

# Advocates pressure victims to turn other cheek

To the editors:

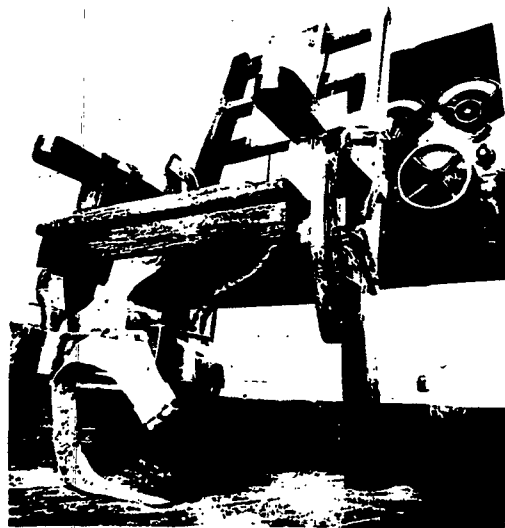
Whenever the issue of capital punishment comes up, in certain religious circles, someone usually points out that the Old Testament "eye for an eye" has been supplanted by the New Testament ideal of "turning the other cheek." But what does that mean in everyday terms?

First of all, Jesus was talking about sin; he never addressed the issue of crime. His call is concerned with our individual response to personal affronts; he never spoke about how the state should respond to the acts of criminals.

On the most basic level, turning one's cheek seems to mean that if somebody comes up and strikes a blow one should just stand there and take it, like Gandhi, instead of striking back. Conveniently, most of us don't live in such rough neighborhoods, so apparently we're exempt from having to think about the principal on a daily, practical basis. Lucky us.

But, consider the following: a drunken driver slams into your parked car and totals it. You can either turn the other cheek and let the matter drop; or, you can take it up with his insurance company.

Or, someone burglarizes your home,



fences your property, and is later apprehended. Again, you can turn the other cheek and not press charges; or, you can have him prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

There's nothing immoral about bringing the wrongdoer to justice, or with seeking damages. In fact, cheek-turning is rarely a matter of choosing good over evil. Rather, it is an invitation to choose a greater over a lesser good; an invitation to *higher* virtue.

But, one's ability to respond to that in-

itation is directly dependent on the degree of one's faith — specifically, one's faith in Divine recompense.

Yet, how many of us have such faith? Well, one need only tune to an episode of "The People's Court" to see how few of us are concerned with pursuing higher virtue; most of us demand our rights — even when we're wrong.

Think of the last time somebody cut you off in traffic; how did you respond? Did you suffer this minor loss to your sense of dignity, and let it ride? Or, did you race ahead in order to throw the finger at the offending driver; and maybe cut him off in return, attempting to recover your "honor?"

The Christian invitation is always a call to suffer some loss to another, rather than seeking to reclaim that loss. That's why it has to be a personal decision. While I have a right to turn my own, I have no such right to turn my neighbor's cheek. But that's precisely what those demanding violent criminals be treated "mercifully" are asking, in effect: they want the criminal "forgiven," not at their own expense, but at the expense of public safety.

Yet why is it these people, who want to

keep cheek-turning codified when it comes to the death penalty, don't also demand that it be codified in other matters? To be consistent, they should ask for laws forbidding us to file suit when our property is damaged or stolen.

The truth is, it's not up to the state — which is all of us, collectively — to embody the virtues we refuse to pursue as individuals. The primary responsibility of the state to do *whatever it takes* — and assuming it is an effective means, that includes using the death penalty — to protect the helpless weak from the predatory strong.

As we all know, it is largely marginalized minorities and the underclass poor who are the primary victims of violent crime. It seems awfully unjust to me when the safe and secure — who can't, or won't, turn their own cheeks on matters of far less consequence — call on others to turn theirs, by way of resigning to a criminal justice system that treats the brutal with endless leniency. That's an expense these victims can ill afford to suffer virtuously.

Michael L. DeLorme  
Park Avenue  
Rochester

# Early church ordained 'deaconesses' as hands of priest

To the editors:

Some would leave the impression that in times past women were ordained to function as deacons in dioceses. Rather women were consecrated as deaconesses to be "the hands" of the ordained so as not to place male clergy in "touchy" situations in adult baptisms and being compromised in visiting situations and in anointing female bodies. Women's consecration, i.e. "setting apart," though resembling in some ways the ordaining of male deacons and numbered after them, was carefully

done so as to avoid being misunderstood as ordination. Contrary irrefutable evidence certainly would be an irrefutable bombshell in ecclesiastical circles.

That some Italian bishops believed themselves empowered to give ordination to women and thereby forcing its recognition on Rome as "the Church" at the time of Gelasius I (492-496) were soon disabused of that notion. Gelasius' was a time of many contending heretical theologies raging, and always there will be those anxious to express them. But "Where Peter is,

there is the Church" goes the prevailing axiom. And indeed the issue was theology not discipline. Church Scriptures, Tradition, council statements and writings of the Fathers rejected pagan and heretical theologic expressions that undermine identity and primacy of that transcendent Power in the Exodus Who visited the Chosen and robed Himself in the humanity of the Male Christ. In handing Himself over in the seamless garment of that tradition, He ordained His priesthood to continue as a living sign of the Transcendent's

mediating presence. Only exclusive male priesthood is capable of being a unique sign of the uniquely uncreated transcendent Power Who orders the elements, rather than the ordinary of men and women — there is nothing, no One having left a unique significance in that.

