

OPINION COMMENTARY

Catholic Courier

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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 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.

Technology has replaced family

To the editors:

With each passing year we witness increased violence tearing deeper into the fabric of our nation and finding its way into our homes ... As 1994 approached, a group of concerned men asked themselves: "WHAT CAN I DO or WHAT RESOLUTIONS CAN I MAKE to mend this nation by creating a healthy and wholesome environment in my home and community?"

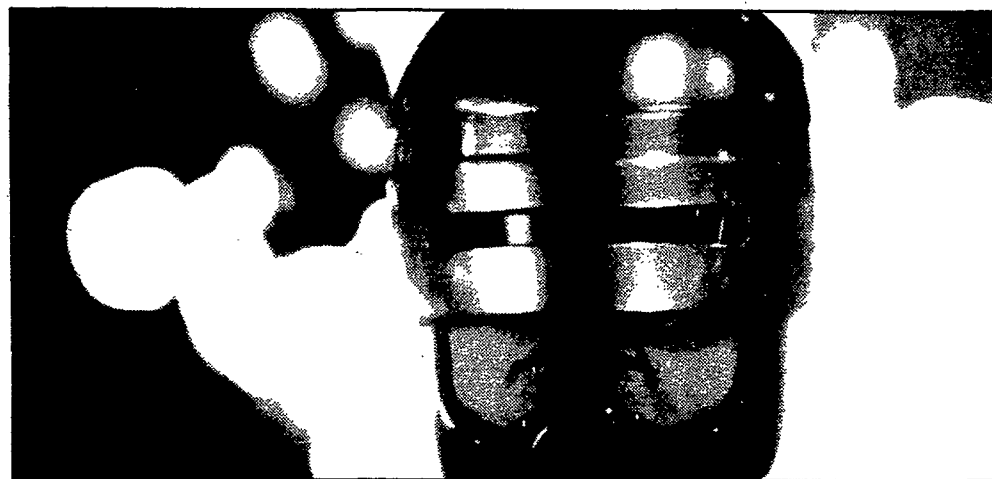
We found one of the answers to be all around us; especially in our homes influencing our daily decisions. We were face to face with a great friend of modern mankind: those tremendous advancements in technological know-how which have brought much good to our society.

We find that television, radio, VCR and video games have replaced family relationships ... We have allowed these technological advances to be used as teaching tools which subconsciously teach us, and especially our children, that violence, racism and sexism are OK, and are even entertaining. We have allowed these electronic devices to usurp our responsibility to teach our children how to become responsible citizens.

... If we are to improve the situation, we must individually and collectively take action that will bring us back to a conscious awareness of the decisions we are making... In this light, we have each resolved in 1994 to:

1. Think before I act! Decide how every decision may affect my family and my community. Ask myself: "Would I want someone like Howard Stern or Brother (Wease) talking to my wife or child, polluting their minds with the garbage they are sending over the airways?" If not, turn it off!

2. Plan and monitor family television



File Photo

viewing, video selections etc! Encourage educational television, movies that support wholesome family values and virtues, and non-violent video games. I will think of the consequences of what is happening in my home; I will not allow my children to be victimized by a "Mortal Combat" or "Night Trap" player.

3. Stand up and speak out! Tell family, friends, neighbors and co-workers about the actions I have taken. Encourage others to make similar resolutions.

4. Send a message! Write to local television, radio stations, sponsor companies, and the Federal Communications Commission about offensive or discomforting shows; be sure to include recommendations for the type of programming I want to see and hear. Do not allow myself to be intimidated by being accused of censorship; I am asking for a clean environment within which to bring up our future citizens...

5. Vote with my dollars! Do not buy violent video games — no matter how much the kids rebel. Do not support "R" rated movies at the box office or the video

rental stores.

6. Increase time spent with my family! Replace TV time with family time: games, reading and wholesome discussions. Encourage my family to be involved in community volunteer projects or to help a needy neighbor or family...

...(T)he undersigned have resolved to make changes to improve the environment within our homes. We may be able to implement only a single resolution at a time but with a commitment to the future we will add resolutions throughout the year... We invite and encourage all in our community to join us in our resolve to make our families stronger foundation blocks from which a wholesome, lively community may be constructed.

