

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

MMC, The Bishop And The Messenger

The sparring between the bishop of the Sioux Falls Catholic Diocese and Mount Marty College over the appearance in Yankton last week by Sister Simone Campbell offered a curious discussion about messages and messengers.

Campbell was the featured speaker at Thursday's Fall Benedictine Lecture, sponsored by MMC's Benedictine Institute of Leadership, Ethics and Social Justice. The social advocate spoke on the topic "Health Care and the Poor," specifically concerning the Affordable Care Act. She is a proponent of the healthcare reform measure, which has been opposed by the U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops in part because of the requirements the bill places on faith-based institutions concerning contraception coverage.

Here, Campbell breaks from the bishops and was frank about it in an interview in Wednesday's *Press & Dakotian*. "The Obama administration essentially accepted all of the requests of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (to change the requirements) and made modifications," she said. "And yet, the bishops persist in saying it isn't sufficient. They keep moving the goal post. It's a question of giving people true information and not just fear."

This brought a rebuke from Bishop Paul Swain of the Sioux Falls Diocese, by way of a letter sent out to clergy that was reported in Thursday's *Press & Dakotian*. He challenged Campbell's claims about the administration's accommodations. He added: "Those who seek to know what the Church really teaches should look to the statements of the Bishops," he wrote. "Her position is both personal and wrong."

MMC President Dr. Joseph Benoit told the *Press & Dakotian* he was "a little disappointed" in Swain's comments. "We have to be open and take into account that everyone is entitled to a viewpoint," Benoit said. "... What that boils down to is, as Catholics, we are sometimes faced with decisions where there are options, but we have to make good choices for us. These types of presentations on campus come from the standpoint of, the more you know, the more you understand. If anything, it's going to strengthen individuals' understanding and, in doing so, strengthen their conviction in their Catholic beliefs."

But Swain was again unhappy. Benoit received a letter from the bishop Thursday stating he was "startled" by Benoit's comments and did not appreciate what Swain perceived as an accusation of curbing academic freedom.

"Your reported comment that Sister has one 'viewpoint' and the bishops have another 'viewpoint' suggests an equivalency outside the Roman Catholic tradition," Swain wrote.

First, for full disclosure, the writer of this editorial you are reading is not Catholic. So, while we do appreciate the Church's traditions, we also profess to be on the outside looking in.

That said, we also appreciate Mount Marty's decision to bring someone like Campbell to campus. No, she doesn't speak for the Church as an institution, but her words surely resonate with many Catholics and non-Catholics alike. (The packed auditorium for her lecture last Thursday would seem to validate that.) We also believe there is considerable common ground between Campbell and the formal Catholic hierarchy on many of the things for which the nun fights, including social and economic justice, of which affordable health care is very much a part.

We also agree with Benoit that the presentation of opposing views does allow individuals to make clearer and more informed decisions on such matters. Granted, her viewpoint does not technically possess the sanctioned "equivalency" of the hierarchical opinions within the Church, but that probably won't stop many Catholics from considering her words and weighing them against the world they see and know.

Owning an open and informed mind is the best way to make life choices and moral decisions. We believe that was MMC's objective with Campbell's appearance — which, by the way, was approved by the Diocese, which also did not discourage anyone from attending the lecture. She was certainly outspoken, which everyone knew coming in, and her criticism of the bishops was nothing new. The bishop's criticism, while not surprising, nevertheless revealed a degree of sensitivity and even intolerance that may not resonate so well among some in the Diocese.

Or perhaps it will ...
That's for the people themselves to decide. From our experience, they will make their own judgments, based on their heads and hearts, and may not place so much emphasis on concerns about "equivalency."

kmh

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press
Today is Tuesday, Sept. 17, the 260th day of 2013. There are 105 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Sept. 17, 1862, more than 3,600 men were killed, many more wounded, captured or left missing, in the Civil War Battle of Antietam in Maryland; although the battle itself proved inconclusive, it effectively halted the Confederates' advance into Maryland.

On this date: In 1787, the Constitution of the United States was completed and signed by a majority of delegates attending the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia.

