

Catholic Family Center frustrates work for peace, justice

To the editors:

On May 6, the Catholic Family Center relieved Ken Maher of his duties as Program Coordinator for the Department of Justice and Peace. Ken, who has during his tenure at the Department of Justice and Peace earned widespread respect among both Catholics and members of the inter-faith community not only for his active work toward building a world free of war, abortion, poverty and oppression but for his strong belief in using dialogue and other non-violent ways of resolving conflicts as a means to that end, was dismissed because it was alleged that certain actions he took in his own name — not that of the department — jeopardized Catholic Family Center's relationships with funding sources and other agencies. Having learned of Catholic Family Center's actions, we the undersigned members of the Department of Justice and Peace's Advisory Committee no longer feel able to serve as committee members.

Justice and peace work often calls for prophetic voices to be raised — voices that "speak truth to power." We are concerned that since its incorporation into Catholic

Family Center, the Department of Justice and Peace has had its prophetic voice silenced. While we understand the rationale for limiting the department's sphere of activities to "local" issues, we are concerned that this focus allows little opportunity for a formal Catholic presence in the Rochester peace and justice community as that community addresses global issues. More importantly, however, we are alarmed at the severe limitations placed on Department of Justice and Peace activities in order to avoid that possibility of offending potential donors to Catholic Family Center programs. Ken's dismissal has, unfortunately, made the organization's priorities abundantly clear. When a member of the Justice and Peace Department cannot, even as a private individual, publicly address social issues that are of deep importance to him, one can only imagine the kinds of control being placed upon official departmental activities.

Catholic Family Center performs many worthwhile services. Catholic social teaching reminds us, however, that charity is not a substitute for creating social systems that respect the fundamental rights and dignity

of every individual. When concern with keeping the funders of our charitable programs happy interferes with our advocating for the kind of systematic change that would ultimately make such programs unnecessary, we are merely playing into the hands of the powers that be and, in so doing, perpetuating injustice. The new mission statement of the Department of Justice and Peace contains laudable goals. Those goals will never be realized, however, as long as they are circumscribed by Catholic Family Center's fear of controversy.

While the integration of justice and peace concerns into the work of Catholic Family Center held much promise at the outset, our experience has been one of continual frustration since this merger occurred. If Catholic Family Center cannot accept the inevitable risk involved in work-

ing for genuine social change, perhaps the Department of Justice and Peace should once again be separated from its control. Moreover, if it denies its responsibility to move beyond charity and take seriously the social teachings of the Catholic Church, regardless of the effect of such action on its financial well-being, it might reconsider its identifying itself as a Catholic organization.

Christine Garrison
Carol N. Crossed
Alison T. Clarke
Neil Miller
Janet Bezila
Judy Curtin
Mario Escalante
John Walker

EDITORS' NOTE: All of the authors listed above are Rochester residents.

Action needed to save the hungry

To the editors:

Millions of people in Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia — known as the Horn of Africa — are at risk of starvation because of ongoing war in their countries. The war continues to cause death and displacement, disrupt food production, and prevent development activities in these countries. This is one of the poorest and most brutalized regions of the world. One might wonder what we can do being so far away. Thanks to an organization called Bread for the World there is hope.

Bread for the world is a national grass-roots Christian movement that seeks justice for those who are hungry in the United States and abroad. They keep informed about pending government decisions on hunger-related issues.

Bread for the World has worked with Republicans and Democrats in Congress to develop a bill (HR 1454) that addresses the crisis in the Horn of Africa. The bill proposes: timely and fair distribution of relief aid to civilians, whether in rebel-held or government-held areas; aid to local non-governmental groups working to build education and health systems, increase food

production, and restore the environment; participation of grass-roots organizations in developing peace initiatives that address the root causes of the conflicts; and United States and international pressure on the warring parties to negotiate peaceful solutions to the conflicts.

Such action would offer hope that the suffering people of the Horn can move beyond the famine-and-relief cycle to a path of long-term development based on justice. We can all make this happen. Write your U.S. representative and senators urging them to co-sponsor the bill on the Horn of Africa. Become a member of Bread for the World and share the message with family, friends and co-workers. As we watch the haunting eyes of these hungry people look out at us from magazines and the TV screen we can know that we are doing our part to help them. It is only by each of us giving a little bit of our time and working together that we can make a difference. We must respond to this call of action.

Linda Travers
Social Ministry Committee
St. Margaret Mary's Church Rochester

Imprisoned protesters embody conscience by 'walking closer to Jesus' than most of us

To the editors:

Peter DeMott, Harry Murray and Frank Carver have devoted a good share of their lives to serving those most victimized by our country's war and usury based economy. They also believe that Christ has forbidden us to take part in the killing of each other.

