

Editorial & Opinion

Teach students truth about sex

To the editor:

A brief tableau of personal experiences encountered during a one-week period:

A workshop on Satanism by local sheriffs' departments relates that the first "statement" or commandment of satanism encourages "indulgence," and discourages "abstinence."

A recent national Harris poll finds that a majority of parents are "uncomfortable" discussing sex with their children and prefer that sex information be taught in the schools.

In the same poll, 71 percent of the New Yorkers polled said that school health clinics "should be allowed to even provide contraceptive services" to students.

Responses of two out of the three Catholic high school students polled by your paper supported the distribution of contraceptive devices in our schools.

A presentation highlighted the contrast between the extensive protection a health-care worker wears while treating an AIDS patient — gown, mask, gloves, cap — and the size of a condom.

All of this — and my 18 years as a high school teacher on Long Island and in the Finger Lakes — leads me to ask, "Why don't we have the guts to tell our children and our students the

truth about human sexuality and maturity, about the differences between love and lust? Why don't we believe in them enough to educate them, challenge them, and expect them to respond? Why do we continue to insult them by assuming that they have no more intelligence, self-respect, or self-control than impulsive, instinct-driven animals? As an educator, I have learned that high expectations encourage and can, to a large extent, determine positive outcomes. Exhaustive research proves the same point. As a parent and youth worker, I have learned that our young people value honesty and truth about their sexuality, and with prayer and grace will rise to the difficult challenges we set before them.

Why, then, do we hesitate to speak God's Truth and Love to them?

Why don't we tell them that love and lust are opposites, that lust is self-centered, impatient, controlling, jealous, demanding, deceitful, and short-lived? Why don't we tell them that young girls get involved in sexual activity in their misguided search for affection and love, and that young boys inaccurately profess love in their desire to satisfy sexual drives? Why don't we instruct them in the reality of "secondary virginity," where sexual activity is put aside in favor of a chaste relationship and where love is proved by postponing sexual gratification until marriage? Why don't we educate them about their inherent human dignity and personhood, and help them develop a self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-esteem that will not allow them to sell themselves short?

Why don't we convince them, by our words as well as our deeds, of the power and character of love: that love is other-centered, patient, trusting, selfless, giving, honest, and enduring, and that to settle for a momentary physical sensation is too high a price to pay for their self-respect? Could it be because these are God's values and we've already expelled Him from our schools?

The answer to our present crisis in human sexuality on all levels is not the further spread of the contraceptive mentality, nor is it the promotion of school-based clinics to reinforce the sexual activity of our youth. Let's stop worshipping King Condom and Princess Pill; the sacrifices at their altar are too costly. Instead, let's believe in the basic goodness, intelligence, courage, and strength of our children and our students. They deserve better answers. They deserve truer love.

Edward R. Gaffney
Main Street
Gorham

Servicemen defend peace

To the editor:

I would like to comment on the Jan. 5 letter to the editor from Father Lawlor concerning the parade celebrating completion of the Main Street Project ("Staffers decry display of militarism").

While I realize that there will always be a difference of opinion regarding what is aesthetically pleasing in a holiday parade, I find Father Lawlor's horror at the appearance of "... military might — tanks, arms and soldiers! ..." a bit disappointing. Those soldiers appear in the parade representing servicemen celebrating Christmas and Hanukkah all over the world as they continue to protect the peace we celebrate. They are our friends, neighbors, husbands, fathers, sons and uncles.

"What kind of a message do we want ... the small children in the crowd ... to take home, to take to their heart?" It is the message that I want my sons to take home as they endure some of the difficulties of a military family life ... that we must continue to hold peace close to our heart and to celebrate our religious freedom and be prepared to guard it at Christmas time and always.

Jacqueline Goldberg
Portsmouth, R.I.

Thanks writer for story about caring physician

To the editor:

After having read the write-up by Rob Cullivan in the Dec. 22 issue about Dr. Ona ("Deacon-doctor tends range of ailments"), I just had to write and say how happy I was to see such an inspiring piece.

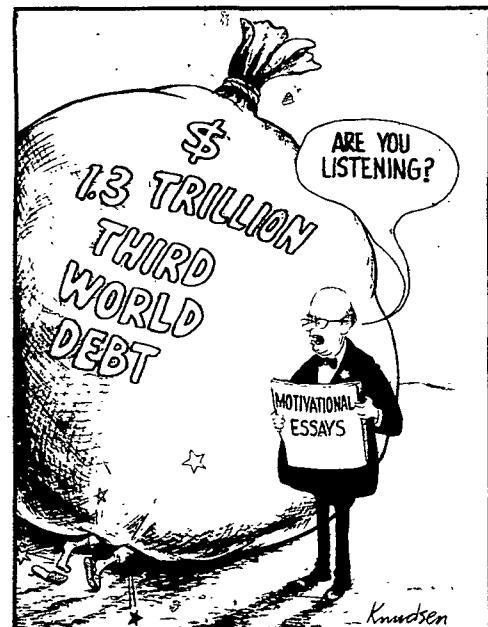
I have been a patient of Dr. Ona's and he is everything and probably more than Mr. Cullivan wrote. He is the most dedicated and caring doctor one could possibly have. No matter how busy his is, he has time to listen to you and is truly interested in your troubles.

