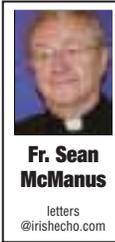


Echo Opinion

A homage to 'The Beloved Community'



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In the words of the motto of the Irish National Caucus, I believe "Ireland, too, has the right to be one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for

all."

In the meantime, I also believe the Good Friday Agreement is the proper way forward. And that, in effect, means seeing Northern Ireland as "The Beloved Community." (Not too difficult for this Fermanagh native to do).

The term "The Beloved Community" was first devised at the beginning of the twentieth century by the important American philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce (1855-1916).

But it was Blessed Martin Luther King, Jr. who made the term famous, investing it with a deeper and wider meaning.

The King Center explains: "For Dr. King, The Beloved Community was not a lofty utopian goal to be confused with the rapturous image of the Peaceable Kingdom, in which lions and lambs coexist in idyllic harmony. Rather, The Beloved Community was for him a realistic, achievable goal that could be attained by a critical mass of people committed to and trained in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence."

Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger, and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it.



A stretch of beloved Fermanagh.



Dr. King.



Josiah Royce.

Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood."

This, for the time being, and pending the common-sense and inevitable reunification of

Ireland - is the Northern Ireland that the Irish National Caucus has worked for since its inception on February 6, 1974, and for which it opened the very first Irish office on Capitol Hill on International Human Rights Day, December 10, 1978.

Now, only the utterly naïve and those totally lacking in a knowledge of Irish history, not to mention British history, would think that this means one does not expose on-going injustice, human rights violations and anti-Catholic discrimination and bigotry in Northern Ireland. (Or perhaps the applicable phrase here is "useful idiots" - useful, that is, to the British Government).

Certainly, Martin Luther King, Jr. did not believe such nonsense.

Even in one of his most famous speeches (and the most conciliatory) "I Have a Dream" (1963), he pulls no punches, but speaks truth to power: "I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. ... I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers."

Yet, a misguided few in the United States have begun to criticize me for continuing to point out that, in the words of our Animated Internet Video (<http://www.irishnationalcaucus.org>), "There is still deep-rooted Anti-Catholic bigotry in Northern Ireland. A significant section of the Unionist/Protestant community resents sharing power with Catholics (Nationalists and Republicans) because they have never accepted Catholics as equals."

One person charged I was

"too Catholic" while, at the same time, another person accused me of not being Catholic enough because I issued a statement supporting Michele Gildernew in her successful campaign to become MP again for Fermanagh/South Tyrone.

The first person opined my emphasizing that Anti-Catholicism was enshrined in the British constitution and, consequently, not ultimately the fault of the Protestants of the North, was "counterproductive to progress."

No wonder the 1972 lyrics of "Stuck in the Middle With You" came to my Fermanagh mind, "Clowns to the left of me, jokers to the right."

Wouldn't you think those two Irish Americans would think twice before they would try to lecture me about Fermanagh and about the history of anti-Catholicism in the North?

That, as we say in Fermanagh, takes some chutzpah.

Both should have remembered the Fermanagh adage: "Don't try to tell your Granny how to try the ducks."

Furthermore, the strange, inexplicable attempt to deny anti-Catholic discrimination in the North would invalidate the entire basis for our MacBride Principles campaign, and its operating motto: "American dollars must not subsidize anti-Catholic discrimination in Northern Ireland."

So now we are being told the MacBride Principles - the most successful Irish-American campaign for Irish justice since 1921- was "counterproductive to progress." God help us all!

Now back to The Beloved Community.

I want to give the King Center the last word:

"In a July 13, 1966, article in Christian Century Magazine, Dr. King affirmed the ultimate goal inherent in the quest for The Beloved Community: 'I do not think of political power as an end. Neither do I think of economic power as an end. They are ingredients in the objective that we seek in life. And I think that end of that objective is a truly brotherly society, the creation of The Beloved Community.'"

That is what I want to see in all of Ireland, north, south, east and west.

This is the final of three op-eds penned in recent weeks for this page by Fr. Sean McManus, founder and president of the Washington, D.C.-based Irish National Caucus.

The Forum LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

Thank you

Editor:

I would like to thank you for the published

articles by Mr. Tom Phelan. I enjoy reading them and they bring back great memories of time past in Ireland.

Joanne Hourigan
Mountmellick, Co. Laois

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