

Can One Issue Be That Important?

By The Most Reverend Jude Speyrer Bishop Emeritus, Diocese of Lake Charles

A perplexed parishioner approached me with a question. "What's wrong with being a single-issue voter?" she wanted to know.

"The number of issues has nothing to do with it" I replied. "It really depends on the issue. One issue by itself could be enough."

She tearfully went on to describe how a circle of relatives had ridiculed her as a 'single-issue voter' when she expressed a preference for pro-life candidates despite candidates' positions on other matters. "They made me feel guilty for selecting a person for his stand against abortion alone as though this was an 'un-civic' thing for me to do."

I knew exactly what she meant. In reply I told the lady that something I had said to a close friend in conversation only the previous week had provoked the same strongly voiced criticism. I too was taunted for being a 'single-issue' voter. His spirited outburst had come when I voiced an automatic preference, (as you would expect) for political candidates who are pro-life. My friend's comment on my voting choice was made to sound like an accusation. It implied that I should always base my selection on more than one feature of a nominee's platform before he (or society) would approve of my action as a voter.

A slow thinker, only later did I organize my thoughts. His finger pointing caused me to wonder. I asked myself what was so wrong with being a 'single-issue' voter anyway? Particularly in a question of life or death. How many issues does it take to make a voter's decision worthy of society's approval? Besides, why should I care what society thinks?

Except for their stand on protection for the unborn, there is often not a dime's worth of difference between the views of people running for office. And even when positions on other matters do clash, for me whether a candidate is pro-life or supports abortion over-rides absolutely everything else.

The conflict between life and death for the unborn is so unconditional that even where major contradictions among candidates exist, enough of an issue is already present to decide the matter then and there. Everything else is secondary.

A glass may be full of Grade-A milk but one single drop of poison renders it deadly and undrinkable!

Looking back, I am willing to bet that many Germans, for instance, would have welcomed a majority of 'single-issue' voters in the March 1933 elections in that country. Instead, Hitler was put in office as German citizens gave the Nazi Party almost 44 per-

cent of the vote.

Of course, Hitler had pledged many other blessings: reduction in unemployment, material recovery (it's the economy, Dummkopf!) and taking credit for the general world-wide improvement, which just happened to coincide with his promises.

How did the German people respond? In a later plebiscite, Hitler's platform received the support of 90 percent of the electorate!

Make no mistake about it. A human life is a human life, whether in Germany, Rwanda or in the United States. And at any time, in any place; whether inside the womb or at its end in an Intensive Care Unit. The only distinction I can see between the 'final solution' in Germany 65 years ago and 'ethnic cleansing' now is only half a century of time and membership in tribes that simply bear different names.

In the present-day version of that Nazi atrocity, discrimination in this country while not as racial as fifty years ago revolves instead around age. We are going after the unborn and the elderly.

Worse yet, attempts are even made at justifying the destruction of the unborn by invoking a mother's right to end the baby's existence; and in the case of the elderly and terminally ill, people speak of a right to suicide and euthanasia.

Surely Pope John Paul II was on target when he warned about 'the culture of death.' This was the topic of several homilies to American Catholics to mention only one country among the dozens he visited. This message, most strongly expressed in his encyclical letter "Evangelium Vitae," (The Gospel of Life) is all about the precious value of human existence. It leaves no doubt about the sinfulness of abortion and euthanasia.

To take seriously the sanctity of life and to question a political candidate's intention of protecting the right to life surely goes to the heart of the matter. In the context of the general elections I can honestly state that especially for the Christian disciple it is not possible to raise an issue of greater importance.

But that same disciple owes no apology to anyone for voting his conscience. Since this is so, why then should he, of all people, need additional issues? When a candidate is not pro-life what possible difference can other issues make?

(Editor's note: This column originally ran in the Catholic Calendar of Friday, November 1, 1996. It has also been rerun prior to the 2004 general election. Modified slightly, its message now is even more important as the November 4 election draws near.)

Seminary burse opened to honor judge's wife

LAKE CHARLES - Judge Henry Yelverton, a retired Third Circuit Court of Appeal Judge, has opened a seminary burse in honor of his wife, Lorraine, on her recent birthday.

A seminary burse is a permanent fund set aside to provide income for the education of seminarians. The principal of the fund is never spent but invested, with the interest used each year for seminarian education expenses. Since the principal is never touched, this fund is truly a "gift that keeps on giving." Donations made to the fund will continue to support the education of seminarians every year, as long as the Diocese exists.

"Lorraine loves seminarians," Judge Yelverton said. "Ask Monsignor Harry Greig. He will remember the unforgettable breakfasts she cooked for him and his fellow seminarians during an Advent season nearly 40 years ago when they stayed in our home."

"Our Lord has graced my life with 55 of her birthdays," the judge continued. "She is the most nearly perfect woman I have ever known. She is beautiful and gracious, and possessed of an unlimited capacity for love. Our seven children, 15 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren will agree with this assessment. Nothing I can give her matches her merit. Her model in all things is the Mother of Our Lord."

