

Catholic Courier

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

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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.

Violence demands action from all

To the editors:

It does not matter whether we live in a community where violence is on the rise or on the decline. It also does not matter whether our lives have been marred or not marred by the kind of inhuman violence which recently took the life of St. John Fisher College sophomore, Jennifer Koon.

What matters is this. The United States, with all of its wealth, with all of its colleges and universities, with all of its extraordinary history of philanthropy, has a youth homicide rate which is 20 times as high as that which can be found in many European countries. In urban areas, one in every five of our high school students is said to possess a gun.

In relation to violence, therefore, our personal histories and the immediate outlook in our respective communities really does not matter when, across the nation, our children are killing one another at a rate that establishes us as a tragically inept society in relation to youth violence.

What can life possibly be like for students in our crime-ridden inner cities? What kind of childhood or youth is it possible to have in an environment where another student, who doesn't like you, might kill you because of it? That is one of the reasons that young people now give for killing one another: "I didn't like him."

This civil crisis demands the attention of all of us. The reason that it does is because, ultimately, the primary cause of this violence is lack of ... competent care-

giving love in the lives of the individuals who have become violent. More than anything else, it is the love-deprivation to which individuals are subjected in infancy, childhood and youth that causes them eventually to resort to violence. Love-deprivation has this terrible impact because it arrests the development of human beings before they have the personality growth and spiritual strength to resist.

This love-deprivation, we feel, has been an epidemic for quite some time because it has become so increasingly difficult in American society to keep families functioning and intact. Being a parent and keeping a family together has become the most difficult and challenging job that any citizen can have ... (Moreover), the mass media (are) constantly exposing our children to what is often the seamiest and most violent side of American life. Our children, therefore, are being brought up in an environment deficient in what they need — the companionship, love and acceptance of a functioning family and a community which teaches them how to be full human beings and good citizens ...

... Catholics must confront this national problem and they need only ask one question when they do: what would Christ have done in this situation? All of us have different answers to that question. We answer it according to the amount of grace with which we have to work. Our actions will take many different forms.

At Camp Good Days and at St. John Fisher, many of us have decided to set aside St. Valentine's Day as a day to protest violence — as a day on which each of us, as an individual, is going to commit him- or herself to a course of action. Some of us will fast the entire day in order to focus ourselves spiritually on the task of creating a society in which violence is no longer fashionable. Others will hold or attend religious services. Others will contact charitable organizations with volunteer opportunities which are relevant to this cause. Others will do an act of kindness, attempt to contact an old friend to discuss the situation or simply say a prayer.

We invite you to do the same or, whatever you can do, to do something, out of love. Love is the key. The love that our children and young people have been denied is the love which we must start to supply. Love is ultimately the only thing that is going to curtail the violence that is threatening the quality of all of our lives.

While we can never be certain what Christ actually would have done, we can be assured of this: He would have done something, and He would have done it out of love.

Father Paul English,
St. John Fisher Campus Ministry
Gary Mervis, founder & chairman,
Camp Good Days and Special Times
EDITORS' NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with space limitations.

Priest replies to challenge

To the editors:

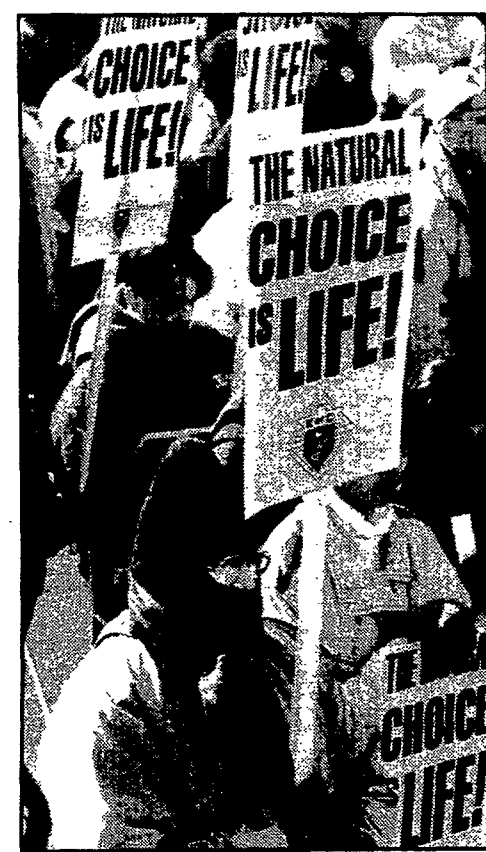
Mr. Michael Gallagher's letter in the Jan. 20 *Catholic Courier* ("Challenging absolute truths does disservice to church and its people") challenges me to "completely, accurately, and fairly present the truths that (Christ's) Church teaches ... so that the laity can fully embrace the truth and properly form their own consciences." I am glad to do so. The following is a complete, accurate, and fair summary of the Church's teachings about conscience:

