

Questions publishing reviews of R-rated films

To the editors:

One wonders about the moral reasoning of your movie column which frequently promotes "R" rated movies. First you spend six or seven paragraphs describing a movie, getting everyone interested. After being enticed to see the movie, one notices it is rated "R" and "O." An "R" rating means that even the producers recognize that their movie is not fit for everyone to see, and that no one is to be admitted under the age of 17, unless accompanied by — not just "any" adult — but by a PARENT or GUARDIAN! An "O" rating means that the (U.S.) Catholic Conference classifies it MORALLY OFFENSIVE.

Why spend column after column promoting something morally offensive? Have you considered the effect your column has on teenagers? To continue week after week promoting movies whose moral values are suspect, seems to be a betrayal of what Catholic journalism is about. A Catholic paper should not just report the news. It should act with moral integrity. It should enrich, support, and strengthen the Faith, not ever jeopardize or weaken it.

Has the *Courier* forgotten the clear teachings of the Church on avoiding the occasion of sin? A 1978 Catholic Encyclopedia states, "To purposefully place oneself in an occasion that offers opportunity, inducement, or enticement to sin, is an occasion of sin." Certainly "R" rated movies that carry the Catholic Conference "O" — morally offensive rating, could very well be an occasion of sin for certain people.

It is inappropriate for a Diocesan newspaper, that wants to have its identity of "Catholic" taken seriously, to promote "R" rated movies by lengthy reviews that only whet the appetite to see it. *Questions and Answers on the Catholic Faith* states, "No one, young or old, is immune to

temptation, and therefore certain things such as immoral motion pictures, books and stories that tend, by their very nature, to tempt one to violate God's laws, are always occasions of sin or sources of scandal and must be avoided by everybody regardless of age or maturity."

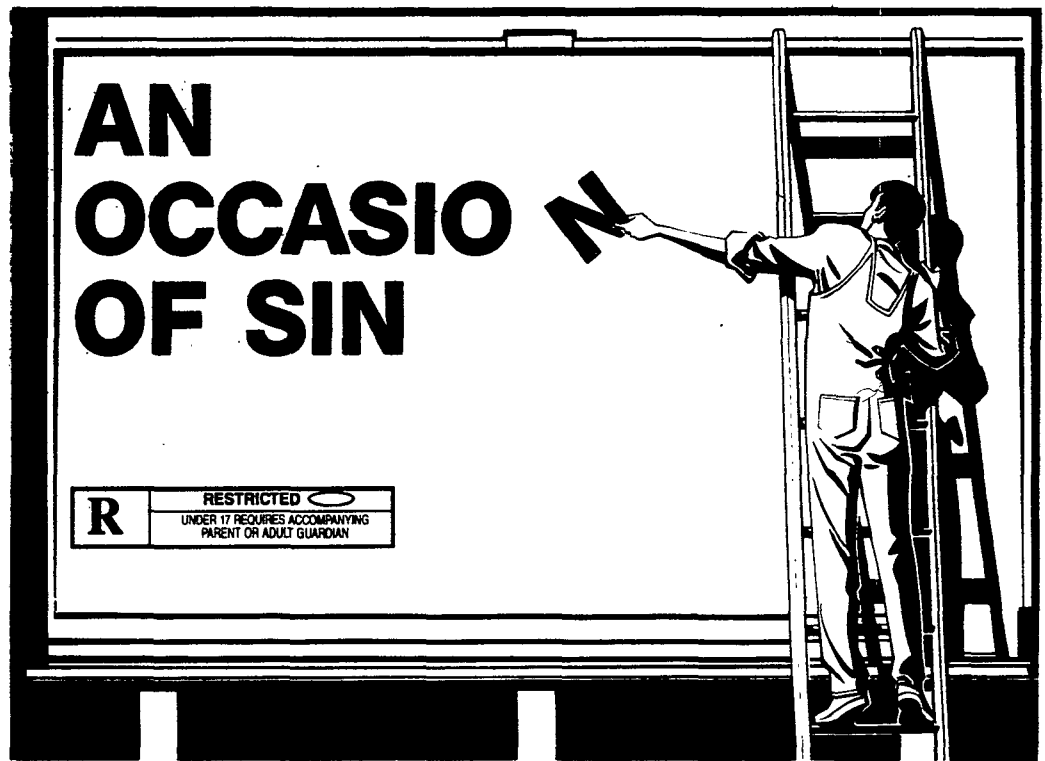
Why not use your newspaper space for an informative column that simply lists lots of movies or videos, their ratings, and whether there is violence, sex, nudity, or profanity. Then you would be really assisting and guiding people in making those very important moral decisions regarding what is, and is not, suitable viewing material for a responsible Catholic.

