

**Editorials**

**Let's Hear It For Life!**

While pro-lifers across the land were making plans to note the Supreme Court's infamous decision of Jan. 22, 1973, which made abortion the law of the land, the high court handed life another blow. The highest court in the land struck down a Pennsylvania law requiring doctors to use the abortion method most likely to save the life of a fetus after it has reached the "viable" stage.

Justice Harry A. Blackmun, who wrote the 6-3 decision and who, incidentally, also wrote the majority opinion in the 1973 decision, said the Pennsylvania law is unconstitutionally vague in defining what exact stage is involved in "viability" and subjects doctors performing abortions in the later stages of pregnancy to possible criminal charges.

It was the first Supreme Court decision itself which said that after the first three months of pregnancy the states were empowered to control abortions in an effort to protect fetal life once the fetus becomes viable, that is, "potentially able to live outside the mother's womb, albeit with artificial aid." The high court said viability "is usually placed at about seven months (28 weeks) but may occur earlier, even at 24 weeks."

Now the authors of that hardly exact language have struck down a law enacted in response to the 1973 decision which required doctors to try to save the life of a fetus when his "experience, judgment or professional competence tell him that it is viable," or when he has "sufficient reason to believe that the fetus may be viable." And the reason our judicial leaders give is that the language is too vague.

We believe that Bishop Thomas Kelly, general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic

Bishops, expressed the situation accurately when he said that the court's latest ruling "has once again made it clear it is pursuing an advocacy role with respect to abortion. The court has abandoned its constitutionally defined role and has acted solely as a maker of social policy — policy which the people rightly reject."

We think it is high time that all who profess to believe in the sanctity of life stand up and let the world know, without tangential hedging. And all will have that opportunity next week.

The Rochester Right to Life has scheduled a demonstration with the theme "Choose Life" for downtown Rochester to begin at 2 p.m. in Washington Square Park with an ecumenical service in Old St. Mary's to begin at 3 p.m.

We hope that groups or parishes throughout the diocese do not let the weekend go by without reminding all about the holiness of life and the damage done by the legalization and even the advocacy of abortion in our land.

The diocese for the first time is also making great strides in the face of this national malaise. Our new Human Life Commission is using the occasion to remind all of the value of all human life. A comparison of statements issued from that commission and from the Right to Life of Rochester give cause for new hope for all people who have been discomfited by the use of death as a solution to social problems. Both have endorsed the proposal that all people choose life from conception to the grave in all areas.

We realize that there are pockets of thought here and there which find some academic necessity of debating relative importance of the value of life in one sphere against that in another. We have no time for that. We believe that to be pro-life is to stand up for life whenever it is threatened, particular by government fiat.

We believe we all have seen the futility of war more clearly than ever in recent years. We believe that the death penalty is wrong and should never be offered as

a form of correction. We believe liberalized abortion is morally unacceptable.

We also believe that anyone who endorses only one of these stands while not seeing them all as part of the whole fabric is making a mistake of judgment and weakening whatever specific arguments they advance.

Let's all quit haranguing and show the world that we are indeed choosers of life whenever society offers death as a remedy for its mistakes.



**Pray for Unity**

Has ecumenism bogged down? If it has, then it is time to give it a renewing boost. The Atonement Friars have for many years conducted an inspiring Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and this year the theme is taken from the first letter of Peter: "Serve one another to the glory of God."

Let us all work together, Christian with Christian, one religion with all religions, every human being with the whole of humanity. And when we do it, do it for Him. We could fear no harm and success will be ours.

**and Opinions**

**What About Parish News?**

Editor:

As a member of a parish in the Diocese of Rochester I submit a concern to the attention of the editor, to those who direct the policies of the Courier and to the readers.

For many years I have received and read the Courier, always looking for parish news from around the diocese, and each time it only takes me a couple of minutes to read what I find. Most of the other print is in the form of ads and news or information of an international and national nature and even resembling syndicated writeups. To me this international and national material feels like filler print far removed from the local parish arena. Out of the many parishes in the diocese only a handful seem to be doing anything worthy of merit.

It seems to me that a problem exists. Is it conceivable that the many parishes are at a standstill? That nothing appears to be happening? And why isn't more appearing in the Courier to make reading more relevant to the local parish areas? Is it lack of writers in the individual parishes, or lack of editors at the Courier, or both? Is editing too restrictive or writing too earthy?

I see the parish as the foundation of the diocese and what occurs on the

parish level is news — the people working in their apostolate. If 20 per cent of the Courier is parish level, then I as a reader see that the Courier is a flop. A hard statement I agree but it's what I believe.

