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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.

Columnist showed indifference to life

To the editors:

The half page (column) by Rev. Richard McBrien in which he raises the question of "Is a vote for Bill Clinton a mortal sin?" (*Catholic Courier*, Dec. 3) raised several questions.

1. Where does the author get his figures on the number of Catholics who voted for a particular candidate and how accurate are they?

2. Why are people passing out pamphlets that support and defend human life referred to as "ultra-right pamphleteers" by the author?

3. Why is the author raising the question of mortal sin in the first place and then stating that this "seems quite silly, of course"?

4. McBrien raises the issue of his concern for the tax exempt status of the dioceses, parishes, and Catholic newspapers; does he imply this status is more important than speaking out in defense of innocent human life?

5. The name of McBrien's column is "Essays in Theology." Are we to believe theology and morality should be determined by the popular vote of Catholics?

6. Is Father McBrien more concerned with being "politically correct" in his thought and dress, then teaching the Church's position on contemporary moral issues?

7. Finally, are the thoughts of Rev. McBrien, who at best demonstrates his indifference to innocent unborn human life, the best use of one-half page of the *Catholic Courier*? Doesn't Archbishop Fulton Sheen's position that "the only difference between the unborn child and us is time" say more than the popular vote or the thoughts of a Notre Dame theologian?

Robert D. Brown
Cross Bow Drive
Rochester



AP/Wide World Photos

Then-presidential candidate Bill Clinton gives the A-OK sign Feb. 11, 1992, as he advises high school students in Keene, N.H., to stay in school.

Finds columnist's analysis to be enlightening

To the editors:

I look forward to reading the *Catholic Courier*, especially for the balanced perspective of your regular columnist, Father Richard P. McBrien. Although I knew that some thought McBrien's viewpoint somewhat progressive and liberal, I was, nevertheless, surprised to read Dr. Reynolds' harsh criticisms of the priest's work and your policy of printing his *Essays in Theology*. I also took exception to Dr. Reynolds' charge (*Catholic Courier*, Dec. 3: "Endorsement" was wrong") that McBrien endorsed Bill Clinton's candidacy in his column printed Oct. 15, 1992. Having recycled that issue of the paper, I went to the library to re-read the supposedly offensive column and found Reynolds' accusation totally without merit. He had no right to scold the editorial policy on this point.

McBrien's Oct. 15 column is an analysis of the role of the "Catholic vote" in recent elections, a report on Clinton's major and issue-clarifying speech given at University of Notre Dame in September, and a comment on the importance to Clinton of the traditionally Democratic Catholic vote should he ultimately win the election.

In this connection, Father McBrien's Essay in the same issue as Dr. Reynolds' letter is very enlightening. In it he explores the question: Was voting for Clinton a mortal sin? Apparently some of our priests taught that it was. On the other hand Father McBrien reminded us of the positions of the U.S. Catholic Conference and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops — which I for one didn't know — the inappropriateness of church leaders using their pulpits or their publications

to endorse politicians or to support or to oppose a particular political party.

Furthermore the bishops declared, "To tell Catholics how to vote, would be pastorally inappropriate, theologically unsound and politically unwise." Father McBrien also reminded us of the bishops' instruction "(that Catholics) should examine the positions of candidates on the full range of issues," because a "consistent ethic of life should be the moral framework from which we address all issues in the political arena."

I for one need the insight that Father McBrien brings weekly in his column. Sometimes he shakes up my complacencies, but he always makes me think and reflect. He teaches and informs. As

Dr. Reynolds correctly pointed out: it is the role of the *Catholic Courier* to instruct us. Through his *Essays*, Father McBrien enlightens us about the ongoing work of our Church, the problems our bishops are wrestling with and the developments in theology. And he regularly stresses that each of us needs to develop well thought-out Christian convictions and prayerfully to act on them.

Unfortunately this theological "prescription" may not be a simple and easy one for all to swallow especially for those who are used to being tranquilized by unquestioned and quack religious remedies. I vote STET for Father McBrien's column!

Raymond S. McCormick
Cross Ridge Road, Pittsford

Sisters of St. Joseph in Brazil thank diocese for aiding the impoverished

To the editors:

People in Brazil live with serious economic and political instability — conditions which aggravate the poverty, homelessness, and persecution in this country. We, the Sisters of St. Joseph in Brazil, wish to thank the people of the Diocese of Rochester for helping us to live among the people of Brazil, in imitation of Jesus who was born into like circumstances.

Although we cannot provide security for the people any more than the Brazilian government can, we can and do remind one another that we all work for justice, as Jesus did. We advocate for housing for families thrown off their land; we seek to be heard by those in

power; we struggle to create more equal distribution of material goods among all Brazilians. It is your support that helps us to be with needy Brazilians as they work to reduce the instability in their lives.

With a deep sense of gratitude we send our best wishes ... and pray that Christ's blessings will be with you.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester in Brazil: Catherine Foos, Ellen Kuhl, Elaine Hollis, Irma Ireny Rosa da Silva, Katherine Popowich, Maureen Finn, Irma Rubia da Sousa, Marlena Roeger, Patricia Frisk, Barbara Orczyk, Christel Burgmaier, Jean Bellini, Irma Joana Dalva Mendes and Suzanne Wills