

## Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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### Hats off, chief New presidency a chance to unite, not divide

The nation's capitol was a place of mixed emotions this inaugural weekend.

On the one hand, President Bush delivered a hopeful message, urging the country to unify in its greatness. On the other hand, protesters decried the election, claiming it was stolen from the American people, vowing never to stand behind President Bush.

In the face of such contrasting and conflicting sentiments, we support Bush's call for civility.

Bush said in his inaugural address that "civility is not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos."

We view the protesters' sentiment as against such civility and further, against any sort of constructive cooperation which is necessary to affect any sort of change in the government.

While their issues – including abortion rights, uniform polling procedures and civil rights – may be relevant, the protesters chose a means and a language to make their point, which will serve only to divide the country.

Even if one disagrees with the procedure by which Bush was named president, the fact remains that he is our president now, and it is our duty as citizens to support him in that role. Protesting his inauguration serves only to insult him. The protesters Saturday did little to help their goals.

Indeed, creating an antagonistic atmosphere in Washington is the easiest way to ensure that liberal initiatives are dismissed. They should work instead to build a consensus with the man that is president, regardless of their objections. They should work to show that civil rights are human rights, that abortion rights are human rights and that creating uniform polling procedures is the only way to ensure that last year's election debacle won't recur.

Further, all citizens should recognize this fact: President Bush is our president. Let us all unify behind him – and when necessary, let us do our best to educate him.

But now that the inauguration is over and the protests have died down, the challenge falls to President Bush as well.

Consensus building, after all, is no easy task, and we are concerned that President Bush may lapse into the partisan double-speak that is a historical tradition of the Republican party.

He might be tempted to ignore the people represented by those who protested his inauguration. He might be tempted not to pursue his goal of civility quite as strongly as he promised in his inaugural address.

But if he is to "build a single nation of justice and opportunity," President Bush will have to reach out to his most vocal opponents and prove that they can have confidence in him.

He must never forget that the majority of Americans voted against him. While this does not serve to invalidate his presidency, it should sober his policy-making. He must keep in mind that he works for the concerns of people with whom he disagrees, politically and philosophically.

And doing so requires more than eloquent speech-making. It requires action.

It requires careful cabinet member selection, careful Supreme Court appointees (should the opportunity arise) and conscientious social policy.

To that end, good luck, Mr. President.

#### Editorial Board

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## Catholicism at the crossroads

"The greater the power, the more dangerous the abuse."  
— Edmund Burke

We can usually best judge the measure of a man by what he does, not what he says or thinks.

The same holds true for religions. Although the doctrines of each religion are equally irrational, the fascinating differences between them lie in how they affect society (and in turn are affected by it).

By such a measure, the Catholic Church has become largely indistinguishable from the Southern Baptist Convention. The modern Catholic Church spends most of its time condemning homosexuals and abortion, issuing proclamations about how it offers the only full means to salvation, actively influencing political elections and generally stifling dissent from within or without.

Of course, it wasn't always this way. In the early 1960s, Pope John XXIII brought new approaches "in the fields of ecumenism, religious liberty, the liturgy, Scripture studies and social action." (Mead & Hill, 1995) He believed passionately that religion could bring about freedom instead of oppression and hope instead of hellfire and damnation.

Priests of the "Vatican II" worked fervently to achieve social justice: They helped feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, secure civil rights for blacks and more.

Unfortunately, some leaders of the modern Catholic Church have returned to the mind-set that brought about the Crusades, the Inquisition and the trial of Galileo.

The Archdiocese of Omaha and its head, Archbishop Curtis, provide the perfect example. In the United States, there are only 42 archbishops: Curtis is one of the most conservative of them all.

In the recent debate over Initiative 416, Curtis sent a flier to several thousand Catholic households in Nebraska urging them to vote for 416. The fliers included a picture and quote from the pope. Not an unexpected action, but what happened next was.

When 12 Catholics (including a retired priest) signed a full-page ad in the Omaha World-Herald urging citizens to vote against the initiative, Curtis reacted angrily and promised to personally contact each of the Catholics who signed it.

Later that same month, Michael Kelly of the World-Herald wrote a column about Vincent Mainelli. Mainelli, probably the most prominent Catholic priest in Nebraska, was a pastor at St. Cecilia, one of the 10 largest Catholic cathedrals in the country.

However, Mainelli decided to retire from the priesthood and get married, citing his dissatisfaction with the Church's movement away from social justice teaching as the main reason for the change.

A World-Herald investigation showed that Mainelli wasn't the only one.

Of all the priests ordained by the Omaha Archdiocese since 1956, between 14 percent and 20 percent have left the priesthood entirely. "Many had questioned church teaching on birth control, divorce and remarriage, the need for celibacy among the clergy and the ban on female priests." (OWH 12-17-00)

Did Archbishop Curtis listen to Mainelli's concerns or try to open a dialogue? No. He simply compared Mainelli's actions to a husband breaking his marriage vows and said that "(Columnist) Michael Kelly, who is supposed to be a Catholic, should have lamented the fact with all of us who love the priesthood and love our archdiocese."

Curtis caused another furor by proclaiming that Catholics should not vote for any candidate who supports abortion rights. (i.e., most Democrats). Why didn't Curtis tell voters not to vote against any candidate who supports the death



Jeremy Patrick

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penalty (i.e., most Republicans), an equally noxious practice under Catholic doctrine?

Governor Mike Johanns also is "supposed to be a Catholic" and eagerly supports sending inmates to the electric chair. Perhaps Archbishop Curtis is too busy calling lay Catholics who signed the advertisement against 416 to find the time to call the Governor who supports having people killed.

