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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.

Source 'distorted' encyclical's nature

To the editor:

Lee Strong's "HUMANAE VITAE: 25 YEARS LATER" provided an interesting commentary on the storm of controversy which erupted over Pope Paul VI's birth control encyclical. In view of the Sexual Revolution's devastating effects on marriage and family life in the nations of the West, the validity and prophetic character of *Humanae Vitae* have become increasingly clear.

Monsignor William Shannon alleges that at the Vatican press conference introducing *Humanae Vitae* to the world, Monsignor Ferdinando Lambruschini stated that the encyclical was "not an infallible document" and that "the Church could still change its teachings about artificial means of birth control." He unfortunately distorts Monsignor Lambruschini's statement. The latter did say that "the decision has been given and it is not infallible," but it is obvious from the context of his address that he only meant that the Papal judgment was not one *infallibly proclaimed ex cathedra*. However, he certainly represented it as irreformable —



Pope Paul VI

and thus, infallible teaching by reason of the Ordinary Magisterium of the Church — because he went on to declare unequivocally: "(This) pronouncement of the authentic Magisterium requires full and loyal assent —

internal and not merely external... This decision binds the consciences of all without any ambiguity..."

All those who have in recent years incautiously taught that it is lawful to use artificial contraceptives to regulate births and have acted accordingly in their pastoral guidance and in the ministry of the confessional, must now change their attitude and set an example by their full acceptance of the teaching of the Encyclical. This is not a case of servility to be shunned, but rather one of essential loyalty and consistency in the profession of Catholic doctrine and in the practice of the Christian life."

Oddly, Mr. Strong provided ample space for the views of Monsignor Shannon and Father Charles Curran, both dissenters from *Humanae Vitae*, but did not include comments from local priests who support and defend the encyclical. For those who would like to gain a better insight into the authentic teaching of the Church on this prophetic document, the Rochester Chapter of Catholics United for the Faith will be holding in Rochester on September 17-18 a Western New York CUF Conference celebrating the 25th Anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, the 25th Anniversary of Catholics United for the Faith and the newly-published *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Featured speakers will be Cardinal Edouard Gagnon, who as past-President of the Pontifical Council of the Family is an expert on family issues and is an authoritative voice of the Magisterium; the famous Jesuit theologian Father John Hardon, and our own Father Albert Shamon. Those interested in attending are welcome to contact me at 716/248-9094.

Dorothy Macaluso, Chairman
St. Pius X Chapter
Catholics United for the Faith
Harwood Lane
East Rochester

Don't regret statement, regret refusal to heed

To the editors:

The Catholic Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities was certainly right for calling Pope Paul VI "prophetic" for predicting the outcome of the acceptance of artificial birth control. Rather than regret that he made a statement about the issue, we should regret that we refused to pay attention to it. During the past 30 years we have seen a steady increase of sexual activity outside of marriage which has been the direct cause of out-of-wedlock pregnancy, abortion, and divorce.

It is, therefore, impossible to understand why the *Catholic Courier* (July 29)

would refer to a continuing "debate" in an article about the 25th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*. Surely, if one does indeed exist, it is time to ignore a few dissenting theologians and admit that Pope Paul was correct about the disastrous effects of birth control on the traditional family and on all of society. It is time to listen to his successor, Pope John Paul II, who continues to acknowledge the wisdom of Christ's teachings as the only true method of solving the many problems caused by our human selfishness.

Mary Lou Reifsnnyder
Mountain Rise, Fairport

Church groups should go public on abuse

To the editors:

I would like to comment on the article about Brother John Heathwood that appeared in the Aug. 5 issue ("Former Kearney teacher accused of sex abuse").

First off, I want to say how proud I am of the victim, Nancy Maher, to come forward and pursue this matter. It takes a lot of guts to do what she is doing. Next, this paper has to be commended for its coverage on the issue of sexual abuse in general and this case in specific.

The article was very well written. My only complaint comes from a comment made by Brother James Roepke saying lawyers recommended that the congregation not talk about the case. Why not? People in that congregation have a right to know what their leaders are doing. There is a big trust problem in the church today and being secretive about sexual abuse in the church only enhances that mistrust.

I believe that the church as a whole and each diocese should make public the number of priests it has that have been accused of sexual abuse. How much money it has cost the church to settle cases out of court — people have the right to know how their money is spent. Have priests in the past been moved from parish to parish after problems of sexual abuse have arisen in their former parish?

Its only after the church comes clean and tells all about the scope of this problem before it will be able to start rebuilding the trust it has lost with many parishioners. Until that happens the church is viewed as less than truthful, which goes against what it teaches. It is really sick to think that (a brother

or priest) could preach about morality in one hour and one hour later be sexually abusing children. It is also sad for all of the good priests out there who are looked at as guilty by association.

The pope has a great opportunity to address this issue during World Youth Day. Somehow I believe that what he

says won't be enough. I hope I am wrong.

Richard J. Kuehner
Middle Road
Horseheads

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter was received prior to World Youth Day. It has been edited due to legal concerns.

Hopes Catholics will be supportive, active in next year's March for Jesus

To the editors:

I read your article, "March draws little Catholic participation" (*Catholic Courier*, June 17) and am very puzzled by the lack of Catholic Church support and participation in this event.

I attended the March for Jesus with several friends of mine and we found it wonderful and fantastic. Praising Jesus in songs and proclamations with 12,000 other Christians were certainly very uplifting. It brought together people of all denominations and took our faith and prayer outside the Church walls through the streets of downtown. So many people along the way were very friendly with smiles and waves. Some even joining in the March with us. We prayed for our nation among many other things and lifted up Jesus as King of the Nations. The focus was entirely on Jesus Christ as Lord.

Why the Catholic Church in this diocese, even though they did endorse it, was so skeptical and not interested in helping to promote it, is beyond my understanding. In Scripture, the Gospel

of John, Chapter 17, Jesus prays for unity among His believers. In the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 19, when Jesus enters Jerusalem, the crowds are rejoicing and praising God loudly proclaiming Him King. Jesus did not stop them or discourage them from this, but He was the reason for their rejoicing. When the Pharisees complained about them, Jesus says "If they were to keep silence, I tell you the very stones would cry out." Jesus calls us to be a people of praise. Our prayer and praise is the foundation of all we do and certainly we must not be afraid to express it. This world is in dire need of Jesus Christ.

I understand that for some people this is not the way they desire to express their faith. But for us who do, support and encouragement from our churches is much needed. I pray that next year's March will be supported and attended by many more of our priests and Catholics.

Jeannette Spencer
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Rochester