The "Lorraine Yelverton" Seminary Burse was begun with a \$2,000 contribution.

This brings the total of burses for the Diocese of Lake Charles to \$760,036.33.

Contributions in any amount are welcome to be added to current burses or you may, like Judge Yelverton, open a burse in the name of a loved one. Semi-

nary burses can be started with any amount of money and contributions may be made to already established burses.

For more information on seminary burses, contact

Chip Gauthier, Director of Development, Diocese of Lake Charles, 411 Iris Street, Lake Charles, LA 70601, 337-439-7400, Ext. 307, or chip.gauthier@lcdiocese.org.



Diocese of Lake Charles Seminary Burses

Msgr. Louis Boudreaux	\$6,982.50
Bishop Jeanmard	\$9,276.69
Latrielle Houssiere	\$15,000.00
Charles Houssiere	\$15,000.00
Gelu Houssiere	\$15,000.00
Henry Houssiere	\$15,000.00
Msgr. William J. Teurlings	\$3,092.23
Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Houssiere	\$15,000.00
Israel Hebert Family	\$15,000.00
Fr. Moise Hebert	\$2,231.66
Pro Ecclesia	\$5,203.55
Immaculate Conception	\$3,092.23
Saint Joseph	\$1,203.35
Lake Charles Seminary	\$15,000.00
Cure d' Ars	\$3,092.23
Mr. & Mrs. C. Delahoussaye	\$15,000.00
Msgr. Lerschen	\$1,203.35
Saint Theresa	\$5,356.71
Catholic Daughters of the Americas	\$1,666.46
Msgr. Louis Boudreaux	\$15,000.00
Herrington Family	\$15,000.00
Horvath Family	\$12,500.00
Harry Van Tiel Family	\$1,031.96
Habetz-Oustalet-Mitchell Families	\$5,000.00
Msgr. A. Van Buijtenen	\$5,000.00
Msgr. Jules Daigle	\$15,000.00
Mr. & Mrs. Galip Jacobs/Sam Joseph	\$600.00
Msgr. Charles Levasseur	\$70,000.00
Plauche Family	\$4,000.00
Rev. Oscar S Vasquez-Munoz	\$1,429.00
Msgr. Bede Becnel	\$23,652.68
Jeffery Savant	\$2,435.00
Rev. Robert Lee Shreve	\$25,973.33
Bishop Jude Speyrer	\$4,000.00
Our Lady of the Snows/ CDA Court	\$20,200.00
Msgr. Curtis Vidrine	\$28,689.60
Msgr. Murphy Bernard	\$27,476.90
Rev. Alphonse M. Volpe	\$25,122.62
East Deanery Serra Club	\$550.00
Msgr. Charles Dubois	\$9,926.70
Msgr. Amos J. Vincent	\$34,723.21
Rev. Oris A. Broussard	\$27,810.66
Msgr. Irving A. DeBlanc	\$157,897.43
Rev. John Giles	\$25,132.21
Rev. Maurice Martineau	\$27,087.40
Truman Stacey	\$10,382.09
Lorraine Yelverton	\$2,000.00
Total	\$760,036.33



Bishop Glen John Provost speaks to the crowd of Catholic men attending the October First Friday Men's Prayer Breakfast held in Ave Maria Hall of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception office building at the corner of Kirby and Bilbo streets. Bishop Provost will celebrate Mass at 6:30 a.m. in the Cathedral for everyone prior to each men's prayer breakfast. The next breakfast will break with tradition and be held on Thursday, Nov. 6 instead of Friday, Nov. 7. All Catholic men are invited to attend and must call 439-7400 to register.

Sacred Heart/Saint Katharine Drexel working on 100 years

LAKE CHARLES - A Catholic education for the African American children of the community, in good times and bad, has been provided by the stalwart teachers, lay people as well as religious sisters, for generations of students at Sacred Heart Saint Katharine Drexel Catholic School.

The school, currently celebrating its centennial of establishment, is the only school in the Diocese of Lake Charles to be able to boast that a Saint of the Church trod its halls. Saint Katharine Drexel, the Philadelphia native used her inherited wealth to open and fund schools for Native Americans and African Americans in the South and on Indian reservations. She also established the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament order and many of those religious women taught at Sacred Heart over the years. She was canonized a Saint of the Catholic Church on October 1, 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

Dr. Kathleen Dorsey Bellow leads the current group of educators at the Louisiana Avenue location of the school.

Not only is the school celebrating its 100th anniversary but the faculty, staff and elementary students are happy to be back in their classrooms after a nearly three year reconstruction forced by Hurricane Rita in September 2005. Students in grades first through fifth spent their time in the former Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic school site on Cherry Street.

The damage to the original building was so devastating that it was gutted to the studs and completely rebuilt.

