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The *Catholic Courier* wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome all signed, original letters about current issues affecting church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions of the letter writers.

We reserve the right to edit all letters. Mail them to: *Catholic Courier*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, New York 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.

Article garbles Democrats' record

To the editors:

I was shocked to see a terrible misstatement of history in the article "Religious affiliation ignites debate" on the front page of your August 29, 1991 issue. It states in part "During the Klan's heyday, the Democrats Party thrice times denied the presidential nomination to then New York Gov. Alfred E. Smith. Smith's bid for the nomination was refuted at the Democratic conventions of 1924, 1928 and 1932."!!

That, of course, is potently false. Al Smith was the presidential candidate of the Democratic Party in 1928. Worse than the historical error is the implication that the Democratic Party was the tool of the Ku Klux Klan! Nothing could be further from the truth. The Democratic Party knew it was incurring the wrath of the Klan in 1928 by nominating Al Smith, but, as so often in the history of the Democratic Party, it did it because it was the right thing to do! And it did it again, despite dire warnings from various Protestant groups, in 1960 with John Kennedy.

What really upsets me about the article is the implications that while the Democratic Party was in Klan's snare, the Republican Party was the party of virtue and Catholic civil rights.

The Republican Party has never nomi-



nated a Catholic for president. In 1928 they threw everything including the kitchen sink at Al Smith and in 1884 they ran James G. Blaine, a leading "Know Nothing," Catholic hater and namer of the infamous Blaine amendment to the N.Y. State constitution for President and he lost to Grover Cleveland by only 62,683 votes!

Save me from this dribble that the Democratic Party opposes Catholic civil rights. It's the Democrats who have been the apostles of Catholic and civil rights! My grandmother used to tell shocking stories of what she endured in 1928 campaigning for Al Smith. Only the Democratic Party has twice nominated Catholics for



President. Only the Democratic Party has ever put a woman on the national ticket — a Catholic! — and I'm sure the Democratic Party will be the first to put a black on the national ticket.

Every civil rights bill in this century has come from Democrats — and the latest one has been blocked by a Republican President.

Paul Haney
Broadway
Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: We corrected our error about the 1928 nomination in the issue of Sept. 5.

Pro-life stance is healthier for the country

To the editors:

Recently newspaper columnist, Ellen Goodman, reprimanded Catholic Bishops; she wrote, the "bishops now consistently tell Catholic officeholders how to vote on one issue: abortion." Ms. Goodman's assumes that a religious stance against abortion should not be mixed with politics, and yet abortion is radically changing the demographics of our nation. Abortion and the abuse of contraception, rather than helping our country, are literally squeezing the economic and cultural life out of us. Planned Parenthood has been spreading a pro-abortion, pro-choice and pro-contraception philosophy which is causing aberrations in our population. For the first time in our history there are more people over 65 than under 5 years of age! In the decade ahead, to have children may become your greatest patriotic act for God and country.

Statistics prove that the present culture of the West — Europe and the U.S. — is being changed by the anti-life movement. Paul Marx, Ph.D., a noted population expert, has found that by the year 2035, the majority of people in France will not be French. The reproductive rate of the French is down to 1.2. On the other hand, for example, Muslim couples in France are having almost twice as many children. Since a country needs a rate of 2.2 to survive, the French culture is on the way out.

The Wirthlin Group found that in the U.S. at least 1.6 million babies are aborted annually — an entire generation since 1971! The U.S. now has a reproductive rate of less than 1.9, leaving our future more and more to depend on Department of Immigration for growth. I have to wonder who will pay into the social security system when my generation retires? If those of us in our 20s, 30s, and 40s do nothing to fight the anti-life movement, our culture and economic future will someday not exist as we now know it. When this group retires either the social benefits will be cut drastically for the elderly, or those children lucky enough to have been born will be taxed at exorbitant rates. Either alternative is undesirable. More than ever, from rich and poor families, we need children who will someday be wage earners.

Other countries, especially in Europe, which have abused birth control are seeing population surprises. 57 percent of all West German couples do not have a child; Germans are on the way out. In Switzerland, soldiers are needed so badly in the military that men must remain in active duty until age 53. In that country there are over a million foreigners working, 1/6 of the population. In England, because of the lack of social welfare dollars for the elderly, one is not allowed in the hospitals if one is over 65.

A Washington D.C. abortion clinic al-

lowed poor, pregnant women to see their fetus via ultrasound. After the viewing, each woman changed her mind and decided to keep her child. This fact proves that abortion, once fully understood, is not desirable. Planned Parenthood has left women in the dark about fetal study and fetal development. Catholic bishops know all of this, that is why they are against abortion. It is anti-life. Any future pro-choice bill must include ultrasound prior to choosing abortion, so that women are better informed.

When we teach that the dignity of child-birth is one of the fruits of sexual conduct, we show we have the will to love and to live. When we work to end abortion, we advocate for posterity and future security. When we replace our immediate self-interest by what is economically good for our country and culture, we will take very seriously the long-term negative effects of the anti-life movement. The old biblical directive, "go forth and multiply," may still be the most reliable philosophy. Catholic Bishops are now armed with facts that prove that the pro-life stance is good for our nation. Is that not enough reason to ask officeholders to vote against funds for abortion.

Frank Netti
Weedsport Sennett Road
Weedsport

'Encounter' weekend neglected church's teachings

To the editors:

We were pleased to read the letter by Frank L. Netti "Encounter did not explain sex teaching" — August 8, 1991 — in which he describes his experiences with the "Engagement Encounter" organized by the Rochester Diocese. We had a very similar experience at the encounter weekend we attended last April as we were preparing for our marriage this past June.

Most of the weekend's activities were well presented, thought provoking, and beneficial to our marriage preparation. There is no doubt that those presenting the weekend were motivated by good intentions. However, like Frank Netti and his fiancée, we were very disturbed by the way topics involving sexuality before and after marriage were presented.

In response to a question on pre-marital sex, the spiritual director said nothing about how fornication is a serious mortal sin. Instead, he spoke about how "we are

called to act responsibly," implying that as long as one is "responsible," sex outside the sacrament of marriage is OK. In other words, we can choose our own morality. Similarly, when the topic of birth control came up, the spiritual director avoided discussing Church teachings by talking about "responsibility." The spiritual director responded to a question about Natural Family Planning — which many people were curious about — by discussing the church's teachings about legitimate reasons for spacing children. This is totally inadequate as a response to a question about NFP, which done correctly, is just as effective as artificial birth control. The reasons for the Church's teaching regarding artificial contraception were hardly touched and virtually nothing positive was said about NFP. It was very distressing to find ourselves defending NFP to a priest.

Even more upsetting was the lack of reverence for the Eucharist which was evident

at the Mass celebrated during the weekend. In an attempt to "make everyone comfortable" the spiritual director invited everyone to receive Communion. There were quite a few non-Catholics present. While we realize that sacrilegious Communions probably occur at most Masses, it is outrageous for a priest to invite them.

One of us is a recent convert to Catholicism. As such, it is even more troubling to witness the frequency with which clergy and lay representatives of the Church — especially in the Diocese of Rochester — either avoid discussion of or openly contradict Church teachings on issues such as sexuality, artificial contraception and abortion. One consequence is that many who are striving to be faithful Catholics are alienated for the sake of those who want to choose their own morality.

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