

Religious liberty misinterpreted

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

How the pendulum regarding mores and morals has swung in the United States! The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights was straight forward. It was understood and practiced as the founders of our country intended, namely the presumption that people would acknowledge God and worship him, but that no denomination should have precedence over another.

The founding fathers had Virginia and Maryland to use as examples. Maryland was founded by Lord Baltimore — a convert to the Catholic Church — who granted religious liberty to all Christians. But then the Virginia Episcopalians invaded Maryland, took it over and suppressed the Catholic religion.

Massachusetts had a track record of religious freedom for Congregationalists, but not for others. So the Baptists moved over to Rhode Island.

To prevent injustices toward religion, the fathers of the Constitution, wrote the First Amendment to the Constitution in 1791. In addition to prohibiting government-established religion, the amendment

guaranteed freedom of worship, speech, the press and assembly. It also allowed citizens to petition the government.

Nearly all of the authors of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were religious men — mostly Protestant. Catholics point with cautious pride to their sole signer, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a cousin of Bishop John Carroll whose life should be known well by Catholics. I think a Jew was also among the signers.

But all of the men presumed that religion was an integral part of American life. After all, the laws of the land were based on Judeo-Christian ethics. Hence adultery, fornication, sodomy, bigamy and blasphemy were considered strong offenses.

Times have sure changed. Today, adultery and fornication seem to be accepted as part of American mores. Sodomy is not only not against the law, but recently 250,000 sodomites and sympathizers staged a huge parade in California to urge support of sodomy by the public.

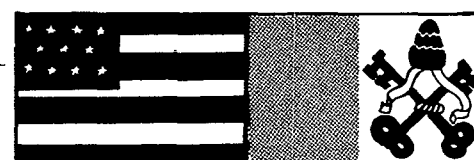
Abortion was against the law for a long time. But the *Roe vs. Wade* decision not only legalized the right to destroy babies,

but became an instrument whereby our taxes are used to procure the death of babies. Many "elegantly" call this "freedom of choice," i.e. the freedom to choose to kill a baby or let it live!

Bishop W. Thomas Larkin, a native of Mt. Morris, recently resigned as bishop of St. Petersburg due to failing health. His mind and typewriter are still working full blast for the church and the nation. In the June 21 issue of *The Florida Catholic*, the bishop published an article "The Founding Fathers Outlined Our Beliefs and Values."

His apt excerpts from the founding fathers contradict the opinion that there should be no expression of religion in public schools or property. Hence no prayer in tax-supported schools; no Christmas creche or carols in the local park.

Bishop Larkin writes: "The founding fathers of our country outlined our beliefs and values when they wrote the Declaration of Independence: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, and they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.' They assume there is a Creator



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

from whom our rights come. But there is a determined effort to overthrow the influence of religion on personal and national morality. We see the results of this philosophy of life in abortion, premarital sex, alternative life styles, as well as the poverty and homelessness that have become prevalent in our nation."

The whole article by Bishop Larkin might well be studied by parents, civil servants, politicians and teachers. That our nation is going down the drain in its immorality is obvious from the daily newspaper and the evening news, and such programs as "The Phil Donahue Show."

Anyone wishing to obtain Bishop Larkin's complete article can send me a self-addressed, stamped envelope to 10 Lewis St., Auburn, N.Y. 13021.

Jesus served as the Good Shepherd to his followers

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mark 6:30-34; (R1) Jeremiah 23:1-6; (R2) Ephesians 2:13-18.

When Jeremiah condemns the shepherds of Israel — "Woe to the shepherds" — he is referring to the contemporary kings. Their worldliness and rejection of God had caused the Babylonian captivity in 606 B.C.

After good King Josiah was killed by the Egyptians in 609 B.C., his son, Jehoahaz, was given the throne. A puppet of Egypt, he reigned only three months. His son, Jehoiakim, followed him. He alienated Babylon by refusing to join her in her invasion of Egypt.

So Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah. But Jehoiakim had died and his son, 18-year-old Jeconiah, succeeded to the throne to reign for only three months. He was carted off to Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar put his uncle Zedekiah on the throne.



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

Zedekiah ignored the advice of Jeremiah and rebelled against Babylon. So in 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem to destroy the city, to put Zedekiah's eyes out and to lead most of the survivors to Babylon. With that, the dynasty begun by David came to an end.

Thus Jeremiah's woe to the shepherds of Israel came to pass. Yet the prophets seldom condemn without giving a ray of hope. So Jeremiah promised that God would one day gather the scattered flock together. And secondly, playing on the word Zedekiah, which means "God my

justice," Jeremiah foretold that a genuine son of David would come: "The Lord our justice," who would be a true shepherd to God's people.

The Gospel makes it clear that Jesus is this shepherd. First he had sent out the apostles to serve and to teach the flock. They came back elated, eager to tell him about all they had done and said. But they had no chance — "people were coming and going in great numbers, making it impossible for them to so much as eat." So, the good shepherd that he was, Jesus took them away by boat to a deserted place.

The people, however, tracked them down. He and the disciples had only a few moments in the boat together. When they came to disembark, a vast crowd was already on the shore to meet and greet them.

Seeing this, Jesus did not get angry; rather he pitied them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. His pity was not mere crocodile tears. Like a good shepherd, he gave them himself and poured out his heart to them by teaching them at great length.

Jesus' pity for the people was no fleeting emotion. The Lord is still our shepherd! Perhaps next to the Lord's Prayer, the best known and loved text in Scriptures is the Shepherd Psalm 23 — Sunday's Responsorial Psalm.

The psalm starts with a tremendous faith claim: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." "I shall not want" because the Lord is my shepherd — not any mere man, but the Lord, the God who made heaven and Earth. He is my shepherd.

He is not just a shepherd in general, but "my" shepherd. He cares about each one of us personally.

He brings rest and refreshment to our souls. He guides us in the journey of life. He feeds us, anoints us with his sacraments. And, at long last, he will bring us to the verdant pastures of heaven.

What remains for us to do? Like good sheep, we must follow the shepherd — the Holy Father and all bishops in union with him. My sheep hear my voice. And, if they do, goodness and kindness will follow them all the days of their life.

Sisters of Mercy to observe founding event

ROCHESTER — More than 3,000 Sisters of Mercy from across the country will gather in Buffalo on July 20 to celebrate the Founding Event of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

The 25 regional communities of Sisters of Mercy will unite under one organizational structure on July 20, marking the culmination of a 10-year planning project between the Vatican and the order. Following the celebration, two weeks of organizational meetings will take place from July 21-Aug 3.

A local celebration will also take place

on July 20 at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse, 1437 Blossom Road, for those sisters not able to attend the national celebration. Coordinated by Sister Brigid Quinn, RSM, the local event is scheduled for 2:30-4 p.m. in the motherhouse chapel and dining room.

Rochester Mayor Thomas P. Ryan Jr. and Monroe County Executive Thomas R. Frey will proclaim July 20 as Sisters of Mercy Day. The joint proclamation will be on display at the local celebration.

For information, call 716/288-2710, 288-8685 or 482-5442.

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