

## Editorial & Opinion

# Questions columnist's use of quotations in argument

To the editor:

For readers of the *Courier-Journal* open to authentic Church doctrine who somehow have retained the visceral resiliency to read Father Richard McBrien's column — which, sadly, still appears in this newspaper under the rather dubious caption "Essays in Theology" — the October 27 installment discussing abortion in moral and civil law nevertheless must have been cause for a dramatic increase in the use of anti-acid remedies.

The thrust of the column was that since the moral and civil law are distinct entities, Catholics should not insist that abortion be outlawed "in the teeth of a consensus to the contrary." In support of his position as one within "Catholic reason," Father McBrien quotes St. Thomas Aquinas and Father John Courtney Murray, SJ, as authorities. However the application of authentic Catholic reason, as truly expressed by the two eminent Church thinkers selected by Father McBrien, does not lead to the conclusion which he advocates; in fact, it leads to the opposite conclusion.

Father McBrien cites question 96, article 2 of Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, which answers the question "whether it belongs to human law to repress all vices" in the negative. For whatever reason, Father McBrien chose only to quote from a reply to an objection provided by Aquinas, instead of from the main part, or "corpus," of the answer to the question posed in the article. Of course, not all of Father McBrien's readers have a copy of the *Summa* on their shelf. If they did, perhaps they would have been interested to read in the corpus of that answer that "human laws do not forbid all vices, from which the virtuous abstain, but only the more grievous vices, from

which it is possible for the majority to abstain; and chiefly those that are to the hurt of others, without the prohibition of which human society could not be maintained." Since, as Father McBrien readily admits, abortion is a "terrible evil" and an "assault on human life," it is abundantly clear from the quoted language that the true Thomistic position supports the absolute proscription of abortion under human law, notwithstanding such law's distinction from the moral law.

Father McBrien's quotation of Murray, from an undisclosed source, does nothing more than illustrate Murray's view of the distinct goals of moral law and civil law. Even if, as Murray apparently stated, the civil law "touches only external acts," one can hardly categorize the intentional killing of unborn human life by a third party as anything but external.

Interestingly, Murray concludes his chapter on the need for a public consensus in his seminal work on American democracy from a Catholic perspective, *We Hold These Truths*, by observing that "it is not true to say that a nation can survive the tests of terrestrial life without a public philosophy, least of all in this our day when the very bases even of terrestrial life are being called into question ... Hence one does well in America today to raise the issue of survival." If America's unborn terrestrial human life could speak, the consensus among those doomed to abortion might reasonably be that Father McBrien's use of distinctions certainly doesn't help — in fact, it might even hurt.

John F. Wagner  
Lark Street  
Rochester

# Protesters may buy time for babies

To the editor:

The heart-wrenching anonymous essay from the young woman whose abusive background drove her to seek comfort in sexual relationships resulting in abortions deserves answers from many who let her down. I do take exception, however, with her suggestion to anti-abortionists to change their tactics. I address my reasoning to her today.

I can't help but speculate what may have happened years ago if, when you arrived at the abortionist's office, a "rescue" was in progress. You may very well have "run so fast!" That could have been exactly the right thing to do — for you would have given your baby a "stay" and yourself more time to think about what you already knew — "I was a Catholic and knew what was wrong." That extra time may have been God's grace to you and your baby.

## Hilton couple enjoys column, talk by Fr. Richard McBrien

To the editor:

My husband and I enjoy and learn from Father Richard McBrien's weekly column.

This gentleman knows where he is at and where his sources come from.

It was a pleasure to hear his lecture on October 31, 1988, at the Interfaith Chapel, courtesy of the Newman Community.

Rose T. Quadrini  
Parma Center Road  
Hilton

Had you persisted in your decision to abort, you would have encountered sidewalk counselors, who in a non-condemning, non-accusatory manner would have tried to inform you of your baby's development and offered all the help and support that you felt you needed to encourage you to let your baby live. Maybe you would have listened and changed your mind. The fact that a "sit-in" would be taking place would have prevented you from going through with your scheduled abortion! Again, time would have been bought for your little one.

Apparently you were not afforded any of these interventions and you still wonder today why the Planned Parenthood counselor, that nurse, somebody, anybody, didn't try to talk you out of it. Contrary to what is reported, babies are saved at "rescues."

Though your past cannot be changed, it can be forgiven. There is also available healing and wholeness through groups like Problem Pregnancy Center, 716/865-0360. In addition to early-on counseling, they offer post-abortion counseling given by women who have been through what you have. You may even be surprised to learn that because of what you have experienced, you have exactly the right qualifications to help others — see Luke 22: 32.

God bless you for your letter. It has touched many, I am sure, and raised some significant questions.