- 1) Conscience is the ultimate subjective norm of morality; a truly moral response is always a response of a person.
- 2) There is always the obligation to have my conscience rightly formed, i.e., shaped and conformed to the world of objective reality as much as is psychologically and physiologically possible.
- 3) Once conscience is formed, the individual cannot refuse to obey it.
- 4) Conscience does not create the truth.
- 5) Conscience is not infallible.
- 6) Conscience can never give us perfect and mathematical certitude about the morality of our actions.
- 7) Even though the ultimate decision of one's conscience may be wrong, a person who makes that decision in good faith cannot be considered to be malicious.

Mr. Gallagher also accuses me of denying that there are absolute truths. I know of one: God is love. All else is relative. Thus,

- 1) The Magisterium is more or less correct, depending on circumstances.
- 2) The Catholic Church is more or less the one true Church, depending on circumstances.
- 3) Mr. Gallagher is more or less a conservative Catholic, depending on circumstances.
- 4) Father Collins is more or less a liberal Catholic, depending on circumstances.
- 5) There is room for both of us in the Catholic Church.

Rev. Robert L. Collins
St. Thomas More Church, Rochester



File photo

Found march 'exhilarating'

To the editors:

How exhilarating, how exciting to have so many youth attend the "March for Life" in Washington, D.C. this year!

Their presence reveals how deeply they care what happens to unborn babies.

Approximately 25 youths were aboard two buses; Cluster Parish St. Anne's, Palmyra/St. Gregory's, Marion; St. Michael's, Newark; and St. Mary's, Waterloo.

Undaunted by cold temperatures, all exhibited much enthusiasm on the mile and 1/2 at least trek up Constitution Avenue, past the Supreme Court Building.

God gave us a beautiful day — a blue sky, some puffy white clouds despite the cold and warm hearts to protest abortion — the scourge of our land.

Rena B. Camblin
Meadow Drive
Palmyra

Logic seems tailored to fit views

To the editors:

Gene Charles writes beautifully (*Courier*, Jan. 13: "Church nears end of 'dim past'") of his concern regarding Maureen O'Neill's openness to the ordination of women in our beloved Church. He obviously has studied deeply, and like other ardent Catholics has an absolute conviction. After all, we are members of the one true Church whose Founder said "I am the Truth." So if we dig deeply into the Scriptures, and pray sincerely, we can pinpoint the truth when needed.

However, depending heavily on logical argument, he and others too, sometimes tailor their logic to fit their absolute conviction. In this case Mr. Charles details the common elements in the three original banquets that prefigured our Mass. Of his 12 elements, the very first two are flawed. #1 was "an Anointed male to represent Deity." #2 was "uncircumcised or ineligible representatives non participant." The "Anointed male" he takes literally. Therefore a priest must

be male. But #2, "un-circumcised" he qualifies as "ineligible representatives." To be consistent either we should now be requiring circumcision as a qualification for priesthood, or we should be allowed to open "Anointed male" to interpretation, perhaps as "Anointed spiritual leader" — gender not relevant.

Other of Mr. Charles' 12 points might also bear study, e.g. the #9 "victim wholly consumed." We have long ago disregarded that practice, and are in fact increasing our interest in the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and in the practice of Perpetual Adoration. Should we be? Did Christ intend His Sacrament for consuming only? Are we, should we be, truly in tune with the early church attitudes?

It all makes me think of the words of a wise man of God: "Only with God is truth a noun. For the rest of us it is a verb ongoing."

Josephine Lavin
West Street
Geneva