"They did quite a bit of work to the outside as well," Dr. Bellow said. "In many ways it is a new facility. The alumni come and they struggle to find the school that they knew."

"I think they are very proud of what we have been able to accomplish with the help of many," Bellow continued. "It's certainly a new opportunity for us to improve our presence in the community, to improve our teaching capabilities, to attract contemporary parents who want the best for their students. Part of that, of course, is a bright and fresh facility that has the latest technology."

During the reconstruction the school was re-wired for the latest in technology.

"We are moving very quickly in that area," she said. "The teachers are working to incorporate the new technologies into their curriculum. That is our number one priority."

Along with the reconstructed elementary building, work began during the summer and continues into the fall term at the junior high facility across the street. The damage from the 2005 storm was not as great at that building but it couldn't renovate one part of the campus without doing work on the other. This has forced Bellow and the school to work on raising money.

"With very good support from members of the Catholic community we are improving the junior high," Bellow continued. "We are

changing the configuration of the classrooms and refreshing the interior as well."

Prior to the hurricane the school had 135 children enrolled. When it reopened after the storm, only 116 returned. "That was one of our struggles during hurricane recovery and even now we are still in hurricane recovery in a number of ways."

First day enrollment for the 2008-2009 school term stood at 108.

Because people have been so busy doing the work of educating the children of Sacred Heart Saint Katharine Drexel, they have had scant time to do much marketing. The centennial year provides a perfect opportunity to do just that, according to Bellow.

"One of our challenges is to project the traditional image of Sacred Heart in a new setting," she said. "This is a tricky message to communicate. The alumni and others in the community know that it is time for Sacred Heart to heighten its profile and to let people know who we were, who we are, what kind of future identity we will have."

"We are so fortunate to have so many Sacred Heart and Immaculate Heart graduates in the community to help us in that area and I think that the assistance and support in public relations is a godsend. It is a cycle of time."

Many people in the community may have taken Sacred Heart for granted in the sense that "it has been here since 1908, of course it is going to be here forever."

"In a 100 year old institution you have to fight as hard as you can to make sure it becomes 101, 105 or 110," Bellow said. "The school is too important to the whole community, not just the Church community. The business community depends on the students that we educate and send out into the world."

Women's Prayer Luncheon Nov. 4

LAKE CHARLES - The inaugural Women's Prayer Luncheon with Bishop Glen John Provost will be held Tuesday, Nov. 4, in the Buccaneer Room of the Lake Charles Civic Center, located on the third floor.

Seating will be available at 11:30 a.m. and the luncheon will begin at noon. Attendees are urged to arrive at 11:30 a.m.

Reservations are still being taken by calling 439-7400 and must be secured by sending in a check in the amount of \$10 made out to the Diocese of Lake Charles or \$10 cash to Esther Gallardo, 612 Alamo Street, Lake Charles, LA 70601-8616, before Oct. 29. Checks should be made out to Diocese of Lake Charles.

All those who registered for the Sept. 2 luncheon may attend but must re-register at 439-7400 and send the \$10.

Pilgrimage dates to St. Paul of Elton announced

LAKE CHARLES - The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, has designated the Church of St. Paul in Elton as a pilgrimage site during this Year of St. Paul where pilgrims may earn a Plenary Indulgence for their visit there.

"It is the only parish in our Diocese named for the great disciple," Bishop Provost said. "The Plenary Indulgence from temporal punishment due to sin is granted to all who visit there and who are truly repentant and have received absolution in the Sacrament of Penance and participated in Holy Communion, as well as have offered prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father."

"This same indulgence is extended to our sick and homebound or those who for

some important reason cannot make pilgrimage and have fulfilled the same conditions of sacramental absolution, Eucharistic participation, and prayers for the Holy Father," the Bishop said.

Bishop Provost also provided a schedule of days of pilgrimage to St. Paul, including the Anniversary of the Dedication of the Basilica of St. Peter and St. Paul, November 18, 2008; the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, January 25, 2009; and the feast day of St. Timothy and St. Titus, January 26, 2009. Also, the anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Lake Charles, April 25, 2009; the feast day of St. Barnabas, June 11, 2009 and the Feast of Sts Peter and Paul, June 29, 2009, the close of the Year of St. Paul.

Did you know...

The courageous people of Cameron Parish have faced much devastation and strife in the past three years but hurricanes Rita and Ike, along with Audrey in 1957, were not the only storms to cause problems for the churches and people there. Hurricanes have mauled the coastal areas numerous times, including September 1865, October 1886, September 1900, 1909, and 1918. Each time rebuilding has taken place the faith communities have continued just as they did after Audrey and Rita and will do now following Ike. Hurricane Audrey took the largest human toll with more than 500 dead.

St. Theodore Church in Moss Bluff was a mission chapel before its elevation to canonical parish. Do you know the name of the parish that gave birth to St. Theodore? Find out in our next Catholic Calendar.