In 1908, Lt. Thomas E. Selfridge of the U.S. Army Signal Corps became the first person to die in the crash of a powered aircraft, the Wright Flyer, at Fort Myer, Va., just outside Washington, D.C.

In 1911, Calbraith P. Rodgers set off from Sheephead Bay, N.Y., aboard a Wright biplane in an attempt to become the first flier to travel the width of the United States. (The 49-day journey required 69 stops before ending in Pasadena, Calif.)

In 1937, the likeness of President Abraham Lincoln's head was dedicated at Mount Rushmore.

In 1939, the Soviet Union invaded Poland during World War II, more than two weeks after Nazi Germany had launched its assault.

In 1947, James V. Forrestal was sworn in as the first U.S. Secretary of Defense.

In 1959, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev traveled by train from Washington, D.C., to New York City, where he received a low-key welcome from New Yorkers. A groundbreaking ceremony was held for Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles.

In 1962, U.S. space officials announced the selection of nine new astronauts, including Neil A. Armstrong, who became the first man to step onto the moon.

In 1971, citing health reasons, Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, 85, retired. (Black, who was succeeded by Lewis F. Powell Jr., died eight days after making his announcement.)

In 1972, the Korean War comedy-drama "M-A-S-H" premiered on CBS. In 1978, after meeting at Camp David, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat signed a framework for a peace treaty.

In 1986, the Senate confirmed the nomination of William H. Rehnquist to become the 16th chief justice of the United States.

In 1987, the city of Philadelphia, birthplace of the U.S. Constitution, threw a big party to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the historic document.

Ten years ago: Spain's leading investigating judge, Baltasar Garçon, issued the first known indictment against Osama bin Laden in the Sept. 11 attacks. An audio-tape purporting to carry the voice of Sad-

dam Hussein, broadcast on Arab television, called on Iraqis to fight the American occupation. New York Stock Exchange chairman Dick Grasso resigned amid a furor over his \$139.5 million pay package. Retired Army Gen. Wesley Clark entered the race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Five years ago: Defense Secretary Robert Gates met with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and offered the people of Afghanistan his "personal regrets" for U.S. airstrikes that had killed civilians and said he would try to improve the accuracy of air warfare. A suicide attack on the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, Yemen, killed 19 people, including an American woman and six militaries.

One year ago: NATO said it was scaling back operations with Afghan soldiers and policemen to lower the risk of insider attacks and reduce local tensions after an anti-Islam film was blamed for setting off protests in Afghanistan. Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney told reporters his comments about Americans who pay no income taxes were not "elegantly stated." Romney was recorded telling a group of wealthy donors that 47 percent of Americans consider themselves victims, don't pay any income tax and expect government benefits.

Today's Birthdays: Actor David Huddleston is 83. Sen. Charles E. Grassley, R-Iowa, is 80. Retired Supreme Court Justice David H. Souter is 74. Singer LaMonte McLemore (The Fifth Dimension) is 78. Retired Marine Gen. Anthony Zinni is 70. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Phil Jackson is 68. Singer Fee Waybill is 63. Actress Cassandra Peterson ("Elvira, Mistress of the Dark") is 62. Comedian Rita Rudner is 60. Muppeteer Kevin Clash (former voice of Elmo on "Sesame Street") is 53. Director-actor Paul Feig is 51. Movie director Baz Luhrmann is 51. Singer BeBe Winans is 51. Actor Kyle Chandler is 48. Director-producer Bryan Singer is 48. Rapper Doug E. Fresh is 47. Actor Malik Yoba is 46. Rock musician Keith Flint (Prodigy) is 44. Actor Matthew Settle is 44. Rapper Vinnie (Naughty By Nature) is 43. Actor Felix Solis is 42. Rock singer Anastacia is 40. Rhythm-and-blues singer Marcus Sanders (Hi-Five) is 40. Actress-singer Nona Gaye is 39. Singer-actor Constantine Maroulis is 38. NASCAR driver Jimmie Johnson is 38. Pop singer Malle Misajon (Eden's Crush) is 37. Country singer-songwriter Stephen Cochran is 34. Rock musician Chuck Comeau (Simple Plan) is 34. Actor Billy Miller is 34. Country singer Desi Waindin (3 of Hearts) is 30. Rock musician Jon Walker is 28.

