional intelligence committees of his activities too restrictive. This would seem to make our new peace but a respite in a near continuous foreign policy of war and subversion since WWII — Iran, 1953; Guatemala, 1954; the Dominican Republic, 1964; Vietnam 1959-1975; El Salvador, Grenada, Chile, Nicaragua, Panama and the Persian Gulf.

What concerns me most is the lack of peace in the hearts and minds of our own children who are in conflict over the discrepancies between what we try to teach them about love and respect for human life and the policies of our government. How can we preach "thou shall not kill" and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" while we allow our government to do whatever is necessary to keep America the world's number one consumer? How can this be reconciled with the teachings of Christ? How can we not expect our children to be confused in the face of this dichotomy? Is it any wonder that suicide is the second leading cause of death among teens? Where is our happy victory? Where is our peace? Until we resolve this struggle between our consciences and our greed we will have no peace and neither will our children.

John Kastner
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State should raise taxes on wealthy, not cut services

To the editors:

I am very concerned about our governor's proposed budget for 1991. There is no argument that this state is in the midst of a grave financial crisis and something needs to be done. What I do not understand is why the majority of the cuts scheduled to take place are in services to the neediest people in this state: the mentally ill and disabled, the physically ill, and troubled youth, to mention a few. As if that were not enough, education is being cut 10 percent and services and programs for senior citizens are being cut and/or totally eliminated.

Decisions will have to be made at the local government level about which of these services we must attempt to keep. Where will the money for this come from? From your property and school taxes, of course. Governor Cuomo has firmly refused to raise NYS taxes but is fully aware that he is shifting the burden to the local governments. This shift puts additional burden on low and middle income folks and retired senior citizens who are already fighting to survive.

My suggestion, and that of many other concerned citizens, is to go back to the tax system we had in place prior to 1987. Increase taxes on the wealthy, those who earn over 150,000 dollars per year by one percent and closing corporate loopholes which allow some businesses to operate in NYS tax free for eight years and others to pay tax on money they earned in NYS in other states. This will not eliminate the entire deficit but it will definitely help.

Yes, I agree there is a waste of govern-

ment money, our money and there are areas where spending should be cut, but not to those who are in need. What does that say about us as a country that professes that "all men are created equal" and that there should be "liberty and justice for all." Please write to your local and state legislators and let them know how you feel.

Linda Crowe
RD 2
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Military victory undermined by flawed policy

To the editors:

Our military forces in all phases did a commendable job in the Gulf War. It gives one a great feeling of security in case we are ever attacked. But sanctions should have been used a lot longer.

Russia and U.S. have flouted the U.N. numerous times in the past. Things change. There may be a question of oil to deal with. Because of many promises of loans and aids to them — China (being) neutral — we

obtained the notes needed for aggressive action. Previously Saddam had been our buddy like Noreiga, Castro, Marcos, the Shah and many others. Russia, China and Turkey have been the most recent violators of territory and human rights. We looked the other way. And these countries — as others — have atomic weapons.

And there is still no effort made for future energy planning. I have read that there are many other methods that could be undertaken to meet our demands.

Maybe our few casualties prevent the reason for more research. And this irritates me with the conservatives and their criterion for patriotism: Two of the most prominent, Quayle — National Guard, through his father — and Cheney — deferred twice — examples of delayed patriotism.

I am not a pacifist, but an Independent Liberal. But I'm against abortion, capital punishment and stupid wars, when it is not 100 percent our problem. Saddam was a beast, but he was helped by many countries of the U.N. for big profits.

And by latest reports, Kuwait is now using Iraq's tactics in human rights abuse.

Thomas H. Dady
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No biblical proof of pacifist Jesus

To the editors:

Mark Scibilia-Carver's response to Father Cuddy (*Catholic Courier*, March 21: "Jesus modeled pacifist standard for Christians") was without scriptural basis.

The overturning of the money changers' table (Mark 11:15) was one instance when our Lord displayed anger that was anything but pacifistic.

Also in Exodus the Lord displayed his anger against the Egyptians when he drowned their entire army in the sea.

There are other examples of our Lord's wrath in Scripture. However the death of his Son was not prevented by "legions of angels" because this death was the only acceptable sacrifice for the redemption of mankind.

To infer that our Lord would prohibit "acts of violence" in defense of ourselves or others because of his death on the cross is false.

We imitate Christ by dying to sin; not by being pacifists.

Robert Bart
Ithaca

Father Drinan skews 'pro-life' definition

To the editors:

Wow! Did I hear correctly? By paying for poor women's abortions, Cuomo is pro-life?

This is what Mr. Drinan — he couldn't be a priest — said (March 13) when he was here speaking against the death penalty at Temple B'rith Kodesh. Pro-life, Mr. Drinan, means day care, increased educational benefits for women and their children, and raising the level of WIC to an entitlement program.

We're glad the Catholic Diocese did not endorse this event. We're proud that the Church takes a strong stand against the death penalty, as does Feminists for Life of America. But Medicaid funded abortions are anti-woman, anti-child, anti-poor, and anti-life.

Donna Marie Kearney
Feminists for Life of Western New York

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