

Prayers: grandmother of F. Marzolf died. Ill, cousin of E. Franzgrotte, friend of....

University of Notre Dame
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...Sister Elise, S.C., father of Pat Dunn. I special int. (TOMORROW. . . FIRST FRIDAY!)

"It IS The Church's Business."

Father Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., Dean of the School of Sacred Theology, Catholic University, in THE SIGN for April, 1951, answers the question whether the Catholic Church interferes immoderately and unjustly in the lives and conduct of decent men and women. . . . (Read your Catholic press.)

Criticisms more frequently come from persons who are hostile to the Catholic Church and intend them as an indictment of the Church's custom of passing judgment on the moral aspect of motion pictures, books, medical and surgical practices, marriage, sex, etc.

Among the many groups of objectors there is one made up mainly of those who charge the Catholic Church with undue interference in the conduct of non-Catholics by striving to procure the general enforcement of certain moral standards, applicable to Catholics but not to those who do not profess Catholicism.

WHAT ANSWER CAN YOU GIVE? Is the Church unjustified in pronouncing on the laws of morality and unjustifiably interfering in the personal conduct, not only of its own members but also of non-Catholics, when she attempts to secure civil legislation in defence of her interpretation of the moral law?

Father Connell's first answer is the strong argumentum ad hominem--an argument that retorts against an adversary the same type of argumentation that he has employed against us. For example: when Catholics are blamed for trying to obtain the support of the civil law against certain practices which they regard as violations of God's law, they can adduce the indubitable fact that certain non-Catholic groups do not hesitate to work for legislation against things which they regard as immoral or detrimental to the common welfare, even though many other Americans do not agree with them. For many years Protestant organizations have been striving to have gambling and the sale of intoxicants declared illegal. ("The Noble Experiment" of Prohibition.)

Such persons, declares Father Connell, are inconsistent if they denounce Catholics for trying to procure legislation against such practices as contraception, euthanasia, divorce, obscene motion pictures, which Catholics regard as immoral. . . Moreover, Catholics should point out to objectors that oftentimes a considerable number of non-Catholics support Catholic efforts toward the defence of the moral law. This was illustrated in connection with Cardinal Spellman's stand against THE MIRACLE, which was declared sacrilegious and blasphemous and offensive to public morals.

Father Connell also observes that the vast majority of non-Catholics uphold the Catholic Church's endeavors, especially through papal encyclicals, to better the lot of the working man and to procure for him a living wage. Yet, this is, in a sense, an act of interference, substantially no different from the Church's intervention in the moral aspects of literature and the stage.

The basic reason, as Father Connell points out, for Church intervention in moral matters, whatever phases of human life they may affect, is the fact that the Church has received from Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the authorization to preach the moral law to all men . . . Our Lord bade the apostles to go forth and to preach to all men whatever He had commanded them--and this certainly included the principles of morality. The Pope and the bishops, successors of the apostles, have inherited the authority given by Our Saviour to the apostles. Hence they have the right to pass authoritative judgment on moral problems connected with the affairs of human life.

It is absurd to claim that there are no moral problems connected with divorce, sex, abortion, mercy killing, labor and industry, shows or books calculated to arouse the passions. The Church not only claims the right but exercises this right to pass judgment on the moral aspects of such matters. (--Father Francis J. Connell.)