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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.

Readers take issue with article

To the editors:

We have just finished reading the article concerning the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*... Several thoughts come to mind when reading the article.

The first is the idea that the Pope and Magisterium teaching will always be of popular opinion or acceptance. This is to say that because something is difficult to comprehend or accept, we should not accept it... The second thing that immediately jumped off the page was the fact that as a source you chose to use Father Curran as the representative of the dissenting theologians. Although he is well known for his position on the encyclical, he can hardly be considered a credible reference to the faithful...

The article in the *Courier* never explains the difference between contraception and the regulation of births... This is a disservice to theologians and laity alike. Is it wrong to think that the *Catholic Courier*, an arm of the Diocesan Bishop, is in some respect responsible for teaching of the faithful? We think not!...

...We had a difficult time with the issue of birth regulation. We do not subscribe to the notion of blindly following what may come forth in an encyclical, however we do subscribe to the obligation for all Catholic laity to prayerfully



study the encyclical.

Could the writer of the article have offered titles or authors that defend the position the Church teaches? The fact that the author only chose to mention the title of those books that apparently favor dissent from the teaching of the Church shows a particularly obvious bias on the writers' part for dissent. We find this reprehensible when it appears in other than an editorial.

The space and consideration given to natural family planning in the article appeared to be nothing more than lip service to a technique. We might add that given the appropriate frame of mind — one that is contralife — the Catholic can just as easily step into a state of sin by treating natural family planning as a technique as one who uses contraception. The very fact that

the article treats natural family planning as a technique only, illustrates a certain level of ignorance on the writers' part...

...We do acknowledge a certain lack of education of the married faithful with respect to *Humanae Vitae* — this may account for its' rejection by many — however, to state that there is no lively debate is not true... (W)e would highly recommend for all, a study of the work of five theologians who support and defend *Humanae Vitae*. The publisher is Ignatius Press, and the title *The Teaching of Humanae Vitae*... We might also recommend reading the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*. Ask your pastor for it or order it through the John Paul II Faith Center located in Auburn, New York. We would like to encourage Bishop Matthew Clark to vigorously support the education of the faithful in accordance with *Humanae Vitae*.

**Shari and John List
Lux Street, Rochester**

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with space limitations. The article in question was not intended to specifically discuss *Natural Family Planning*, which has been addressed previously. Readers also should note "Speakers tell conference encyclical remains valid," which was published in the very next edition of the *Catholic Courier* (Aug. 5).

Catholic physicians encourage adherence

To the editors:

...On July 25, 1968, Pope Paul VI issued his much awaited encyclical on love, life, and human reproduction titled "*Humanae Vitae*," to a world eager to embrace artificial contraception as a means of family planning. To the dismay of most, he rejected this method and warned its adoption would ultimately place children at great risk of premature sexual activity and thus in serious moral and social danger; that men would lose respect for their wives leading to divorce; that family life would break down; and that nations would adopt contraception and forceably compel its citizens to use it whenever it was felt to be necessary.

The Pope's warnings about contraception went unheeded and were ridiculed by many, including those within the Catholic Church which set precedent for dissension from many of its teachings. What was gained by such defiance? Contraception has allowed so many people who shouldn't be having sex, to have sex. It is estimated that as many as 80 percent of women using artificial contraception have had abortions, subjecting themselves to all the terrible psychological sequela of the procedure. Far from adequately preventing pregnancy, up to 20 percent of women using "the pill" become pregnant each year...

Twenty percent of all adults in the United States now suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, twice the average of the rest of the world and 20 percent of the women of childbearing age in our country are now sterile as a result of these diseases, also twice the average of the rest of the world...

... Yet despite the rise of these devastating medical and social problems associated with the rising use of "the pill," Father Curran still claims the Church has lost the respect of the laity since condemning its use...

... Proclaiming such a sacred document on human sexuality was a courageous act and it required implementation to a diocesan and parish level. This, unfortunately, did not take place. Little effort was made by our Catholic leaders to familiarize themselves with the document and to fully educate the

laity with its true meaning... Although Monsignor Shannon describes a poor reception of the encyclical, he fails to mention this ignorance of all about its contents and the failure to provide any education so we might learn about the issue. How often have we heard a homily on contraception or *Natural Family Planning* within the last 25 years?...

... Society is deteriorating because of the failure by many to lead Christian lives... It will only be through the education of Catholic leaders, physicians and laity (about the teachings of *Humanae Vitae*) that the family will be saved from the devastating influences of the sexual revolution.

We urge all to become thoroughly educated with this document and to consider the safe and effective method of *Natural Family Planning* as a means

of regulating the size of one's family and to assist couples in conceiving children. Refusing to compromise concerning the saving doctrine of Christ is an outstanding act of charity to souls. At the same time, as directed by Pope Paul VI, let us always combine this with tolerance and charity as we patiently lead others to a more closer union with Christ.

The Catholic Physicians Guild wishes to make this short, easily readable encyclical "*Humanae Vitae*" available to all who wish to learn about it. For your FREE copy, call 716/464-3620 and give your name and address.

**Michael R. Aiello, M.D., president
The Catholic Physicians Guild
Clintwood Court, Rochester**

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with space limitations.

Found story disturbing, discouraging

To the editors:

I found the cover story on *Humanae Vitae* 25 Years Later to be disturbing and discouraging. A quote: "If he (Pope Paul VI) had not made that one statement (about birth control), he could very well be considered the greatest pope of the 20th century," remarked Monsignor William H. Shannon, professor emeritus of theology at Nazareth College of Rochester" — and a dissenter from *Humanae Vitae*.

The article quotes extensively not only from Monsignor Shannon, but also from Father Charles Curran who is well known for his beliefs that his freedom of thought and inquiry is more important than the Church's teaching authority.

... *Humanae Vitae* calls followers of Christ to the same uncompromising standards that He did 2,000 years ago, with specific reference to marriage and sexual union. Christ forgave, freely and with compassion, when a person sinned, like the woman at the well or the woman who was about to be stoned, but he did not condone the sin.

Dissenters from *Humanae Vitae*, I feel, said that humans cannot live up to the standards in *Humanae Vitae*, therefore the church should not call it a sin when they fail. People are different now, they

said, as if access to birth control devices made us somehow substantially different from the people in Jesus' time. Besides, *Humanae Vitae* was not infallible anyway.

We haven't changed; most Christians are still unable to take up our crosses and follow Him. ... (T)hose in the Church who should be calling us to follow Christ, and who should be correcting us when we fail, with God's own forgiveness and exhortations of encouragement — without regard to how popular their words are — they are in the forefront of those who would now tell us, don't worry, He didn't really mean it after all.

The newspaper article seems to say that the prevailing view in the Church, or at least the Rochester diocese, is that it's only a matter of time before the Church 'corrects' the 'error' Pope Paul VI made in his otherwise splendid encyclical... Pope Paul VI may well someday be considered the greatest Pope of the 20th century, but if so, it will not be in spite of *Humanae Vitae*; it may very well be because of it.

**Anne E. Battery
East Foster Street, Palmyra**

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with space limitations