Most recently, Curtis "said he would probably publicize the names of Catholic university theologians who don't obtain his approval as being in accord with the teachings of the church." (OWH 1-07-01) The mandate is part of a document issue by Pope John Paul II.

Many Catholics, including Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk of Cincinnati, don't believe the mandate is enforceable, and they do believe it threatens the religious and intellectual freedom of Catholic theologians.

Curtis, speaking with respect to Creighton, is not dissuaded: "I'm just saying that if I declare that this person doesn't have a mandate to teach Catholic theology in this university, (it's) going to have some impact."

The Catholic Church has come to a crossroads. Its leadership is increasingly conservative, yet its membership is increasingly liberal.

A 1999 Gallup survey for the National Catholic Reporter showed that 53 percent of Catholics believed that a person could be a Catholic and support abortion rights (up from 39 percent in 1987), 72 percent believed Catholics could make birth control decisions contrary to the Church's position (up from 66 percent), and 63 percent supported allowing women as priests (up from 48 percent) – an issue Pope John Paul II said is closed to debate. Another poll showed that 75 percent of Catholics believed priests should be allowed to marry. (OWH 9-03-00)

The Church's membership also is changing. The Church is now facing a drastic shortage of priests, while enrollment in its seminaries and private schools is down. One study found that of nearly 7,000 active priests, almost 20 percent left between 1966 and 1985.

The Omaha Archdiocese itself is in trouble. In 1960, there was one priest for every 798 Catholic members. Today, there is only one priest for every 1,449 members.

If we measure religions by the effect they have on the world, the verdict is still out on Catholicism. Lay members and some priests still work hard on social justice issues.

In Nebraska, Catholics like Reverend Zuerlein of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church advocate for immigrants; others work building houses for Habitat for Humanity or operating battered women's shelters. Yet, how long can they continue without active support from leaders who seem concerned only with abortion or homosexuality?

"We haven't left the church. The church has left us," said Mainelli when he quit the priesthood. The Catholic Church, or what's left of it, must soon decide whether it believes in compassion, freedom and social justice – or hegemony, intolerance and obedience.

It is increasingly clear that if Archbishop Curtis gets his way, the latter view will prevail.

## Picking through the bad fruit

Work had become the kaleidoscope through which I was viewing the world.

I was paid in the excess of the world. The lard that encircles the warm little rhythm of life. My paychecks were bruised bananas, dropped apples, brown lettuce and rotting potatoes converted into American dollars. Every other Friday, I received my 100 percent recycled lard paycheck stub – I had it directly deposited in my bank.

This saved time – time I could spend drinking cappuccinos and driving my foreign-made automobile. Time I could spend throwing half-bad fruit into a box and down a trash compactor, slamming a heavy metal door on its short existence.

I guess I had to do this – it was my job. I was the metal screen sifting the dirt from the world. I was ridding the world of the gristle and fat around the steak.

In the spirit of the great explorers of the past, I culled over displays in search of mild imperfections. I felt like a NASA chimp combing and grooming the back of another chimp. I filled luxury. I am the bruised bananas.

I guess that is where it had all started, in the bruised bananas I was putting in bruised banana boxes – my job. The bananas would end up in one of the cubes of trash they would pull from the compactor – devalued only by the need for the upper 3 percent of quality. The bad apples that I would find later – the bad apples that weren't all that bad – would follow the bananas. Oranges, sometimes; potatoes maybe; everyday, lettuce. I suppose we couldn't avoid lettuce, its flicker of shelf life was like the click of a burnt-out light bulb when you turn it on.

We trashed a lot of things. Sometimes, I just felt like I was holding a bat, and I was breaking something beautiful – like I was standing on a historical monument or piece of artwork and was pouring all my weight into destroying it.

Sometimes, I just stare at the world blankly – let it blur, roll in every direction, until it is out of focus. I feed those who have never been hungry. I am 300 free minutes and free long distance on your cellular plan. I am your pager. Weekend retreats to the mountains. I am designer end tables and \$120 sweaters.

Then the colors pull together – magnetized in their nonexistent polarity – they run together like people huddling before some sort of mass destruction.

I watch them all piece together and form this blob of clarification, of focus. It isn't this that is focused though. In the blob, everyone is engulfed like the points of a pointillist painting.

Unfocused, I could see the people individually – focused, I was absorbed in the shadow of their blob.

People appreciate me because I provide quality produce for their Christmas Eve soups or office New Year's party vegetable trays. They appreciate my bruised bananas, dropped apples and half rotting potatoes because they are not there – they appreciate my trash. They love their pretty little worlds of comfort.

This is our luxury, the epitome of civilization. We have whittled life into specific specs. We opt for excess.

Some mornings I wake up and hope that the lights in my room won't work. That there is no hot water in the shower. Maybe there would be an electrical problem. I want to look in the mirror and not shave or comb my hair. I wish that everyone would wake up just like me. Rock bottom.

I bet those bruised bananas wouldn't sound so bad.

I like to put on my orange sunglasses. We try to liberate ourselves, free ourselves in plucking our eyebrows, pressing our pants or washing our new car. We scrape happiness from the corners of our showers. Your new mass-produced, four-colors-of-blue shirt is not happiness. The clean, fresh fruits are the advantage we take.

In reality, there is no need to dump gasoline around your teepee and set fire to all your worldly possessions. You don't have to let go of all the things you enjoy. You don't have to eat them to appreciate the bruised fruit of the world.

Ask yourself, what if you had to? What if all the excess of the world was gone? What if I quit my job and there was no one to sift through all the shit you like to pick up and complain about? What would you have left? Where would you get your produce? So, how's that treating you? My job? I hope it works out for you.



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Please write back and tell us what you think.

