

sometimes be changed in the light of God's word.

Taken by surprise, I spontaneously began to speak to the Holy Father about the Church's relation to the legal profession in Chicago, of the many contacts and gatherings, of the several Chicago priests who are also civil lawyers, of the pro bono work for the poor, of the Catholic law schools and of many initiatives similar to what takes place here through the good offices of the members of the John Carroll society. Then I backed up and began to explain that, in the United States, the law is a primary carrier of culture. In a country continuously being knit together from so many diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic threads, legal language most often creates the terms of our public discourse as Americans. A vocation to make and to serve the law is a calling to shape our culture.

We live in worded worlds. If there is no common language, very likely there is no common vision and citizens find themselves trapped in separate worlds. Listening to God's liberating word, in this Mass and elsewhere, believers must wonder where the language of civil law and the language of faith might share a common vocabulary. The Catholic Church has tried for some generations to speak here a language of natural law, a language that presupposes God speaks in nature as well as in history, a language, therefore, able to speak of God's ways without explicitly confessional terminology. But our various attempts have not really provided a dictionary shared between American culture and Catholic faith. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops often tries to speak the language of policy, hoping that well argued policy statements will influence legal discussion; but the common understanding generated has clear limitations. There is the language of Holy Scripture itself, common to great extent to all Christians and Jews, but the Bible's phraseology and stories are no longer common cultural parlance in our country.

Speaking, in order to be heard today, a language largely shorn of religious nuances, the believer can still ask two questions of the vision behind legal discourse:

First, can the vision of courts and legislatures expand to see at least dimly God's actions and purposes in history? Abraham Lincoln of Illinois used public language to speak of God's purpose at the end of a bloody American civil war. "With firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in." Lincoln, who wrestled like a biblical prophet with God's purposes in history and his judgment on this nation, grew, because of his public service, in his ability to bring together, always tentatively, the law he defended finally with his own life and God's word which, like a two-edged sword, cuts through the rhetoric of public as well as personal deceit. Lincoln knew that God judges nations as well as persons, and he forged a language which, and the end, placed even the personal liberty to which this nation was dedicated second to the designs of God himself. Are we permitted to speak similarly today or must the language of law, rather than setting us free, blind us and leave us mute in any world not constructed by our private interests and intentions?

And a second question, put to us often these days by Pope John Paul II: does the vision of the human person found in public laws and decisions adequately express what it means to be human? Do our laws not only protect contracts but also tend to force all

human relations into them? Is the language of contract becoming the only public language of America? Does the model of association which is accorded public rights tend more and more to constrain or even exclude the natural family, the life of faith, cultural and racial groupings, relations which cannot be unchosen without destroying the human person shaped by them.

Christian faith gives us a vision of a person we call the Word of God, made flesh. Crucified and risen from the dead, Jesus sends us the Holy Spirit, who speaks every language and gives every good gift. This vision should set us free from any lesser picture of things; the language of faith should keep us from supposing that we adequately understand reality in its depths and heights. This is a vision that should humble and, in humbling us, open us to other worlds. Approaching a third Christian millennium (using what is now a common calendar), we gather to worship the God we believe to be the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ and therefore, in Christ, our Father as well. It is good to do so, for if we do not worship God we will inevitably end up worshipping ourselves. Nations worshipping themselves have plagued this last century of the second millennium, and God's word prompts us now to examine anew ourselves and our history. Without warrant, we have associated ourselves with the biblical city on a hill, not Nazareth but Jerusalem itself. Without right, we too often judge other people and nations by our standards and interests, assuming that our interests must be universal. Without sense, we even seriously consider if this nation is the end of history, as if our present political and economic arrangements were surely the culmination of God's designs for the universe. Lincoln, who had the good grace to speak of us only as an "almost chosen people", would surely blush, and so should we.

Today, as yesterday and tomorrow, the Church speaks a language of respect for public office holders, whose vocation is shaped by the constraints of law; but the Church, today as yesterday and tomorrow, also speaks as best she can to judge the actions and decision of public officials, and the culture shaped by them, when these are inadequate to the vision given us by the truths of faith. "Faith must become culture," Pope John Paul II says. "What are you doing to change the culture?" he asks. But how can we speak of change in America today when the law itself blinds us to basic truths? One egregious blind spot is our very sense of liberation construed as personal autonomy. An autonomous person has no need of jubilee, of freedom as gift; he has set himself free. The fault line that runs through our culture, and it is sometimes exacerbated rather than corrected by law, is the sacrificing of the full truth about the human person in the name of freedom construed as personal autonomy. It is a blind spot as deep as that in Marxism's sacrifice of personal freedom in the name of justice construed as absolute economic equality. Such a profound error makes our future uncertain. Will the United States be here when the human race celebrates the end of the third millennium? Not without a very changed, a very converted culture.

The Church, however, must also listen first to God's word before she speaks, before she translates God's word into the words of our culture or any other. Hence the Church can speak only with deep humility a language which purports to give definitive access to God's designs in history. Even prophetic judgment, while certain in its proclamation, is tentative in its final outcome. The Spirit is always free, but never self-contradictory.

Tentatively, then, let us try the language of prayer and ask that God's judgment fall lightly on us and our nation. Gratefully, I pray that God reward your dedication to public service and your desire to create a common language adequate to the experience of all our people and open to all others. Joyfully, let us hope that the Jubilee introducing the coming millennium may restore to the United States a sense of authentic freedom rooted in an evergrowing generosity of spirit. May God bless us all. Amen.

A TRAGIC LOSS

HON. TOM CAMPBELL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 1999

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, my state and our nation recently suffered a grievous loss in the passing of California State Senator Milton Marks. I expressed my sorrow in a letter to his wife, the Honorable Carolene Marks, San Francisco Commissioner on the Status of Women, and I would like to put into the RECORD of the House of Representatives my letter to her, as a tribute to him.

DEAR CAROLENE: My heart sank with an empty feeling the moment I learned of Milton's passing. Both Susanne and I send our heartfelt condolences to let you know that we share your loss. It was my personal joy and honor to call Milton a colleague and dear friend. He will be missed by those who knew of his dedication and service to the citizens of San Francisco and the State of California.

Carolene, there are no words that can be spoken, no words that can be written, to relieve the pain and sorrow of losing Milton. He was the consummate statesman who worked hard at his profession using his drive, dedication and spirit to champion many causes. He lived life with compassion by creating laws that protected our youth from harm, by improving the quality of our environment, and by encouraging the development of economic policy that makes California the greatest state in the nation. His service to the public will be a lasting memory for the next generation. May God bless you and your loved ones in this time of grief.

THE SOAP BOX DERBY

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 1999

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, for the last eight years, I have sponsored a resolution for the Greater Washington Soap Box Derby to hold its race along Constitution Avenue. Yesterday, I proudly introduced H. Con. Res. 47 to permit the 58th running of the Greater Washington Soap Box Derby, which is to take place on the Capitol Grounds on July 10, 1999. This resolution authorizes the Architect of the Capitol, the Capitol Police Board, and the Greater Washington Soap Box Derby Association to negotiate the necessary arrangements for carrying out running of the Greater Washington Soap Box Derby in complete compliance with rules and regulations governing the use of the Capitol Grounds.