

**Catholic Courier**1150 Buffalo Road  
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The *Catholic Courier* wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome original, signed 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 letters writers.

We reserve the right to edit all letters for length as well as legal concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable.

Mail letters to: *Catholic Courier*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for verification purposes.

**Catholics must support victims****To the editors:**

I want to commend the recent letter to the *Courier* calling us all to pray for our priests. I would like to suggest that we also include in our prayers those who have been unwillingly violated by priests.

There exists a power differential between professional and client which is similar to that which exists between adult and child. The greater the vulnerability of the client, by reason of age or life circumstances, the greater the differential. Because the sexualization of any such non-peer relationship is deeply abusive to the client, it is always the responsibility of the so-called "helping professional" to maintain appropriate boundaries, regardless of how provocative the needy member's behavior is.

In the pastoral relationship, the power differential is greatly magnified by the moral and spiritual authority with which the pastor is invested. In the Catholic

priest, this differential is further enlarged by the cultic identification of the priest with Jesus Christ. Moreover, our tradition of calling priests, "Father," and of comparing parishes to "family" introduces a strong parent/child element to any pastor/parishioner relationship. Sexual misconduct by a priest is one of the most devastating emotional, psychological, and spiritual violations a Catholic can suffer. Recovery is possible, but it requires an enormous amount of hard work and prayer.

Members of the clergy, as well as teachers, doctors, therapists, and lawyers, must know their personal limitations in this matter. If they are psychologically incapable of controlling their behavior, they must remove themselves from positions of trust and responsibility. We expect police officers and military personnel to control their behaviors under extreme provocation. Certainly, we ought to be able to expect as much from our priests and not

condemn or ostracize the victims when one of our priests disappoints us.

The victims of clergy sexual abuse are often among the most devout and trusting of Catholics. It was their very faith in and respect for the priesthood that made them so vulnerable. The sinful choices of their abusers do not change their beliefs or attachment to Catholic tradition, but they do have a devastating impact on their ability to worship in community. This is particularly true when they see their fellow Catholics rallying around clergy perpetrators with the very things which the victims need most and are, seemingly, denied — the love, support, and prayers of the Catholic community.

Let us reassure them that, though we may not know their identities, we do love them, we do support them, and we are praying most fervently for their recoveries.

**Christine Bravo-Cullen**  
Lee Road, Dryden

**N.O.W. member scoffs at new 'right'****To the editors:**

Lo and behold in the Gannett newspaper of Sunday, November 23, 1993, we learn that the Catholic Church has decreed for its women members, the status of "partner" in marriage. What the State of New York still withholds from women in its laws and its courts, that is, equal rights, the Bishops have granted in their domain. And academia concurs via the quote of Professor Jarnevic, at the University of Detroit-Mercy: "The essence of the theology is that, as humans, we are all the same in nature. We are all created in the image and likeness of God."

The Church has avoided for centuries this portrayal of females. Women have generally been consigned to the "parts" department. This has meant being anything from an expanded male rib, as in some versions of the translated Old Testament, to becoming a being whose head was replaced spiritually by that of her husband's, as according to St. Paul in the New.

Other female parts, indispensable to the species, have so far defied adequate replacement — though work is being done. The most notable of these is the place where, according to one ecclesiastical schematic, the miniature beings ejected by men could be planted until reaching a viable age. Though one would think that simple observation would have weakened this agricultural paradigm, it was the science of genetics that gave female genes their belated role in the production of human beings.

Before we can celebrate, don't we still face the problem of retrofitting large numbers of women, and whose job is it to do that? The Bishops have wisely delegated this character-building task to the victims themselves. They have come up with some generous instructions, however. They reveal that all women have to do is "accept" their officially upgraded self-worth, and they will consequently be more confident and assertive. "Sour grapes" will label this the old "here are your

bootstraps, now lift yourself up ploy." But let's face it — now that women have the Bishop's declaration of equality, won't it be our own fault if we don't become equal? Even equally angry, as the Bishops so courageously suggest.

Well females are still not invited on these trips to Mount Sinai, and messages though the media are certainly more evanescent than dicta illuminated on parchment or stone, so questions on timing and motivation may be advanced. For example, didn't these concessions come just as the female sex had almost constructed an irrefutable case against the Church as the principal philosophical and even physical source of abuse of their rights as human beings? And isn't it pay-back time? So who owes whom?

**Marion D. Strand**  
Family Issues Task Force  
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**Beware calls for disastrous liberty of death****To the editors:**

It's in the air more and more: the destructive notion that people should have the "liberty" to decide when to end their lives and even to have doctors help them with lethal injections. Initiatives to make this legal have been only narrowly defeated on the West Coast, and will again be proposed in 1994. This is called the "right to die," but it's really the right to kill. We already have the right to refuse useless treatment. We never have the right to take life.

Some consider the taking of one's life as constitutional under the 14th Amendment's provision for "liberty." But this opens the door to chaos, because "liberty" can be invoked for any circumstance. If we are going to recognize a "liberty" for the terminally ill to have their lives ended, are we also ready to extend it to those suffering emotional distress due to a divorce or a financial loss? What happens when teenagers, among whom suicides are most frequent, demand their constitutional "liberty" for ALL people, not just for some. It is an illusion to think that the taking of life can be limited to only one category of persons or circumstances once it is admitted as a "liberty." This thinking is disastrous and opens the way for the loss of lives on a scale never imagined or intended.

Nor must we imagine that the killing will be only for those who request it. As soon as you allow the killing of those who ASK for it as a "right," then the ar-

gument will be used that EVERYONE has that right, even if they CANNOT ask for it. Why deprive them? This is "equal protection under law." You can count on it that people will be killed without asking for it. In fact, it already happens in Holland and, yes, in our country too.

Priests for Life is an organization to help the clergy teach and preach on this issue, and on other life issues. Please con-

tact us at: Priests for Life, P.O. Box 141172, Staten Island, N.Y. 10314.

Let's not allow this false "liberty" in our nation. It's time to confront the "culture of death" head-on, without hesitation, without fear, without compromise!

**Father Frank A. Pavone**  
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Priests for Life  
Staten Island, N.Y.

**Challenging absolute truths does disservice to church and its people****To the editors:**

Father Collins' conclusion in his letter in the December 9, 1993 *Catholic Courier* ("Priest responds to conscience query") defies logical reasoning and needs to be corrected; for his benefit as well as others who might be misled by it.

When he reduces the Magisterium to just one of many "sources of truth" and when he picks and chooses other "sources of truth" that may fit more neatly and easily into his daily life Father Collins leads us to the conclusion that each of our consciences is an infallible guide and that there are no absolute truths. In other words Father Collins is saying "The only absolute truth is that there is no absolute truth!" This is a nonsensical as the statement "Never say never."

With all due respect Father, all we ask of you and other "non-conformist" the-

ologians, bishops and priests is that you have the courage and commitment to Christ and His Church to completely, accurately and fairly present the truths that His Church teaches — along with the basis for them — so that the laity can fully embrace the truth and properly form their own consciences. After all we alone have to account to God for our actions based upon our consciences; not based upon your conscience. By doing anything short of this you are misusing your position of authority in the Church and only do yourself, the priesthood, the Church and the laity a disservice while at the same time treating us as weak Catholics incapable of making a difficult choice based upon the truth.

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