A few years ago I was very sick and when I arrived in emergency at St. Mary's Hospital, my own doctor was on vacation and while the emergency doctor was very kind, I felt lost. I happened to mention I had been a patient of Dr. Ona's. Some time later, I heard his voice, he took my hand in his, I felt I had someone who really cared and someone to cling to. He will never know how much it meant to me to have him there.

I can't say enough praise about him and all he does for so many. Anyone's life he touches is surely blessed.

Thank you, Rob Cullivan, for writing that article and giving praise where it belongs. May God bless Dr. Ona and his family.

Frances Lurz
Littlecreek Drive
Rochester



Courier-Journal 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, New York 14624.** Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.



Rabbi clarifies comments on Holocaust

To the editor:

It was with sadness that I read the letter by F.M. Szwagiel of Auburn about my comments concerning Edith Stein (C-J, Jan. 19: "Reader recalls all holocaust victims"). He misunderstood me completely. For I do not minimize the millions of martyrs of all people and faiths who were killed in Auschwitz and the other death camps. We grieve for all of them. The rabbis of the Talmud tell us that if even one person is killed, then it were as though an entire world was destroyed.

At that panel discussion I tried to make two points. First, there are revisionist historians who deny that the Nazi Holocaust ever happened, that the Nazis did not kill 6 million Jews. I only wish what they claim was true, that my own two brothers who were murdered at Sobibor were still alive. Alas, it did happen and the horror should not be denied.

As part of that pattern of denial, for example, the monument erected by Soviet authorities at Babi Yar in Kiev honors the memory of the hundred thousand Russians killed there. But the fact is that the vast majority murdered at Babi Yar were Jewish. They were murdered precisely because they were Jewish, not just because they were Russian or Ukrainian.

My concern is that a similar thing may occur at Auschwitz. When I last visited the camp, the guide spoke movingly about all the many people who were martyred there: Poles, Russians and Gypsies. No time did the guide mention Jews. When I asked whether any Jews had been killed there, his response was, "Yes, they, too." To deny people memory is to add to the pain of their deaths.

More theology, less sarcasm

To the editor:

Occasionally I read something in your paper which moves me to write a rebuttal. December 5th's "Essays in Theology" is one of them. In his column, Father McBrien accuses a graduate student of chastising fellow students but, does he see in himself the very thing he objects to in others? Spiritual blindness can occur in the rightside, the left and yes, even in the middle where some of us claim to be. We all make errors in judgment, especially when it comes to people we hardly know. Christ alone was infallible about discerning individual hearts. We do not share that attribute. I respectfully ask Father McBrien to employ more theology in his column. We can do without the subtle sarcasm.

Mark Petersheim
Damsen Road
Rochester

The second point I made at that panel discussion was this. It is known that in Auschwitz over a million Poles were killed and 3 million Jews. The difference is not quantitative, because every life is precious.

But for a Pole to have been killed there, he usually did something heroic. A Jew had to do nothing, only be Jewish. There was, therefore, never any issue that the Polish nation would be so annihilated by the Nazis that they would disappear from the face of the earth. But for Jews that was the purpose of Hitler and a real possibility.

Let us not bicker over whose pain was the more. Every person killed at Auschwitz was precious. We grieve for them all.

Rabbi Judea Miller
Temple B'rith Kodesh
Rochester

Proposed closings are time for collaboration

To the editor:

The possible closing of six parochial schools in Monroe County may seem like the beginning of the end of the parochial school system in the Rochester diocese; in reality, it is a time for continued collaboration, faith, and commitment to quality Catholic education. In the future, the spirit of the parochial schools may be found in new configurations of programs, staffs, leaderships and systems for resources.

Women religious have been historically invested in parochial schools as co-founders with the bishops of Rochester and as educators and leaders. News of the possible closings has had a two-fold impact on the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester: first, it brings to the fore the mission statement underlying the many diverse SSS ministries, including education, that are a result of our current challenge to respond to the needs of the times. Second, it causes us to reaffirm our presence in the three schools we own and operate: Trinity Montessori School, located at our motherhouse in Pittsford and founded in 1967; and our two schools located in the city — Nazareth Hall (1884) and Nazareth Academy (1871). We will continue to promote the special mission of these schools while we seek ways to collaborate in education with other city schools, whether it be through teaching or through program development.

Sister Elizabeth Anne LeValley
Superior General
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester

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