

Reflections on Sister Helen Prejean

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One might read her book, watch her movie, or read about Sr. Helen, but meeting her and listening to her sincere

social challenge to stop capital punishment is a rewarding, enlightening experience. The southern story-teller led us into her life as she journeyed into a world she never before felt called to, ministering to people on death row. As her story unfolded, we could feel the nudging of the spirit to move all of us into a world of social consciousness. Self awareness and listening to the spirit will serve as guide for our lives. She

reminded us that through our Baptism, we are all called to be Christ to one another, in all areas of life. She called us to deepen our reflection of people who have made very poor decisions but whose life overall doesn't need to be lost.

A copy of her lecture is available on CD for \$5 from Beacon of Hope . Contact any Board member or write to us with your request.

Sister Helen is the 3rd Educational speaker brought to you by Beacon of Hope. We have had such positive reviews for this kind of opportunity we will continue our series next April 24th with our guest speaker Fr. Charles Curran. He will speak of Loyal Dissent.



Deacons hear from Beacon of Hope

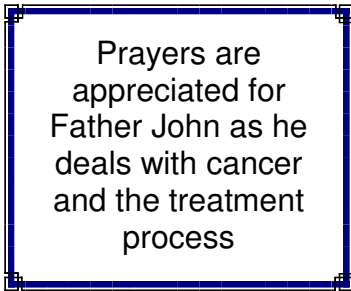
Following the August 2nd meeting that Beacon of Hope board members had with Bishop David Zubick regarding the results of a Listening Session we conducted for area Catholics, Board President Greg Stock received a letter requesting that Beacon of Hope send a representative to the next quarterly meeting of Deacons for the Green Bay Catholic Diocese.

ideals, the speaker forums that have been offered, and our future intentions regarding the Listening Session that was conducted this April. Upon conclusion of the meeting, Anne and Tom received many favorable comments for the work that Beacon of Hope is conducting in the Diocese.

On Thursday evening, August 30th, Anne Thielen and Dr. Tom Wiltzius met with a number of deacons and guests at St. Bernard Catholic Church in Appleton. After reviewing the history of Beacon of Hope, Anne and Tom reviewed our mission and the activities of members over the last two years.

It is clear that Beacon of Hope – Light of Christ is beginning to have a significant and positive impact in the Green Bay Diocese. Bringing in speakers like Father Richard McBrien, Father Donald Cozzens and Sister Helen Prejean has enlightened and enriched the minds and thinking of area Catholics and our Christian friends. The work we do at the food pantries and Community Clothes Closet is making a difference in the lives of both the volunteers and the needy in our communities.

Deacons asked questions about the organization's commitment to Vatican II



Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors.

Beacon of Hope... Light of Christ Staff: Tom Wiltzius, Joe Uchtyl

FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

It's hard to believe, but Beacon of Hope – Light of Christ as an incorporated non-profit organization has now been in existence for 2 ½ years already. Reflecting back on what has happened in that time, it is truly amazing what our organization has accomplished.

I'm proud of our ability to sponsor three national speakers (and another coming in spring) that have appeared at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center to discuss various current topics with us. Everyone involved from those organizing the events to everyone attending I think would agree that we have been blessed to have them speak to us.

I'm also very proud of other things we've accomplished so far. We sponsored a listening session that has been received favorably by the Green Bay Diocese, and we are in the process of following up with the Diocesan administration about how to go forward with what has been done so far. Two of our board members spoke to a group of deacons in the area about Beacon of Hope and our

mission, and were well received (see a related article in this newsletter for more information). We are sponsoring a trip to Israel in March 2008, and 32 of the 36 spots are already filled. The other four will hopefully be filled shortly with our ability to advertise in the Compass for the trip.

But, I think that I'm most proud of the help we've been able to extend to those both within and outside of Beacon of Hope. Whether it is financial assistance for people who have been wronged by the church, an extended prayer network where people can mention someone they would like to pray for and many join in, or our young people giving of their free time at other area non-profit organizations, our group has done a lot of good for many others.

As another church year ends and another one begins full of promise and wonder, let's keep helping others as our focus going forward. And with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will do just that.

- Greg Stock

Q and A – The Rev. Richard P. McBrien

Paulist Press and the Rev. McBrien have graciously allowed Beacon of Hope – Light of Christ to publish a Question and Answer in each of our 2007 newsletters from the book 101 Questions & Answers on The Church.

Q. 48. You say that the laity participate directly in the mission of the Church and not simply as sharers in the mission of the hierarchy and clergy. But isn't that the way Christ set up his Church, with authority given directly to the Apostles and their successors and with the rest of us in only supporting roles?