Michael Henty, John Bisgrove, Douglas Wayne and Dr. Thomas Gill

EDITORS' NOTE: The four men listed above signed this letter on behalf of an organization called "Concerned Men of Central New York." The signers provided the names of 28 members. Their letter has been edited to comply with space limitations.

Get in sync with moral tradition

To the editors:

We hear an awful lot these days about how "the people" are the Church, and about how we are to discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit by attuning ourselves to the "sense of the faithful."

Indeed, as one recent letter-writer put it, Truth is found not only in official Church documents, but also in the views of "responsible theologians" and in the "consensus of all ... good Catholic people."

Of course, the writer might have added that the Truth cannot contradict itself; nor can the Holy Spirit be both for and against something. If, say, He is the inspiration behind rejection of the Church's teaching — as set forth in *Humanae Vitae* — on artificial birth control by 89 percent of American Catholics; then He cannot also be the inspiration behind the wholehearted acceptance of that teaching by the other 11 percent of us. Which is it?

Jesus tells us that Moses allowed divorce — not because he listened to the "sense of the people" and heart the Holy Spirit telling him it was time to change what was "taught from the beginning" — he allowed it because of the stubbornness of the people.

Too many of today's Church leaders, though, aren't content with merely granting dispensation to the stubborn. In stumbling over themselves to accommodate and show their great compassion, these leaders pretend that stubbornness may be inspired by the Holy Spirit. And by this identifying the "consensus of good Catholics" with the "consensus of the stubborn" they seem perfectly willing to risk, thereby, sapping the resolve of those who aspire to live by higher standards.

I believe people ought to be given all of the leeway and benefit of the doubt — and shown all of the compassion — that

can legitimately be extended to them, in the difficult task of working out their salvation. I certainly fail in living up to the ideals I profess as often as anyone else; maybe more often. So I can use the leeway myself.

But I would rather confess my weakness, and pray that someday I might be given the grace not to fail, rather than expect or demand that the Church define sin down to my current capacities. And I'm more than a little dismayed at the persistent and rather underhanded suggestion that those who do aspire to higher standards — who are not a part of the contemporary consensus, but who accept, say, all of *Humanae Vitae's* teachings — are the ones who are out of touch with the Holy Spirit. As though being in the minority were sufficient evidence of it.

As far as consensus — and being in the majority — is concerned, here's a point worth pondering: the American bishops, in their 1980 Statement of Capital Punishment, concede that most citizens — Catholic and non-Catholic alike — support the death penalty. "(N)or," they admit "is this position incompatible with Catholic tradition..."

Yet since 1974, when they first voiced official opposition to it, the bishops have continually tried to change the consensus of the faithful. Why? Why is it that when it comes to the death penalty, our clergy believe it is their task to "lead" the faithful; but, when it comes to artificial birth control, they believe it is their task to "listen to" the faithful?

... If the Spirit is with those who are Church today; then He has always been with those who were Church throughout the ages. Maybe it's time to bring ourselves back into syne with a moral understanding that Christians have traditionally held.

Michael L. DeLorme
Park Avenue, Rochester

Not all feminists disavow concept of 'father' while fighting patriarchy

To the editors:

Having read Maureen O'Neill's splendid letter in the December 2nd *Courier* and the three responses in the January 6th issue, I would like to make a few comments and pose one question.

With regard to whether Jesus' maleness disturbs Catholic feminists, I do not believe that all feminists think exactly alike. Those who cannot accept a male savior have already left the church. Many, like myself, love him as our Lord and Savior and brother. What we do not accept is patriarchal authoritarianism in Christianity. It is not an essential part of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

With regard to calling God Father, I agree with the favorable comments made on that subject in a wonderful book by

Fritjof Capra and David Steindal-Rast, *Belonging to the Universe*. These reflections gave me some new insights into the meaning of "father" in a faith context. It is as far away from patriarchy as one can get.

Of course there is magnificent ministry being done by persons who are not ordained. But the work of Mother Teresa and her order should not be used as a weapon against other women, as it so often is.

Finally, if the church is the Bride of Christ and our Mother, why are women forbidden to speak and teach in her name?

Thank you for printing many points of view in the *Courier*.

Sheryl B. Zabel
Lyndon Road, Fairport