

New NC-17 rating is just the X rating in disguise

To the editors:

An X-rating warned parents and viewers that a film/video contained excessive violence, sex and/or foul language. The new NC-17 rating is an effort to mainline porn movies by major studios. This means that X-rated movies which were formerly restricted to porn theaters and were not advertised on television, radio, or in most local newspapers, will now be in local theaters through deceptive advertising.

One of the largest video rental firms, Blockbuster Video, has announced that they will not carry NC-17 videos. The criteria for NC-17 videos is exactly the same as for X. The simplest solution is to

read X whenever you see NC-17. It is as simple as that. The decision by Blockbuster shows a concern for children and families and is appreciated.

A U.S. Today poll stated that more than 80% of children ages 11-16 were admitted



to R-rated movies. Ted Baehr, editor of *Movieguide*, has tried to alert parents, "These NC-17 movies are not aimed at mature adults. They are aimed at teenagers, and young adults who frequent the R-rated movies."

Syndicated columnist William Murchison of the *Dallas Morning News* says, "What lies ahead is sex, sex, and more sex...Nothing restrains them now but their own instinct for what and how much the movie-public will swallow." According to the National Center for Juvenile Justice, the rate of arrests for "forcible" rape committed by 13 to 14 year olds has almost doubled in the last decade, and 50% of all gang rapes involved young men under the age of 21.

Hollywood screams about their rights to reflect culture. They never mention their responsibilities to society. What about love, tenderness, caring, fidelity, responsibility for children? Do we really need the violence toward children and women? Is the victimization and exploitation of women and children justified under the terms of "adult entertainment" or "art". We think not.

There is a story about an emperor who parades through the streets naked. Everyone around him is afraid to utter the truth. They continue to tell him that his new clothes are beautiful. Finally one little boy in the town has the courage to tell the emperor he is naked. We must be truthful with Hollywood just as this boy was truthful. The American public is not stupid and the equation is NC-17 = X.

We believe the decision to not carry NC-17 videos will also prove to be a wise business decision. Making these movies available puts children and women at risk. Blockbuster maintains its integrity with its decision. We hope that newspapers, radio and television stations and local theaters will have the same integrity.

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Father McBrien contributes intelligent abortion insights

To the editors:

Congratulations for putting in the (column) "Abortion stance weakens church in Poland" by Father Richard P. McBrien recently.

His views of abortion in this country, Poland, are shown in the sweeping context of real life for many Polish women and their families. It is good to finally hear a Catholic voice in your publication that acknowledges the real and pressing reasons women have abortions without using the standard party line which says women are immoral, etc.

Father McBrien's best observations were, "As any reasonable person knows, women — American and Polish women alike — do not have abortions because they want them, or because they have some kind of killer instinct. Women have abortions because they have unwanted pregnancies."

He goes on to add that to successfully stop abortions is to prevent unwanted pregnancies and here is where I am pleased to hear his observations because he states that the Poles have limited or no access to birth control methods or information and no sexuality education. It is so refreshing

to hear that these are considered positive things which should be included in an individual's life to prevent unwanted pregnancies, a concept unheard of in the passages quoted from newspapers and magazines like the *Courier*.

It's been too long since a Catholic theologian has spoken in a reasonable manner — addressing the needs for birth control information and access to methods, sexuality education and other positive avenues which empower people, especially women, with choices and strength in their self determination.

I also was pleased to hear Father McBrien acknowledge that pressure from the Church and its officials is not the way to stop abortions. Intimidation and browbeating of parishioners only pushes us away from the Church, leaving us with no respect for this institution at all.

More columns with Father McBrien's tone, reality and wisdom should fill your pages.

Michelle Cometa
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Proposal to end abortion funding would unfairly target poor women

To the editors:

In the January 24 issue, Kathleen Gallagher, Associate Director of the New York State Catholic Conference, proposes stopping Medicaid funding for elective abortions. She would reallocate these funds for other necessary social services.