In a word, "No." We have no evidence that Jesus ever uttered the words, "hierarchy", "bishop", "clergy", or even "laity", for that matter. Jesus displayed little or no interest in the manner by which his disciples would organize themselves for their mission to preach the good news of the coming of the Reign of God nor how they would pass that responsibility on to others. Church structures with which we are all familiar began to develop later, after the death of the Apostles and the appearance on the scene of various false teachers (1 Tim 4:1-3; Titus 1:10-13; 2 Tim 3:1-

9; 4:3-4). There was a growing recognition of the need for some church order. Presbyters, also known as elders, were appointed in each town and were given supervisory (literally, episcopal) functions. They monitored the religious and moral behavior of the faithful, cared for the needy out of the common goods, and ensured sound doctrine. As the older, looser charismatic structure of apostles, prophets, and teachers gave way (1 Cor 12:28), the ancient *Didache* ("teachings") urged Christians to appoint bishops and deacons. By the 90s itinerant prophets and apostles became a source of trouble and their pastoral credentials were unverifiable. So the need intensified for a more regulated structure. The so-called tripartite system (bishop-priest-deacon) came into being around this time, with the particular support of Clement of Rome who drew a clear line of authority from God to Jesus Christ to the apostles to the bishops and deacons and their successors. The awareness of a separate sacrificial Eucharist and of a separate Christian priesthood also began to appear around this time, that is, late first century, early second century. But well after the time of Jesus himself, and of the apostles, too. for that matter.

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Q and A – The Rev. Richard P. McBrien

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The Second Vatican Council made it very clear that the Church is the whole People of God and that, while there are different ministerial functions to be performed, every member of the Church is radically equal in Christian and human dignity. “Everything which has been said so far concerning the People of God,” the council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church declared, “applies equally to the laity, reli-

gious, and clergy.” Moreover, the pastors of the Church – bishops and lower clergy – “understand that it is their noble duty so to shepherd the faithful and recognize their services [ministries] and charismatic gifts that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one heart” (n.30).

Credibility and Influence Grows

In early August, Beacon of Hope President Greg Stock, Vice-President for Operations Anne Thielen, Vice-President of Communications Joe Uchytel and Board Advisor Dr. Tom Wiltzius met with Bishop David Zubik and a delegation from the Green Bay Diocesan office to discuss the results of the Listening Session focus groups initiated by Beacon of Hope in the spring.

The hour-long meeting was cordial and informative. Bishop Zubik indicated he was pleased with the efforts of Beacon of Hope and would recommend his replacement build on the efforts. Zubik, who has been named to take charge of the Pittsburgh Diocese, asked Deacon Tim Reilly to ensure that Beacon of Hope officials meet with the new Green Bay Diocese Administrator later this year. Those attending the meeting agreed that the focus group process should be expanded, the results aggregated, and initiatives developed. The initiatives would

then be given to existing Diocesan groups to implement.

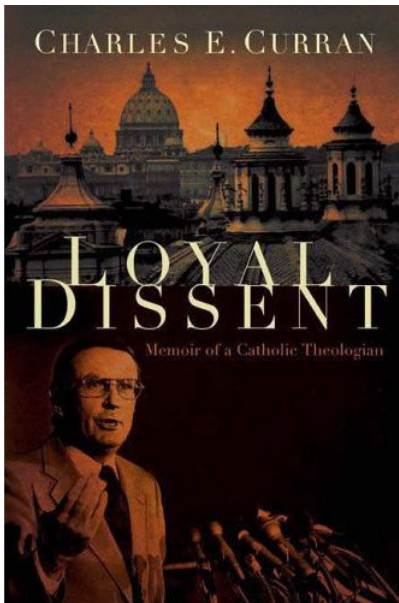
Shortly after the meeting with the Bishop Zubik, Greg Stock received a letter of invitation from the Deacons of the Green Bay Diocese, requesting a speaker for their next quarterly meeting. Anne Thielen and Dr. Tom Wiltzius met with the deacons and reviewed the history of Beacon of Hope, its mission, and its past and current activities.

Dispelling a number of hostile rumors, Anne and Tom confirmed that Beacon of Hope is not an alternative church, but a group of Catholics committed to continuing the reforms of Vatican II. Many favorable comments regarding Beacon of Hope were made at the meeting, and more have been received since the meeting.

Packers Support Speaker series

Whenever the Green Bay Packers play at home, Beacon of Hope runs one of the concession stands. All the money earned is used to support our Speaker Series at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center. We usually need 18 workers who either serve customers, help fill orders, do dishes or prepare food. There is a special job for you!

If interested in working at one or more games, please contact Beacon of Hope at one of the posted addresses. Besides the work, there is a good sense of camaraderie.



Loyal Dissent

A Review of Charles E. Curran's Loyal Dissent:

Memoir of a Catholic Theologian

(Georgetown Univ. Press, 2006)

Submitted by Bill Kessenich

The Rev. Charles E. Curran recently retired from his position as an ethics professor at Southern Methodist University, where he completed his career as a Catholic moral theologian. Despite being censured by Rome for his outspoken dissent from many of the traditional moral teachings of the Church while at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. where he was a tenured professor of moral theology for over 25 years, Charlie, as he was affectionately

known by both friends and students, continued to maintain his loyalty to the Catholic tradition. He started teaching during the tumultuous 60's years of the Second Vatican Council and Pope Paul's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, through the 70's which included the Roe vs. Wade decision by the Supreme Court as well as other new medical ethical issues, and on into the 80's where his theology made a decided turn away from sexual ethics to issues expanding on the social teachings and traditions of the Church regarding justice and peace. His last 20 years while at Auburn University for a year and then at Southern Methodist have been taken up with his attempt to deepen his moral thinking to include a more systematic and complete moral theology while steering away from the more dogmatic approach that admits of only one divinely revealed truth as taught by the Church.