When the war with Iraq seemed inevitable, these three took part in a peace witness at Seneca Army Depot — SAD — that included non-violent civil disobedience. Such an assignment of ultimate value to the Kingdom of God is seen by many as a radical act and a political threat.

An angry judge, Kenneth Fisher, was apparently satisfied that none of the blame for years of CIA dirty tricks designed to make the Middle East safe and profitable for Big Oil, weapons sales to "help" one side and then the other, up to 400,000 killed — by one estimate — in a highly avoidable war, and that none of the blame for the seeds of hatred and future violence now sown could be laid to the U.S. He handed out harsh sentences to the Salvation Army Jail on West Avenue. The conscience of our diocese now resides in a jail just a short distance from the Pastoral

Center.

These prisoners of conscience and their families walked closer to Jesus last Holy Week than most of us dared for, as John Yoder wrote in "The Politics of Jesus," ...

The suffering that the prisoners and their families now endure is thus closely aligned to that of Jesus and gives a new poignancy to verses such as Phillipians 3:10-12.

Here there needs to be a plea to Judge Fisher for a change of heart. Perhaps his stake in the U.S. Empire need not be as great as it seems.

In the Kingdom of God, there is no room for SAD which will have existed in the Diocese of Rochester for 50 years this August 9th. Someday, as more Christians, moved by the Holy Spirit, enter the gates of the Depot rejoicing, its plutonium gods of metal will be toppled and its secrecy and idolatry undone. Could it be by the next Synod? Perhaps then, some will still remember the three who early on sacrificed so much to mark the path.

Thank you, Peter, Harry and Dad.
Mark Scibilia-Carver
Cold Springs Road
Trumansburg

Reader notes error in article citing jubilarians

To the editors:

I would like to make a correction in the wonderful article on Jubilarians (*Catholic Courier*, May 16). It was stated that Father John Nacca holds the diocesan record for the longest number of years — 36 — as pastor of a single parish.

The late Father Sebastian Contegiacomo served for 37 years as pastor of Most Precious Blood Church. He was assigned as-

sistant pastor in 1930, two months after the church opened. He became pastor in 1937 and remained in that position until he retired in 1974. Then he became pastor emeritus and remained very active until his death in August 1982, days before his eighty-sixth birthday. Overall he served the community of Most Precious Blood for over 52 years!

I might add that anyone who would be interested in a video history of MPB parish can contact the rectory for a copy of one made last year for our 60th anniversary. Father Sebastian does play a significant role in it.

Kevin Mannara
Religious Education Coordinator
Most Precious Blood Church
Rochester

Priest edits magazine

To the editor:

I don't recall in the write up of Father Peter M.J. Stravinskias (*Catholic Courier*, May 9: "Church must keep schools open, priest says") anything about his being editor of *The Catholic Answer* magazine. Noted, he had articles written for the *National Catholic Register*.

The Catholic Answer is what the title implies. Father Stravinskias answers questions concerning the Catholic Faith. Many and varied are the questions. The reader broadens his knowledge of the Catholic Faith. Personally I recommend this informative magazine.

Father Stravinskias appeared in early May at St. Basil's Hall at St. John Fishers as a panel member. The discussion was on Catholic Education.

Rena B. Camblin
Meadow Drive
Palmyra

Radio rosary lauded

To the editors:

Bravo to the Sisters of St. Joseph at Nazareth Motherhouse for continuing the Rosary for Peace on the radio at 6:30 p.m. daily. We also appreciate the continuation of the same format with a weekly Novena to St. Joseph or the Blessed Mother and news.

It is coming in loud and clear here in the Southern Tier. Keep up the good work. "To Jesus, through Mary!"

Rita D. Wayne
Guinnip Avenue
Elmira

Reader disappointed by Mary story, article

To the editors:

Regarding front page drawing and article on our Blessed Mother (*Catholic Courier*, May 9). I am forced to respond, how dare you portray our Blessed Mother as 60's flower child — nude no less. I have to ask myself what could possibly be next.

I could not imagine what the article would be about. If I was disgusted with the picture, I was certainly disappointed with the article.

Somewhat silly, women would have to experience motherhood to understand Mary. Give me a break!

God chose Mary to be His son's mother. I rest my case.

Jeanne Fallon
Sunrise Crescent
Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: Sources quoted in the May 9 front-page article focused their comments on Mary as a woman, as opposed to a saint on a pedestal. The drawing was intended simply to complement that focus. No disrespect for the Blessed Virgin was intended, and we regret any upset this unconventional depiction may have caused our readers.

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