

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

President

Bishop Matthew H. Clark

General Manager

Bishop Dennis W. Hickey

Editor/Asst. Gen. Mgr.

Karen M. Franz

Editorial Department

Managing Editor

Richard A. Kiley

Senior Staff Writer

**Lee Strong
Finger Lakes**

Staff Writers

**Rob Cullivan
Monroe County
Mike Latona
Southern Tier**

Photo Editor

Babette G. Augustin

Photo Intern

S. John Wilkin

Business Department

Circulation Manager

Jeanne A. Morin

Office Manager

Amy D'Accursio

Receptionist

Lenna Hurley

Advertising Department

Advertising Manager

Bernie Puglisi

Advertising Account Exec.

Kathy Welsh

Production Department

Graphics Manager

Lorraine Hennessey

Graphic Artist

Kim Parks

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.

Jesus espoused pacifism

To the editors:

Regarding "Double-Edged Sword: Modern wars test permissible limits of church's teaching" (*Catholic Courier*, Feb. 4): Augustine's "theory" served to make more formal the subversion of Christianity that began one hundred years earlier with Constantine. After 300 years of virtual pacifism in the Church, an edict of Constantine made Christianity a legal religion in the Roman Empire: "Let this be so in order that the divine grace which we have experienced in such manifold ways, may always remain loyal to us, and continue to bless us in all that we undertake, for the welfare of the empire." This has been the simplest and most operative just war theory ever since!

No Council of the Church has ever adopted a just war theory at the highest level of teaching

authority. In the early days, pacifism was taken for granted as the example left by Jesus so it was not an issue for a Council. (*Courier* Senior staff writer Lee) Strong says Catholics now have an option of following either persuasion yet I feel they are mutually exclusive and the Church must soon choose one.

Just war theory cannot bear the light of Christ. Love of enemies was Jesus' command to his disciples as in Luke 6:27 ff. The works of war reverse the works of mercy and the poor suffer most. Christians killing Christians and others throughout the world is an undeniable countersign to the Gospel. For the Church to become the dominant spiritual/social force in the lives of its people, instead of being co-opted by the prevailing culture, it must live and teach clearly what Jesus lived and

taught. The Seamless Garment can only be the one Jesus wore if it includes his pacifism. To accept to proclaim the Gospel in all its fullness except as it relates to such a central issue as Christian participation in war and violence is to fail to proclaim the Gospel.

It is time for the bishops to call for a Council of the Church that will consider the history of Christian support for and participation in state sponsored killing in light of the words and example of Jesus and the early Church. The faithful desperately need clearer guidance. It is time for our diocese to begin a process that will educate in each parish on Scripture and Church history related to this issue as a support for a meaningful Council.

Anyone with similar concerns would do well to prepare for Synod Week 6. It is hard to imagine a more important pastoral issue. I believe the Holy Spirit will lead our diocese and our Church to end the Constantinian Era of Christianity and its betrayal of Jesus.

**Mark Scibilia-Carver
Cold Springs Road, Trumansburg**

Each of us is a variable in poverty equation

To the editors:

While I found Mike Latona's article (*Catholic Courier*, Nov. 19, 1992: "Food providers see shadows of Depression-era need") well-written, I feel that this is once again a good attempt at identifying a problem but perhaps not addressing a root cause.

Specifically, I refer to Mr. Latona's lead-in example of Ms. Patricia McPherson's difficulty in making ends meet. I do not know Ms. McPherson and therefore I will assume that she is a fine hard-working single person, trying as best she can to provide for her family — she has my applause. However, it would seem to me that a good share of the reason for her problems of late, may stem from the fact that she is 26 years old and has five children, the eldest being 11!

While I give Ms. McPherson high

marks for bearing and keeping her five children, I wonder if her own past behavior is really the crux of the problem of not being able to provide. Nowhere in the article was this even addressed. Someone else is always the blame — the bad economy, the government, the President. We the people often have a difficult time looking in the mirror.

Today, there are many struggling single-parent families, many who have become that way due to irresponsible fathers. However, there are also many women who have brought a large number of children into this world out of wedlock, only to be placed on the welfare role, and perhaps losing the last bit of dignity that they have in the process. I do not specifically know if this is the case of Ms. McPherson, although my

assumptions from the article lean in this direction.

When will we stand up on our own two feet and recognize that while the equation of poverty is very complex, fundamentally, we too are a variable in that equation, and how we make basic moral choices can affect the answer significantly.

We who are able should support the various agencies which help these people break the chains of poverty and become self-sufficient. Yet we have to start addressing the basic roots of many of these problems, even if it means taking a stand which is not viewed as politically-correct. For in many cases, if we wait until we have a problem, it may be too late.

**Richard D. Stoffel
Rochester**

School violence shows it's time to lift the ban on prayer

To the editors:

It appeared rather strange that Billy Graham was allowed to pray at President Clinton's Inaugural Ceremony, while only a few months ago the Supreme Court declared praying illegal at public high school graduation ceremonies. Apparently, it's significant to ask God's blessing and guidance for our new president, but not for our high school students.

With soaring levels of high school violence, drugs, teen pregnancies and abortions, it seems as though the only things successfully prevented in schools today, are God and prayer. At a time when many students are more concerned about carrying weapons, condoms, and drugs, than carrying textbooks, "prayer" is now a censored word. Student test scores are lower than ever, while teachers' salaries are higher.

Declining morality in media and increasing numbers of dysfunctional families, add additional chaos to the classroom. Anything goes. Nothing is sacred. Discipline is a lost art. Our humanistic-driven public school systems, which first started eliminating God from the schools in 1962, are simply not working.

Perhaps allowing student prayer, and re-establishing the basic Judeo-Christian values that our nation was founded upon, may not be so terrible after all. Such principles as the Ten Commandments and love for God and neighbor, are desperately needed today, more than ever. Forgotten virtues as faith, hope

and charity, would help instill in students a sense of direction, accountability, and ultimate purpose for life. Maybe it is time to consider re-legalizing prayer and taking the ban off God.

**Michael J. McBride
Fillingham Drive
Rochester**

Series continues discussion of health concerns

To the editors:

I was pleased to read the interview with Father (Charles) Curran in the February 11 *Catholic Courier* ("Father Curran draws line at assisted suicide").

I would like to inform your readers that Father Curran was speaking in the first of a three part series of Ethics in Health Care sponsored by the St. John Fisher College Department of Nursing. On Thursday, March 4 and Thursday, April 15, the series will continue with featured speakers and panel discussions related to the ethical issues surrounding the use of increasingly sophisticated technology in health care and the distribution of health care resources. The series is free and open to the public. Call



the Department of Nursing, St. John Fisher College for more information.
**Marilyn L. Dollinger
Assistant Professor of Nursing
St. John Fisher College
Rochester**