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Schwenker
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Elmira

EDITOR'S NOTE: Producers do not affix ratings to their films; upon completion, producers submit their films for rating to the Motion Picture Association of America — an independent rating board. In fact, producers frequently dispute the MPAA's decision to assign R or X ratings to their films.

The "lengthy reviews" carried by the *Catholic Courier* are, in fact, written by members of the communications staff of the U.S. Catholic Conference, the public-policy arm of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. The individuals who write these reviews are the very same people who assign the USCC's O rating to those they find morally objectionable.

Instead of merely listing films and their MPAA and USCC ratings, the *Catholic Courier* carries the USCC reviews so that readers may learn why films receive specific ratings. This should be of particular assistance to parents, who may be challenged on their decisions to rule out certain movies.



Poor local showing caused by letter on Gov. Cuomo?

To the editors:

In the Nov. 15, 1990 issue of the *Catholic Courier* syndicated columnist Father Richard McBrien is critical of results and strategies of pro-life advocates; Father McBrien said, "It did more harm than good to the pro-life cause to threaten (Catholic politicians) with excommunication." For what ever the merits of Father McBrien's "Better-way," his strategy shows a lack of confidence in the hope that goodness will triumph over evil.

Causes like pro-life, or discontent with self serving tax schemes are issues on the side of fairness and equality. With a free rein things might get a little pell-mell but must we inhibit free expression? To relax rhetoric would be pandering to tyrants.

For an example that letters and editorials do work look at the *Catholic Courier's*

August 9, 1990, issue (featuring a page-one article on) "Dissent in the Church," especially the letter, "Cuomo should act like a Catholic." In the counties which make up the Diocese of Rochester only one county voted for Governor Cuomo. That is success. Why should our views be denied because someone thinks he has a better way? Without letters and editorials on behalf of the pro-life cause the cure would be fatal, church boring, nothing to talk about, etc.

It's true the nuclear dump site was a dominant issue in the Southern Tier; but, who can deny it was humanism and not secularism as the deciding factor?

Joseph Blanda
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Rochester

'Sensationalist' article draws ire

To the editors:

I am most perturbed by the article "Cross Racial Adoption" (*Catholic Courier*, Nov. 22: "Adoption of minority children sparks debate") with the abuse of a black child by black foster parents, as its focal point. Am I to assume that Maurice West was abused because the foster parents were black? I do believe that cross racial adoption is an important issue to debate, but not in a sensationalist spirit.

May I ask, "Does the *Courier* have a mission?" With racial tensions on the increase in the U.S., I would have applauded the *Courier* for making the report on Pierre Toussaint, who may be the first African American to be canonized, as front-page news, instead of burying it on page 6 of the above issue.

To conclude, it is almost impossible to be a parent today. To raise a child of another race — unscientific concept that needs to be abolished — may be impossible. Fortunately, "for God everything is possible" (Matthew 19:26). May all the Maurices in the world find a home where God is present.

Elizabeth Rivkin
William Street
Geneva



What are we doing to avoid war?

To the editors:

"I will hear what the Lord God has to say, a voice that speaks of peace" (Psalm 85:9). As we enter this time of particular anticipation of Christ, who is always among us, please consider the psalmist's words. Please listen and hear with your entire being this voice "that speaks of peace." Perhaps, as your heart listens you may feel moved to act. Is there anything which you can do, now, today, at this moment, which may enable us, as a nation, to "speak of peace"? Have we made any real effort to avoid war?

Make your voice heard, the time is very short. Call or write your representatives, urge your friends to do the same. Freedom

carries responsibilities. As Christian Americans we ought to make a difference.

Christ is given to us to show that "God so loved the world" (John 3:16). In His image let us show our love for our world, for our country.

The need is urgent, no effort can be spared, all avenues must be tried — God did not create the world to be a wasteland.

What are you going to do today so that you will truly walk with Christ on Christmas? What are you going to do to make real the psalmist's words that "peace will follow in his steps" (Psalm 85:16)?

Dorothy J. Barbehenn
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Frightened by parallels to Nazi exterminations

To the editors:

If someone had stood up in a meeting at a town hall in 1972 and said, "In 30 years Americans will have killed 30 million of their own children," no one would have believed him!

This scares me. When one part of a society is allowed to decide that another part has no right to live, we are all in danger. Following that philosophy of thinking, I become an unwilling euthanasia victim, if I live long enough. This has a direct parallel to what happened in Nazi Germany.

Mary Rita Crowe
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Clarification

On last week's Opinion page, several words inadvertently were omitted from a sentence in Dorothy Williams' letter "Suggests dissenters seek church more to their liking."

The sentence should have been: "My suggestion to these people is you don't have far to look for some churches of other denominations that already have these rules."

We regret the error.

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