At a time of crisis in the state budget, it is tempting to seek such savings, but Catholics must count the larger cost, one that would unfairly impact poor women, including women of color.

The argument overlooks the reason that the state pays for Medicaid abortions. Before the legalization of abortion, a poor woman who was determined to have an abortion suffered disproportionately. She was forced to seek an illegal, back-alley abortion with the possibility of complications including infection, hemorrhaging, ruptured uterus and even death. Little would change after the legalization of abortion for women who were unable to afford safe, doctor-supervised abortions. New York State legislators therefore provided Medicaid funding to rectify this injustice.

On one hand, Ms. Gallagher's proposal might reduce abortions. On the other hand, poor women would be denied access to safe abortions that are available to women of means.

Ms. Gallagher offers no strategies to cut down on the causes of unintended pregnancies, such as sex education and subsidized, accessible family planning services. Nor does she talk about increasing public assistance for family maintenance and

other help for young families that would occur if Medicaid abortions were stopped.

The proposal is of doubtful value from the fiscal point of view. Equally important for a church that proclaims the "preferential option for the poor" to be its first priority, it should be unthinkable to reduce the state budget at the expense of those who suffer from poverty.

Rachel Studer
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To the editors:

Mark Scibilia-Carver's letter "Jesus set example of pacifism for his followers" (*Catholic Courier*, Feb. 7) in no way invalidated the "Just war theory."

Actually Jesus was involved in a war; a war against sin. While he told us to "turn the other cheek" he didn't tell us to abandon the weak and vulnerable to those who sought to destroy them.

Peace groups' efforts fail to support troops

To the editors:

As I read your latest Jan. 31, all I could think of was the cry of the peaceniks of a decade or so ago. "Better red than dead."

You glorify and push for those against the war perhaps. Who is not against the war? Those Draft Dodgers, and Peace and Justice Ministries are now against the American and other troops trying to preserve the freedoms these people enjoy. No one was or is for the war but we back our troops. Too bad these people are not old enough to remember WWII. Hussein is the reincarnation of Hitler and would not have stopped at Kuwait.

I wonder if these Peace & Justice ministries are making a lot of noise to cover up for their lack on the domestic front.

Finally, I really don't care to hear about the Bishop's nieces. He's supposed to be our spiritual leader.

The only way I can counteract you is through my wallet which I intend to do when my renewal comes up.

E.Z. Rague
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He told soldiers to be content with their pay and not to plunder their adversaries. He didn't tell them to desert the army.

Peace activists for years, influenced by communists in the peace movement, have criticized military responses to communist aggression throughout the world.

The Vietnam War was lost because of pressure from anti-war groups who were silent, for the most part, during the genocide in Cambodia. Also the fact that thousands of "boat people" fleeing their communist liberators led to no protests by the anti-war people.

In our own hemisphere we have cut aid to the government of El Salvador because six Jesuit clergy and two of their aides were slain.

The fact that hundreds of Salvadorian civilians and government workers were murdered by the communist FMLN guerrillas seemed to matter little to the peace activists.

While prayer is our most effective weapon there are times when physical responses are needed to combat evil. The Bible tells us that.

As followers of Christ we cannot accept the "Peace at any price" theory.

A morally and militarily strong nation is an obstacle to an "evil empire" bent on world conquest.

Robert W. Bart
Ithaca

Only Christ furnishes answer to world's wars

To the editors:

We hear of war. We hear of Peace Protests. Write the President. We belong over there. God demands peace. God will give us victory.

What we hear and see is nothing more than a symptom, an outward sign of an inner deficiency. We wage war on all sides, our family relationships, the way we conduct ourselves toward strangers and acquaintances. The way we react to gender differences says much about the condition of our hearts.

Perhaps we need to take the Word of God to heart. "... (I) f my people, upon whom my name has been pronounced, humble themselves and pray, and seek my presence and turn from their evil ways, I will hear them from heaven and pardon their sins and revive their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Mankind wages war of all types.
Only Christ can wage peace.

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