Thought for Today: "Governments exist to protect the rights of minorities. The loved and the rich need no protection — they have many friends and few enemies." — Wendell Phillips, American abolitionist (1811-1884).

FROM THE BIBLE

We were held captive under the law. Galatians 3:23. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Send In The Clowns

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

© 2013, Washington Post News Service

WASHINGTON — As I read Vlad's op-ed in The New York Times, a Judy Collins tune kept replaying in my head: "Isn't it rich? Isn't it queer?"

The song, actually written by Stephen Sondheim, although it is Collins' signature hit, is "Send in the Clowns" and seems an apt soundtrack for current events. As we've stalled in making a decision about how to handle Syria (two years and counting), Russian President Vladimir Putin and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad have been allowed to emerge as reasonable heads of state, talking down to the U.S., lecturing us about our misplaced belief in exceptionalism, and making demands that mock our president.

Nice work. Putin hasn't had this much fun since he rode shotgun in George W. Bush's truck. Thanks to President Obama, the good times keep on rolling. We now have a catalog of blunders we can attach to Putin-related (Putinesca?) "diplomacy," a term that becomes more farcical by the day.

Recall that Bush, whose international outreach often included a ride around his Crawford, Texas, ranch, once said he looked into Putin's eyes and saw his soul. I have a photograph from the day in Texas that captures the two men grinning. Putin, it must be said, looks like he's having the time of his life and Bush looks, as he always did, confident and oblivious to the menace seated beside him.

Next we have Obama, who, in an intimate moment with then-outgoing Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, conveyed a message to incoming President Putin. Thinking the microphones were off, Obama asked for a little space until after his re-election when he would have more wiggle room on missile defense.

"Wiggle room," now there's a foreign policy. As the red line has moved, then blurred, then moved again until now it is nearly invisible, Putin has approached the American people directly via the Times, while Assad issues orders to Washington: He'll sign the chemical weapons agreement if the U.S. promises to bug off.

Brilliant. We can't quite seem to get it quite right at the helm. Either we're saddled with a cocksure "decidicator" who is feared for his lack of pause — or we're stuck with an over-thinker so afraid of making the wrong decision that he paralyzes

himself into a pose of ineptitude.

Both profiles can be equally dangerous, depending on circumstances, though inarguably it is better to be feared than pitied. It is painful to watch as Obama is increasingly diminished by his inability to commit to a position that he himself has staked out.

Certitude isn't always an admirable trait. In fact, in political discourse, it is most often annoying if not downright wrong. Life is not, as it turns out, black and white. Diplomacy is all about exploring the shades of gray. But it is also true that the president of the United States doesn't get to suffer the usual flaws of human comport. He doesn't get to promise grave consequences for unacceptable behavior and then, failing to follow through, act as though everyone else's perception is somehow off fault.

"I didn't set a red line," Obama has said. "The world set a red line."

This not only is false but sounds petulant. The president's speech to the nation Tuesday night struck a better tone, but it was consistently inconsistent in content. Obama conveyed the sense that he really doesn't know what he intends to do — or why.

Recognizing this, Putin now has taken the high road, scolding the U.S. for its "commonplace" interventions in countries not its own.

"Is it in America's long-term interest? I doubt it," Putin wrote — and we know that Putin cares deeply about America's long-term interest. "Millions around the world increasingly see America not as a model of democracy but as relying solely on brute force, cobbling coalitions together under the slogan 'you're either with us or against us.'"

And, it is "extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation."

Actually, Vlad, millions around the world do see the U.S. not only as a model of democracy but also as exceptional because, among other things, we let everybody talk. Even clowns. Sing it, Judy.

Whatever the outcome of these fire-hydrant gymnastics, a positive result (no U.S. military engagement and an enforceable chemical weapons agreement with Syria) likely will have been accidental. So be it and pass the champagne. But the larger lesson should not get lost in events: Never draw a line unless you are prepared to fight. Erasers make lousy weapons.

