

Anti-union stores should be boycotted

We have heard a lot of talk in recent months that the solution to the Catholic Church's current sexual-abuse crisis is greater fidelity to the church's teachings.

Whenever this point is made, there is an implication that the teachings in question primarily, if not exclusively, concern human sexuality and reproduction: chastity, birth control, homosexuality, celibacy, women priests, abortion, stem-cell research, cloning and the like.

But official Catholic teachings range much more widely than that. Not only do they touch matters of faith, such as the divinity of Christ or his real presence in the Eucharist, but also a much broader range of moral questions: social justice, human rights, capital punishment and peace.

There is a certain type of Catholic for whom "cafeteria Catholicism" is a failing only of Catholics of a more liberal or progressive orientation. The latter are said to "pick and choose" among church teachings, consistently turning up their noses at the sight of any teaching that pertains to sex.

But "cafeteria Catholicism" is practiced on a more "ecumenical" scale within the church. Conservative Catholics practice it just as effortlessly as their more liberal counterparts.

Thus, while they heartily support papal teaching on birth control and homosexuality, they either ignore or



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Essays in Theology

deftly "interpret" away papal teaching on economic rights, Third World debt and the option for the poor.

If lack of fidelity to the teachings of the church is at the root of any and all crises in the church, those of us who are truly concerned about its spiritual health and well-being need to be on the watch for signs of infidelity all across the board.

As the Christmas shopping season moves into high gear, it might serve, for purposes of illustration, to focus on one U.S. commercial giant whose employment practices seem to conflict openly with the official teachings of the Catholic Church on the right of workers to unionize.

The November 8th issue of *The New York Times* and a PBS television broadcast, "Now With Bill Moyers," aired the same night, have highlighted some of the persistent problems between Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, and its hourly-wage employees.

According to *The New York Times*, unions have made only one successful effort at organizing at a Wal-Mart store in the U.S. — in a

butcher department in a Texas outlet. Two weeks later the company closed down the department. The employees lost their jobs.

As of early last month there have been as many as ten judgments against the company by the National Labor Relations Board — for this single organization drive in Texas.

Over the last four years alone, the NLRB has filed more than 40 complaints against Wal-Mart for illegal anti-union practices. According to these complaints, Wal-Mart has in some cases fired union supporters, intimidated workers who showed an interest in a union, threatened to deny workers their promotions or their bonuses for union activities, and confiscated pro-union literature.

The Catholic Church has gone on record again and again in support of unionization, beginning with Pope Leo XIII's ground-breaking 1891 social encyclical, *Rerum novarum* ("On the Condition of the Working Person"), and continuing for over a century into the pontificate of John Paul II.

There are no ifs, ands or buts. According to explicit and repeated papal teaching, workers have the right to unionize.

This Christmas Catholics can demonstrate their fidelity to church teaching by shopping elsewhere.

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

Keep Christ prominent

To the editor:

It seems to me that the only serious problem with the plan for the restoration of our cathedral is the placement of the tabernacle. Putting the place we reserve for the Real Presence in a "prominent" place in an out of sight chapel is inherently contradictory. The Christ-centeredness of our Church should be reflected in our churches' very architecture.

I understand that the reason for moving the tabernacle out of the main church is to be able to have concerts and social events in the cathedral. While this shows commendable respect for the Blessed Sacrament, these social activities have nothing to do with our mission and should be scheduled in facilities that are not our principal places of worship. Mixing entertainment and worship bothers me. I fear that it's a step toward loss of our sense of the sacred and confusion over the nature and origin of our community.

The Real Presence of Jesus Christ is our greatest treasure. Let's keep this treasure prominent and greatly respected in our houses of worship.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Renovations are intended to preserve the cathedral's structural integrity; add such amenities as improved lighting and sound; and update

the interior in line with liturgical reforms following the Second Vatican Council. The placement of the Blessed Sacrament in a private chapel is intended to provide a private place of prayer, in fulfillment of the requirements of the Ceremonial of Bishops # 49: "It is recommended that the tabernacle, in accordance with a very ancient tradition in cathedral churches, should be located in a chapel separate from the main body of the church." The use of the cathedral for non-liturgical events, while possible, is not a primary reason for any changes.

Sing to God, not ourselves

To the editor:

Perhaps the singing discomfort of Bill Kehoe (Nov. 7 letter) and many others is in the focus and emphasis of the lyrics.

There was a time when hymns focused on the Lord, on Jesus, God, Holy Spirit. Such as: "Shepherd of Souls," "Holy God We Praise Thy Name," "He is Lord," "How Great Is Our God." Remember how heart and soul poured into the singing?

Today too many songs focus on "us," on "we." In the refrain of "We are Called, We are Chosen" there are 13 we's to one mention of Christ! The lyrics of "Gather Us In" are completely focused on "us." There is not an inkling of leading us to worship.

There is insensitivity and inappropriateness, such as "Lord of the Dance" in which the words "they whipped and they stripped and they hung me high ... left me there on a cross to die." The chorus follows, "Dance then wherever you may be ... I am the Lord of the dance."

Is this irreverence, or what? There may be an appropriate time and place for this "hymn." But not on Good Friday or at a Mass, which is a sacrifice.

Those in charge of choice of hymns have an awesome responsibility. With spiritu-

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