

Conflicting views have value



As the letters on this page indicate, some of our readers have objected to our Oct. 5 Insight section's inclusion of articles by and about Catholics who — to varying degrees — disagree with church teaching on abortion.

In letters to the editor, some of which are published below, these readers asserted that a diocesan newspaper should not present opinions contrary to church teaching because such articles mislead the faithful by misrepresenting opinion as fact.

We appreciate that concern, but find it hard to imagine that even a casual reader of the *Catholic Courier* could be confused about the church's official teaching on abortion. Our pages are consistently dominated by life issues. Seldom in recent months have we published even a single issue that did not provide coverage of one anti-abortion effort or another.

Our Oct. 5 issue was no exception, featuring a four-page Respect Life supplement and a front-page story on the Right to Life Party, in addition to the Insight section.

The *Catholic Courier's* editorial policy does, in fact, support church teaching against abortion. But it is also a fact that Catholics' opinions on abortion are diverse. By presenting four distinctly different views on the subject Oct. 5, Insight simply reflected this diversity of opinion,

which is often obscured by the rhetoric of both pro-life and pro-choice groups.

We realize and constantly strive to fulfill our responsibility to clearly present church teaching. But we also believe our pages should reflect how Catholics live — and sometimes struggle — with that teaching. We trust that our readers will discern the difference between official teaching and individual practice.

Moreover, we never intended for Insight to be easy reading. We want its content to hit a nerve, to elicit an emotional as well as an intellectual response — whether the topic is death and bereavement, religious vocations or abortion.

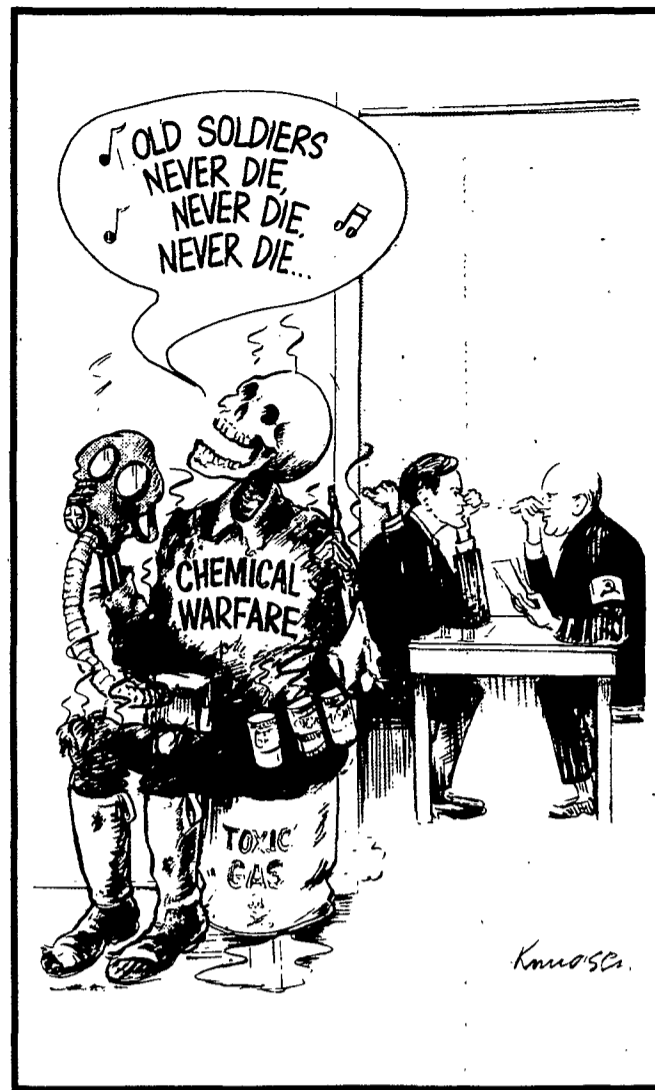
Yet we failed to clearly articulate to readers the rationale behind Insight when we first presented it last March. That failure is at least partially responsible for reader confusion about the Oct. 5 installment.

So before another installment comes and goes, we should point out that Insight began with reader requests for a commentary section that would challenge the ways they put faith into action in daily life. In response, we began soliciting personal essays from authors whose faith has led them down divergent life paths.

We hope every Insight section will call readers to serious reflection on their own opinions and actions in the light of faith. We ask readers to question the views presented in every Insight section and to consider the ways in which they might individually respond to the essayists' words.

For above all, we believe our readers must listen to one another — especially when they disagree.

