

1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, NY 14624
716/328-4340

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Letters Policy

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.

Mercy Sisters in Chile thank donors

To the editors:

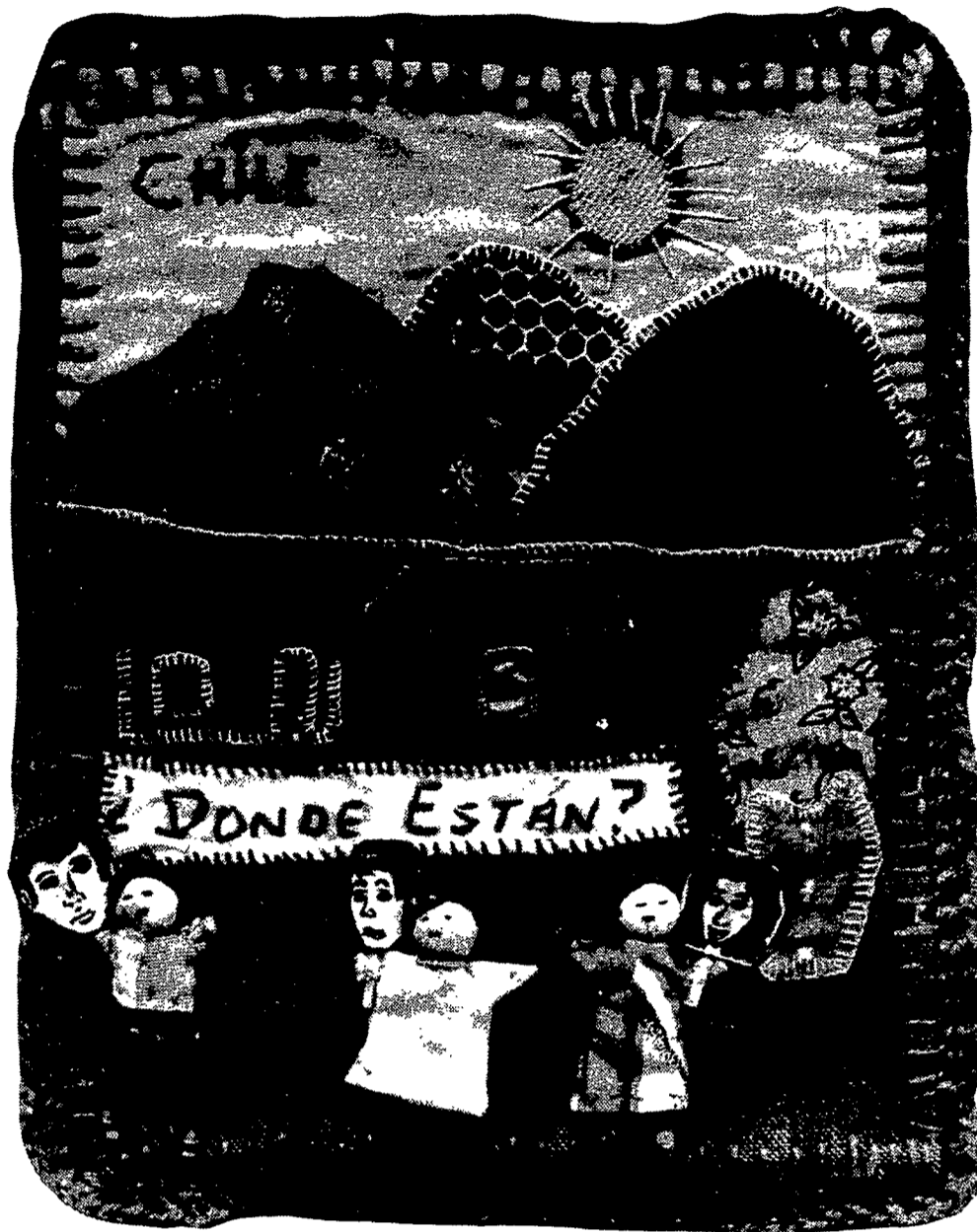
For many years now, the people of the Rochester Diocese have faithfully supported us Sisters of Mercy from the diocese who have been working in Santiago, Chile. We are now represented also in the diocese of Valparaiso in parish work and in the all important challenge of the present time — the AIDS ministry.

