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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.

Fully intends to remain inconsistent

To the editors:

According to proponents of the so-called Seamless Garment theory of morality, one isn't being consistent opposing abortion, unless he or she also opposes the death penalty — and any notion of a "just war." These proponents advocate what they call a "consistent ethic of life."

Well, I'd like to suggest that if Arthur Shawcross had been executed 20 years ago, after murdering two young children in Watertown, 11 Rochester area women would probably be alive today. And, as I see it, favoring execution is the same thing as being pro-the lives of those 11 women.

I can't for the life of me, fathom the logic of those who are so eloquent and passionate in reminding us of how infinitely valuable each human life is; but, then, no matter what manner of outrage is committed against one of these sacred lives — say a Marie Walsh or a June Cicero — they aren't prepared to exact an adequate penalty for it.

A thing is worth either the price we're willing to pay, or the price we're willing to demand, for that thing. If every life is of infinite value, then it seems obvious that the only adequate price for the taking of a human life — is another human life. It is not about vengeance versus Christian forgiveness and forbearance. It is about preserving what's left of the social fabric of our communities. The State can no longer afford not to be hardnosed in this.

Yes, Our Lord paid the price for our redemption; and that should be enough. But, unfortunately, the fact has little bearing on the issue of public safety — as even the most cursory acquaintance with crime statistics gives evidence.



AP/Wide World Photos

LATEST EXECUTED — Cornelius Singleton, shown in a 1981 photo, was executed in Alabama's electric chair Nov. 20 for killing a Roman Catholic nun in a Mobile cemetery in 1977.

What the death penalty says to the violent criminal is "Your behavior has exhausted the limits — the human limits — of society's tolerance." Why are so few Catholic leaders, today, willing to admit that such limits exist?

To say, instead, to the criminal "There is nothing you can do to exhaust our forgiveness and understanding," may be plausible coming from a Mother Teresa. But, it would hardly ring true coming from the mouths of the vast majority of people I've met in my lifetime, Christian or otherwise. It certainly wouldn't be true coming from my own mouth. Sainthood is a goal; and, unlike some of the death penalty opponents, I haven't

arrived.

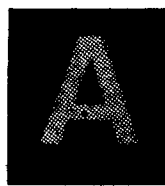
If murder victims' survivors choose not to pursue the matter, in imitation of our Lord, I find it almost incomprehensibly admirable. But there's not the least cause for admiration when the State tries to pose as Christian saint.

I have to laugh when I hear it said that, it is when the State takes the life of a murderer that it is playing God. Quite the contrary. It is God whose patience, understanding, compassion and forgiveness are without limit. Those who presume to imitate Him without first having struggled for, and attained, a high degree of — if not perfection in — sanctity are the ones who are playing God. To pretend to be able to forbear whom only God, or the Saints, have the resources to forbear, is to play God.

How long are we supposed to sacrifice public safety — the right of citizens to walk their streets without fear; the right of inner-city parents to be unafraid that their children might not make it home from the grocery store, from school or from the playground, alive; the simple right of a young couple to take a stroll at night and gaze at the moon without fear of being mugged, or worse — on the altar of the State's misguided exercise of "virtue?"

Not to have executed Mr. Shawcross 20 years ago doesn't demonstrate how virtuous the State is; it shows how cheap the State holds the lives of the two children he killed. And, the fact that Mr. Shawcross lives today says that we hold his life to be more valuable than the combined lives of his 13 known victims. If that is pro-life, then I have no intention to be consistent.

Michael L. DeLorme
Park Avenue, Rochester



**LONG
THE WAY**

Urges bishop to get hotline

To the editors:

Here's a suggestion for Bishop Clark's effort for communication. Have a phone line for just call-in suggestions — these are put on tape. Bishop Clark could listen to suggestions, cares and needs and respond thoughtfully in the column.

Advantages are people will feel free to express real feelings by not identifying themselves — the choice would be theirs — the tone of the voice would express attitudes and often hurts.

Big advantage: cost would be much less (and) tapes could be reviewed in private.

Wolfe Publications (newspapers) have what they call "Chatterline" — perhaps the Bishop could call it "Listening Shepherd."

Please consider this method because people who are the Church need to tell their Shepherd their needs, hurts and hungers and cost of TV would be better spent on the poor.

Lily May Wagner
Gebhardt Road, Penfield

Congregations praise efforts to remove racism from church

To the editors:

We would like to commend and thank Bishop Matthew Clark and the Diocesan Task Force on Societal Injustice for the challenging and practical report they have just completed and sent out to all of us who are part of the Church of Rochester.

Convened by the Bishop after the racial discord in Los Angeles last May, the Task Force focused on the sin of racism, acknowledging painfully "the existence of racism in our policies, practices, experiences ... attitudes, practices, and behaviors." We know this to be true even though, in our prayer, we say that we are all children of God, brother and sister to one another.

The Task Force Report clearly, succinctly, and forcefully outlines examples of racism or racist practices within our Church, and offers practical recommendations for struggling with this sinful-

ness at the Pastoral Center, in its affiliated agencies, in the parishes — and, we would add, in our religious congregations.

The Bishop, in his acceptance of this Report, pledges that the Diocese will engage in training focused on multi-cultural issues and sensitivity over the coming year, and also calls attention to the Urban League's community-wide initiative to reduce radical polarization in the greater Rochester community.

We, in turn, would like to pledge our support for these and for all other efforts, individual and collective, which will help us all to move closer to living in the love to which we are called.

Sister Rosemary St. Peter, SSJ,
and Sister Ann Miller, RSM, for
the Central Administration of the
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester
and the Leadership Council of the
Sisters of Mercy of Rochester

Encounter was joyful experience

To the editors:

We have just returned from a Marriage Encounter weekend. We found it to be such a positive experience that we wish to urge all married couples to attend one.

Marriage Encounter is open to all happily married couples regardless of faith, race, age, education or financial status. The weekend is designed to expand and deepen the joys a couple share together whether they've been married for a short time or for many years.

We grew in knowledge and love of each other, ourselves, God, and his plan

for us as a couple.

We were a little afraid to go to Marriage Encounter because we did not know what to expect. Please do not let your fear or any of your excuses keep you from experiencing the joy this weekend can bring to your life. You have nothing to lose and a lifetime of love and happiness to gain.

For information about Marriage Encounter you may contact: Mike and Kathy Williams, 430 Tarrington Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14609 (716/288-4713).

John and Belinda Brasley
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Bath