Kathleen Parker's email address is kathleen-parker@washpost.com.

Bill O'Reilly

The Path Of A Higher Calling

BY BILL O'REILLY

Creators Syndicate

Here's the crime story of the week. New York City cops busted a heroin ring comprised of five religious Jews, all male. Prosecutors allege that the men sold a variety of hard drugs out of a Brooklyn apartment but would not provide the narcotics from Friday evening through Saturday morning because of Shabbat. The rest of the week, they would sell you all the heroin, cocaine and oxycodone you want.

This might seem bizarre — unless you think about it. Many on the left, including some in the media, are peddling the sick scenario that selling hard drugs is not a violent crime and should not be harshly punished. In New York State, liberals have been screaming for years to end tough mandatory prison sentences for hard drug dealers. In their opinion, the punishment does not fit the crime.

Drug abuse, you see, is not a criminal act in their eyes. It's a disease, and the pushers are only serving a demand. They are not doing anything immoral or destructive to society.

That is so wrongheaded it's frightening. According to the latest statistics available from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, nearly 40,000 people died from drug overdoses in 2010. Between 1999 and 2010, the drug-related death rate rose by an astounding 102 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Why? Because narcotics are more powerful than they used to be.

In 2011, about 2.5 million people were treated in the nation's emergency rooms for drug emergencies, including tens of thousands of children. That's not a disease; it's an epidemic.

Making all of this death and suffering possible is a small army of callous drug dealers who sell poi-

son. They know that hard drugs can enslave and even kill human beings. They don't care. They also know that once they sell the drugs, they could be used by children. They don't care.

When I was a teenager, drug dealers were pariahs in my Levittown neighborhood. Yes, that was in the suburbs, but it was a fairly tough place. Pushers were on the bottom rung. Nobody respected them, and few outside of junkies associated with them. Karma being what it is, many of those pushers wound up dead or in prison, breaking the hearts of their working-class families.

Now, drug dealing is acceptable in some quarters, and a segment of our society actually feels sorry for pushers. Editorials describe these parasites as committing "nonviolent" crimes: the kind of crimes that should be overlooked, the kind of crimes that allow you to attend temple or church with no problem.

Let me be clear about this. Anyone who sells drugs is a degenerate criminal, a person who should be shunned by decent people. There is no excuse. If you're addicted, get help. If you need money, work for it. When liberals show sympathy for these devils, I ask them how they would feel if their young daughter or son was shooting up heroin. Are you OK with that?

Blank stares usually follow. America is in decline, and one big reason is that we the people now often refuse to condemn destructive behavior. Many of us have lost perspective.

Drug dealing is a violent crime. It harms human beings. That's it.

Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of the book "Pinheads and Patriots: Where You Stand in the Age of Obama."

YOUR LETTERS

A Great Show!

Dave and Lisa Oberg, Emmetsburg, Iowa
Last weekend we traveled 3 1/2 hours to see John Berry in concert at the WJ Ranch. It was well worth the travel time! The concert was wonderful.

Kudos to the Schiferl family and the area sponsors for bringing wonderful entertainment to the area. The small venue was comfortable and all the seats offered a great view of the performers. What a great way to showcase Yankton and the surrounding area. It was easy to see the pride that the families in your area feel.

We enjoyed the fine food at Sudbeck's in Bow Valley and a great night's rest at the Kelly Inn.

We sure hope to visit the Yankton area again when we return for more concerts at the WJ Ranch!

Online Opinion

The results of the most recent internet poll on the *Press & Dakotian's* Web site are as follows:

LATEST RESULTS:

Should the Minnesota Twins replace manager Ron Gardenhire?
Yes36%
Not sure/don't care32.1%
No31.9%

TOTAL VOTES CAST255
The Press & Dakotian Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

CURRENT QUESTION:

Do you think the Nebraska Cornhuskers will cover the 24 1/2-point spread by which they are favored over South Dakota State this weekend?

To vote in the *Press & Dakotian's* internet poll, log on to our Web site at www.yankton.net.