Everything we look at today tells us of the finitude of creation and humanity. Everything around us tell us creation is limited, is contingent, is powerless in the face of abuse. Creation is not at all God.

The dismantling of the spirituality of the transcendent God of Exodus through socialist leveling is simply a mental exercise without Judeo-Christian roots. The real God proved He transcended both time and space because the patriarchal God leaves continuing footprints through even vicissitudes of history. The pagan gods of male-female creation leave only powerless moldering effigies.

Gene Charles  
Geneva Turnpike  
Canandaigua

# Source says punctuation oversight distorted quote

To the editors:

In response to the Aug. 23 article titled "Gays strive for complete acceptance by church," Mr. Cullivan neglected to insert a set of internal quotation marks. My statement to Mr. Cullivan should have read, "It is very difficult to participate in a worship service when the underlying message is that God loves everyone except you because you are 'an aberration of nature.'" This phrase is used by people who have no knowledge or understanding of homosexuality. I certainly do not believe that I am an aberration of nature. I believe that my life, including my sexuality, is a gift from God.

The Church's teachings on sexual behavior are based on procreative sex. Does the Church say to a married woman who is unable to bear children, because of

a medical condition or advanced age, to refrain from sex? No, because these circumstances are God-given uncontrolled by humans. Contrary to Jim Johnson's and Father Harvey's personal opinions, the latest and growing body of medical and scientific research points to the origin of homosexuality as being a biological one. One's sexuality is determined before birth — uncontrolled by humans — God-given.

I personally am not striving for complete acceptance by the Church. If I were, I would be a member of Courage. The word courage in my mind is connected with fear.

I am a gay Christian — of the Catholic tradition — in a committed relationship living my life as I believe God intended — with dignity and integrity.

Sheila M. Sloan  
Marlborough Road  
Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: Given the syntactical structure of Ms. Sloan's statement, we considered it obvious that the words "aberration of nature" did not express her own opinion.

# Opponents of life make nonsensical case

To the editors:

Recently, we have seen two movies featuring Dr. Nathanson — an early, strong abortion rights adherent and now a strong Pro-Life advocate and Dr. Boike a "biggie" of the National Right to Life committee. We know that both movies were made with the full realization that the viewer would be shocked and saddened — and we were. Have any of you, who support the women's freedom of choice with her own body — seen such movies? Do you know the pain the little women or man in the womb suffers — what about their freedom of choice? What about their rights? To rip the baby limb from limb or to scald the babies lungs with a killing saline solution — what barbarians we have become!

We have many good people very concerned about animal rights and rightly so but come on people those in the womb are human, genetically unique individuals who feel pain from the very earliest moments of their conception. How can we brutally kill them? Are they not of more value than the bunny rabbit or the deer? They are our brothers and sisters. Awaken people to the agonizing screams of these innocent little ones.

Don't let those who would sacrifice all of these little one's fool or mislead you. They

will say that you don't really care about living children because you care about the unborn — nonsense we care for both. They will tell you that wanted children are better, happier, etc. than unwanted children — nonsense the rate of child abuse has skyrocketed in the last 20 years and since 22 million unwanted kids were terminated that should have left a whole lot of wanted kids. They will tell you it's not a baby, it doesn't have any rights, it's not wanted it feels no pain — again we say NONSENSE.

And the final and most insidious bit of NONSENSE is when they throw the separation of Church and state at you — this is not a Catholic or Protestant issue and it's not Jewish or Muslim issue either it is really an issue for all peoples. Don't listen to the lies or the misstatements and don't be taken in by the smokescreen. Take the time to understand just how horrible an abortion is and then reach out to those who have been lied to about how safe and easy an abortion is — lied to about that beautiful human life they are carrying and offer your love and support. Judge not but do reach out and help stop the pain.

Kevin and Anne Kelly  
Bellmawr Drive  
Rochester

**CATHOLIC COURIER** Bishop Matthew H. Clark, President  
Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, Gen. Mgr.  
Karen M. Franz, Editor/Asst. Gen. Mgr.

1150 Buffalo Road • Rochester, New York 14624 • 716/328-4340

**Editorial Department:**  
Richard A. Kiley, Managing Editor  
Lee Strong, Staff Writer • Rob Cullivan, Staff Writer  
Barbara Ann Homick, Staff Writer  
Babette G. Augustin, Photographer

**Business Department:**  
Mary E. Bittner, Office Manager • Bernie Puglisi, Advertising Manager  
Jeanne A. Morin, Circulation Mgr. • Kathy Welsh, Ad. Account Executive

**Production Department:**  
Lorraine Hennessey, Graphics Mgr. • Michael Fleckenstein, Graphic Artist