The book is a faithful memoir of Charlie's entire life in his own voice, from his upbringing and family in Rochester, New York, his studies for the priesthood in Rome, and his first teaching assignment in the seminary in Syracuse, New York, and subsequent teaching positions. Throughout the book the person comes through just as I remembered him when I had the honor of being one of his students during 1973-1975 while I myself was studying for the priesthood at the Theological College at CUA. While I decided to leave the seminary during those two tumultuous years of my life, I have often fondly recalled the memory of not only Charlie's challenging graduate classes, but also the affection and personalism he displayed to friends and critics alike. My memory of the man is one of a cordial gentleman, a thinker with a profound understanding of Thomism and the Church's tradition, and more importantly a fellow pilgrim on the journey of faith to God. The book echoes my perception and understanding of this humble, gentle and faith-filled pilgrim whose journey of faith, while more profoundly rational and logical than most of us have the patience to aspire to, never has the pretension and certainty that many scholars display. Charlie's wit and interpersonal skill is evident throughout, even toward those that could be considered his enemies.

One quote from page 68 sums up both the title and the content of the book relative to the fundamental issue of dissent from the non-infallible teachings of the Church that so determined Charlie's relationship to the Church throughout his life of teaching and moral thinking:

In my view dissent is a positive force and need not carry negative connotations. In the political realm, this attitude has often been expressed as the highest form of patriotism, which consists in resisting one's country or one's government when it is wrong. In the context of the church, for me, dissent means speaking the truth in love, and that has always been my intention.

This idea of loyal dissent, while anathema to lesser minds who attribute infallibility to each and every pronouncement of the Pope, is a hallmark of the adult Christian today, who is not simply accommodating the modern mindset by questioning everything, but is sincerely grappling with often contradictory truths and reaching for the full truth in a more whole and complex manner. Charlie remains a symbol to us all who have a similar desire to find a deeper truth in the complex world we are presented with today.

I found Chapter 4 on Charlie's more systematic development of a complete moral theology enlightening since he had not developed these ideas as completely when I was lucky enough to be one of his students. This comprehensive view is dependent on four aspects including *stance, model, person as subject and agent, and conscience.*(p.79) Charlie's stance or perspective from which he begins thinking morally is profoundly Catholic Christian including the fivefold *mysteries of creation, sin, incarnation, redemption, and resurrection destiny.* His relationality-responsibility model understands that *the Christian lives in a web of fourfold relationships to God, neighbor, the world and self and that these relationships are spread out over time – past, present, and future.* Regarding the person as subject and agent, Charlie states that *as agent, the person's acts affect others and the world, while as subject, the person through her own actions makes and shapes her own personal identity.* The notion of fundamental option in the sense of a Christian's call to continual conversion and growth in the Christian life *is the most important act for it directs, guides, and influences all the other particular choices.* Finally, with regard to conscience Charlie suggests *that the peace and joy of a good conscience is the (my emphasis) criterion for a good and true conscience. ...The human person has a drive and a thrust for value and the truth. We know that we have made a good judgment ...when that drive and thrust have been fulfilled.*

While much of the book is filled with details of the events surrounding: 1) his famous lawsuit in 1968, where he took Catholic University to task on the issue of academic freedom surrounding his and many other theologians' objections to the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* on birth control and their right and responsibility to object; and 2) his censure by Pope John Paul II through Josef Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, in 1986 and his subsequent dismissal from Catholic University; it is rich with Charlie's observations on many of the important players in the Church, both American and European, in the last 70 years. He certainly belongs among those giants of intellect and spirit! His journey of faith and discovery is both inspiring and tragic! Yet one is filled with optimism in spite of it all because of the profound joy one hears in the voice of this extraordinarily Christian man who has served both his Church and his world with a profound moral sensitivity and simple goodness. It is a book worth reading from both the historical perspective as well as a trigger for one's own reflection on what an adult relationship with the Church means.

Israel 2008 Update

Volume 4, Issue 5

As October 2007 draws to a close, registrations for the March 2008 Beacon of Hope trip to the Holy Land stand at 32. Trip organizers Greg Stock, Jim Kampa, Fr. John Zickert and Dr. Tom Wiltzius continue to refine the agenda and are fully engaged with trip coordinators at Blossoming Rose.

A general meeting is being planned for November 17th at Goodwill for all who are registered. This meeting will allow people to get to know one another, discuss the planned itinerary, and coordinate activities prior to the March 2nd departure from Chicago.

There are 36 seats currently reserved by organizers, leaving room for 4 more area Catholics to join in the visit to the Holy Land. If you are moved to learn more, or wish to register, please call Dr. Tom Wiltzius at 920-757-0906 or visit the website at:

www.BOHLightofChrist.org



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September/October