I also note as a reader of the secular papers, that an increasing number of letters and articles on diocesan affairs are appearing in those papers. In the Jan. 3 edition of the Rochester Times-Union, a letter by a priest appeared, and it was directed toward Bishop Hogan. Would the Courier print this type of letter? I think not.

Will you print this letter in its entirety, or edit parts out, or just file it? Whatever you do with it will tell me something. I've submitted to Opinion the concerns growing in me and it might be that others also are thinking likewise. Does a problem exist?

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Editor's Note: We appreciate reader Tarkulich's interest and also the opportunity to explain some of the things we do at the Courier. We took a quick, informal survey of four consecutive issues of the Courier, starting with Dec. 20 and going back to compare them with Tarkulich's observations. In those four papers, there were seven photos of parish events, from eight different parishes (one photo concerned two parishes).

None of the parishes were repeated; they were St. Thomas the Apostle in Irondequoit, Our Mother of Sorrows in Greece, St. Lawrence in Greece, St. Joseph's in Penfield, Our Lady of Lourdes in Elmira, St. Mary's in Auburn and St. Augustine's and St. Monica's in Rochester. In addition there were nine stories (some admittedly were short) of parish activities. These do not include listing of parish events in the Courier Calendar. Not everyone agrees with Tarkulich concerning national and international news — many readers would prefer more. The Courier is one of the few diocesan papers across the country that concentrates on local coverage. In the same four issues we checked national and international news stories. There were stories on an IRS proposal to check racial balance in private schools and see if tax exemptions should be reconsidered. There were news reports on the U.S. bishops making changes in Eucharist practices and on forming a committee to dialogue with those advocating the ordination of women. Strictly speaking none of these stories are directly about parishes, yet each has a bearing on parish life and would not necessarily appear in secular newspapers. Other national and international news stories were concentrated on Pope John Paul II — we consider it a duty to acquaint our readers with this new and interesting pontiff. We do not use "filler" at the Courier and have only a news service (Religious News Service) for outside coverage — no syndicated

material. It is not easy to "balance" your newspaper and we do not claim perfection. Indeed, we have been working on a plan to "departmentalize" parish news to make it more easily found. In addition, we have always invited any parish correspondent to send in news of his or her parish. We can use black and white photos, even instant prints, if they are sharp. Seldom, if ever, have we turned down any parish news — unless it was received beyond deadline, or in the case of photos, could not be reproduced. We do not expect correspondents to be master writers and gladly rewrite where needed. There are more than 150 parishes in the diocese and we only need their cooperation to get their news in. As for letters to the editor, our annual inventory shows we printed 311 letters in 1978 — an average of six an issue. We have been criticized for printing letters considered by some as too controversial. The letter reader Tarkulich mentioned that appeared in the Times-Union was NOT written by a priest (at least, not by a Catholic priest); it included no address; it was in extremely poor taste (attacking Bishop Hogan for his "moans and groans"), and, no, it would not have been printed in the Courier-Journal — whether it had been about the bishop or any other person who had been forced into retirement by illness. Reader Tarkulich is correct about parish news — it should be and is one of our principal areas for coverage. We look forward to improving work in that direction. We ask

tolerance for the many other areas we must cover (remember, not all our readers look for the same things) and for the departments we must offer (including space for letters from reader Tarkulich and others). We must reach as many different tastes as possible.

**Worth Writing About**

Editor:

Columnists and letters to the editor are so often critical and negative in their remarks about the liturgy, textbooks, laity and leaders in our church.

I wonder whether we

are so different in the southeast corner of the diocese.

On New Year's Day, I prayed that our people here would only continue in their prayer life, participation and support. It's beautiful!

Is anybody else enjoying such graces and happiness?

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Editor's Note: We heartily agree! Most of the letters to the editor are of a downbeat variety. Anybody got some good news to write about?

**Guidelines**

Letters intended for publication must be addressed to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604.

Expressions of opinions should be brief, no longer than 1 1/2 pages, typed, double-spaced, with names and addresses.

We reserve the right to edit as to length, offensive words, libelous statements, or to reject altogether. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and letters will reflect the writer's own style.

We encourage readers to submit opinions but since we try to print letters from as many different contributors as possible we will publish no more than one letter a month from the same individual.

**COURIER-JOURNAL**

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Vol. 95 No. 38 January 17, 1979

Published weekly by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. Subscription rates: Single copy 20¢; 1 year subscription in U.S. \$7.50. Canada and Foreign \$12.00. Offices: Richford Building, 67 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. (716) 454-7050. Second Class Postage paid at Rochester, N.Y.

Courier-Journal