— The Editors



Failure to respect unborn erodes respect for all life

To the editor:

There are many times that I have been upset by some of the liberal views expressed in the *Catholic Courier*, particularly in Father McBrien's column but this time you really have gone too far. I think the word I would have to use to describe my feeling is horrified. I was absolutely horrified to read Frances Kissling's and Teresa Parsons' pro-choice articles in a Catholic newspaper during Respect Life month. Frances Kissling's article is based on a lie, that lie being that even the Catholic Church doesn't know when life begins. The Church has always held that life begins at conception and that all life is sacred. Her quotations are used out of context and it is an insult to read them in our Catholic paper. It is not right to publish something that can mislead some of the faithful.

As for Ms. Parson's article, I would like to comment on the closing statement. If we do not have respect for the most innocent and helpless of all life, the unborn child, how can we expect to respect the hungry, the homeless, the sick, etc. The "tales" of abusive and aggressive demonstrations are simply that — tall tales. The only aggression is on the part of the law and the pro-abortion supporters. The Bialaszewskis are sadly misinformed and to present their views as being how the majority of Catholics feel is simply unfair.

Jane M. Mead
Lexington Avenue
Rochester

Reader found Insight 'too much to swallow'

To the editor:

This year, I was looking forward to receiving the Respect Life issue of the *Catholic Courier*. Because the issue of justice for the unborn and their mothers is of great interest to me, I couldn't wait to read what I was hoping to be an informative and Catholic-based issue. All was fine till I started reading the second half of the "Insight" section. The column by Frances Kissling was bad enough since it gave the impression that Catholics do have the option of abortion. There was no disclaimer explaining that Ms. Kissling's rantings are far from what the Catholic Church teaches on abortion. The article was presented as fact.

The next article called "Catholic couple defends 'pro-common sense' view on abortion," dateline Rochester, N.Y., written by Teresa Parsons was a bit too much to swallow. The couple, Michael and Brenda Bialaszewski, told of a friend's 70-year-old

'Balance' unnecessary with respect to abortion

To the editor:

I was profoundly disappointed to see, in the only annual "Respect Life" issue of 1989, two columns attacking the Catholic Church's stand on abortion, under the heading "Catholics united by principal (sic), divided by action." First, the four columnists featured are not united by principle; two believe women should sometimes have the opportunity to lethally kill their children and two do not.

Second, I question why the *Catholic Courier* finds it necessary to provide "balance" in editorial columns on the abortion issue (Ms. Kissling's *Boston Globe* column having apparently been solicited). Would the paper be sure to seek out opinion columns from racist "Catholics" to provide balance for an anti-apartheid column, or solicit anti-Semitic "Catholic" columnists to balance those who oppose that evil?

Since the *Courier* normally presents the pro-life view so well, I felt very betrayed by this issue. I would hope, at the very least, that slander against pro-lifers will be checked in the future instead of presented as fact.

Karen A. Webb
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EDITOR'S NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with space restrictions.

mother being harassed by pro-life demonstrators and having what she perceived to be a bloody unborn child shoved at her. When I spoke to the editor on the phone Friday, Oct. 6, and asked when and where this alleged event took place, she couldn't give me any documentation or further information. She stated that she didn't believe it took place in Rochester. I do not know of any pro-lifer in Rochester who has an aborted baby. I have been to almost every pro-life demonstration that has taken place in Rochester for the last five years and have never seen anyone harassed by a pro-lifer. I have been documenting the harassment taking place each week by the pro-death forces at Genesee Hospital directed at the peaceful pro-lifers...

Children born of rape deserve chance at life

To the editor:

Ten years ago I lived and worked at Bethany House. It was there that I met two people who had been conceived through the rape of their mother.

The first was a boy of four. The boy's mother told me she had been raped. I have never forgotten her reason for not aborting him. She said: "How could I blame him that I was raped? I just couldn't. It wasn't his fault." Prefacing this conversation were my remarks on how darling both her boys were. She then told me her husband was father to only one. She was a practicing Catholic. Her faith gave her the strength to endure and see that her life and her son's life had purpose and meaning.

Considering that both articles were sought out in order to present the view of Catholics who are pro-abortion, I wonder if the leanings of the editorial staff are out of step with the truth that the Catholic church espouses.

Mary Ellen Frisch
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EDITOR'S NOTE: The Bialaszewskis replied that the demonstration which upset their friend's mother did occur within the confines of the Diocese of Rochester within the past two years. Because they fear upsetting the family involved, the couple declined to provide more specific details.

This above letter was edited to comply with space restrictions.

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