Judith Donoghue  
Eugene Street  
Rochester



# Questions 'pro-choice' viewpoint of ads, letters

To the editor:

The November 3 issue of the *Courier-Journal* was really a shock to me. The ad "The Reagan-Bush Record on Death," from some of the peace and justice people of Rochester, seemed designed to pull votes away from Bush and toward Dukakis. Also, presenting the three pro-choice letters a few days before election is a strange way of encouraging Catholics to abide by the teaching of our Church — which is still anti-abortion. I had presumed that the *Courier-Journal* was the official newspaper of the Rochester diocese, but evidently not so.

Mary Studier  
Rochester

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** We've had a number of complaints — from supporters of both Bush and Dukakis — concerning the political advertisements that appeared in this paper during the last month. Apparently, many people are unaware that the editorial and advertising departments of the *Courier-Journal* are distinct and separate operations, and that the activi-

ties of one have little or no bearing on the other. Thus, the advertising department's acceptance of paid political advertisements in no way implies that the editorial department has endorsed the views expressed therein or the candidates on whose behalf the ads were purchased.

For the record, the *Courier-Journal* took NO POSITION on the recent presidential election, nor for that matter did the Diocese of Rochester.

Furthermore, in the issue of November 3 the editorial department pushed aside all non-election letters to the editor in order to publish every election-oriented letter we had received by the deadline.

In submitting letters to the editor, readers should keep in mind that deadlines impose a delay of at least a week between our receipt of letters and their appearance in the paper. And — because we receive so many letters — those whose topics have longer "shelf life" may be backlogged for several weeks.

# Commends Bath Knights of Columbus for aid to dying man

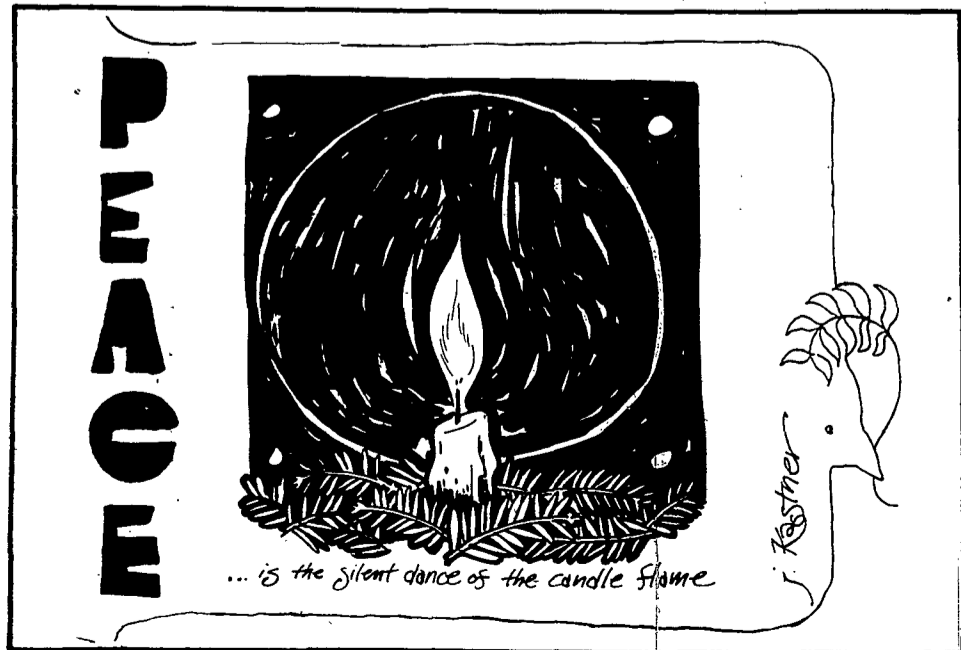
To the editor:

We are writing to commend the Knights of Columbus in Bath. Our friend, Deacon Don vonHagn, who suffered from terminal cancer, died earlier this month. During his illness and at the time of his death, the Knights were a living example of what it means to love your neighbor as you love yourself. These fine men served Don and his wife, Bettie, with love and affection. Not only did they do him honor by dedicating their meeting hall to him, but at the time when he needed constant care, they helped

Bettie and the hospice organization by taking turns in watching over him and ministering to his needs.

We have never given much thought to what the Knights stood for, but after seeing this love in action, we would like this letter to serve as a memorial to a very fine group of dedicated men who really do exemplify the Christian message.

Margaret and Tom Cleary  
Buttonwood Circle  
Fairport



## C-J Letters Policy

The *Courier-Journal* wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome all signed, original letters about current issues affecting Church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the Church. We will

choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions of the letter writers.

We reserve the right to edit all letters. Mail them to: *Courier-Journal*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY, 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.