Over these years we've been engaged in a variety of services, the emphasis changing with the changing circumstances and needs of the people. Preparation for the sacraments remains very important, our part being mostly to oversee and support the lay people who meet weekly with the parents of those to be baptized or who will receive their First Communion; with the young people who prepare adolescents for Confirmation and with the marriage preparation guides.

Most of the Sisters have a particular chapel where they accompany the people in their worship and in various activities such as clubs for the elderly, workshops where women learn new skills, particularly sewing, knitting, painting on cloth, and in youth groups.

There is a Woman's House, a welcome place where women gather to listen to presentations by other women knowledgeable in areas helpful to their audience. One Sister accompanies women who have followed a training period of several months to be able to orientate women or men who have need for certain services but who don't know how to obtain them. Nearly all participate in the preparation of the Sunday liturgy along with the lay people. Because of the shortage of priests, a para-liturg frequently becomes the Sunday worship service instead of the Mass, and the lay people take turns along with the Sisters in conducting it.

Three Chilean Sisters have made first profession and look forward to perpetual commitment. Several young women are meeting monthly in a search for and indication of God's will in the choice of a vocation. Mercy is extended further by twenty-five associ-



This cloth picture — known as an *arpillera* — was created by members of the Woman's House in Santiago, Chile.

ates of the Sisters of Mercy here in Chile. Their expression of our charism is a joy to experience.

All this would not be possible without the faithful sacrificing people of the Rochester Diocese to whom we give heartfelt gratitude and prayer that your lives be greatly blessed as you share with people less fortunate from your bounty or from your own meager

resources.

The Sisters of Mercy of Rochester serving in Chile

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter was signed by Mercy Sisters Janet Canfield, Jane Kenrick, Anne Marie Mathis, Joanne Deck, Margaret Mary Mattie, Soledad Cantillano Calderon, Maria Ines Olguin Caro, Lia Gonzalez Sandoval and Margaret Mary Mungovan.

Religious education charts course to future

To the editors:

I was deeply touched by a letter written to you by sixth grader Katie Tytler from St. Rita School, Webster (*Catholic Courier*, May 7: "Closing schools and aborting babies are both wrong"). Her pro-life stand is admirable. Her stand on Catholic Education reflects her loyalty and appreciation for the sacrifices her parents and community make to provide such an education. But, I am very concerned about her question, "If there are no more Catholic Schools, where will children learn about God and their faith?" I hope my response will help Katie and others who are worried about their schools and their "Catholic" futures.

Children first learn about God in their homes, from the love they receive and the values shared by the family. We as "Church" have a responsibility to help parents in their roles as primary educators — first teachers — by giving adults opportunities to learn more about God and their own faith through classes and small group discussions on topics from Scripture to personal growth.

"Religion" or "faith formation" classes help children learn in peer settings about their faith and to see "faith in action" through the wonderful vol-



unteers who are called to do this important work.

Children's Liturgy of the Word is another way to share the "Good News" with young people. When youngsters are allowed time within Mass to "listen" to God's Word in terms they can readily understand, they grow in their knowledge of and love for God.

My local faith community makes these opportunities and more available to about 150 children and teens and many adults throughout the year for less than \$100 per person. Six years ago my children attended a Catholic School and the cost was \$600 per student. It is sad that costs have increased so much that it makes it hard, or impossible, for Catholic Schools to survive. As worthwhile as Catholic Schools are, and as deeply we feel the desire for them to continue, we must be realistic. Some communities just can't afford to foot the bill.

I know that it's very painful to even

consider losing one's school. Our decision makers must keep that in mind when looking at the bottom line on a financial statement. Catholic Schools are more than just places to learn academics or religious tradition. They are places where friendships are made with teachers and students that often last a lifetime. They are also places where God's word is lived and we can grow into the people God calls us to be. It's important for those who feel the "grief" of losing their schools to be able to express these feelings. This process is not only important, but it is the "healthy way" to deal with conflict.

Fortunately for all of us, our churches as well as our Catholic Schools are meant to be the kind of places where we can be valued. I encourage everyone at St. Rita's and in all parishes, to let children like Katie know your "faith family" doesn't want you to live your life without God. Catholic Education does have a future. It's just that its future may be lived out in churches and homes, through classes and groups led by catechists rather than in schools.

Julie Flanagan
Religious Education Administrator
St. Columba-St. Patrick Parish
Caledonia-Mumford