

# 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 letter 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.

## Naive to insist on total nonviolence

### To the editors:

Mark Scibilia-Carver, in his letter criticizing the Pope for asking for intervention in the Bosnian crisis (*Catholic Courier*, Feb. 17: "Is pope condoning violence?"), demonstrated naivete and expressed a reductionist interpretation of the Gospel. In the history of the Church, there has always been the temptation to reduce Jesus' message to a single principle, such as poverty, celibacy, toleration, etc., a tendency which the Church has always combatted. Mr. Scibilia-Carver attempts to reduce the Gospel to the principle of nonviolence, and excoriates the Pope for failing, in his view, to adhere to this principle.

Jesus did indeed teach His followers the principle of nonretaliation, and indeed nonresistance, in the face of personal persecution. Furthermore, He taught that His kingdom would not be established by physical force, or, impliedly by primarily political means, when He told Peter to "put away his sword," a teaching which the Church has not always followed in the past. However, it is a distortion to claim that Jesus taught nonviolence in all circumstances, by any person or institution. Jesus himself used physical force on at least one occasion, in expelling the money-changers from the Temple (Mark 11). On one occasion, He advised his disciples to carry swords (Luke 36), and some of His parables speak of righteous kings executing rebellious subjects (e.g. Luke 19:11-27). St. Paul later recognized the legitimate use of force by the government in affirming that the authorities "do not bear the sword in vain."

Some Christians may be called to practice total nonviolence, and there are situations where nonviolent resistance is the best tactic, e.g. civil rights demonstrations, but to insist on "non-violence" when innocent people are in



File photo  
Bosnian volunteers carry a wounded girl from a U.N. truck after arriving in Tuzla, north of Sarajevo.

danger of annihilation by an implacable enemy is incredibly naive and foolish. In such situations, St. Augustine rightly discerned that violence, while regrettable, may be justified and even necessary to prevent a greater evil. This is the "just war" theory that Mr. Scibilia-Carver dismisses so easily.

Violence, contrary to much contemporary thinking, is not the ultimate evil, but rather a symptom of a more fundamental disorder: lives and societies out of harmony with God (James 4:14). To focus on eliminating violence is akin to treating a person seriously ill with pneumonia only by trying to reduce their fever; it may indeed be necessary to reduce the fever, but sooner or later the underlying illness must be dealt with.

Mr. Scibilia-Carver's criticism of the Pope is arrogant and presumptuous. I venture to say that John Paul, having fought with the Polish resistance against the Nazis, is in a better position to gauge the realities of the situation in Bosnia. When Mr. Scibilia-Carver has faced an enemy bent on his destruction, and has seen the disembodied limbs of his family and neighbors, then it will be his place to lecture the Pope and the people of Sarajevo on "nonviolence."

We are all called to look for and work for the coming of God's kingdom, when there will be no need for violence. To act as if it is already here is the height of foolishness.

Joseph B. Conder  
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## Nostalgia for '50s Catholicism very real

### To the editors:

Father McBrien opines that "in some cases, the nostalgia (for the 1950s church) is fabricated" (*Catholic Courier*, Feb. 24: "1950s Catholicism had ups, downs"). Not so for one of a number of so called "less educated" adults who experienced the Church throughout the decade of the 50s. Nostalgia is real and poignant.

Father McBrien would have us believe that the post Vatican II changes have released us from authoritarianism, stagnation and burdensome rules and regulations.

To support his contention, he cites a number of selective reforms — whose merits are debatable.

Discounted are the evident significant disruptive consequences of the "renewal" — the disunity and polarization; the widespread dissension; the loss of rever-

ence, devotion and vertical worship of the Latin Mass; the clown and dancing girl liturgies; the demise of Catholic Universities; the undermining of authentic catechesis; the lack of belief in the Transubstantiation and Eucharistic presence; the loss of the sense of sin; the proliferation of heterodoxy; the repudiation of Papal authority; radical feminist advocacy; Gospel demythologization; assembly hall "church" architecture practically devoid of religious symbolism; Protestant influence in the Novus Ordo; fundamental option and the revival of consequentialism and proportionalism.

Pope Paul was not oblivious to the impending upheavals per his comments on "the smoke of Satan entering the Church."

The success/failure of any organizational changes must be viewed in the

light of the merits/debits which ensue — what was lost vs. what was gained; condition, status, stability and support prior vs. subsequent; and future prospects. Coincident with depriving later generations of a Catholic heritage to which they were traditionally and justly entitled, the negative aspects of the so called "spirit of Vatican II" foisted upon the laity far outweigh the limited benefits.

The "spirit" has evolved into a specter of a progression to disorder.

The elitism reflected in Father McBrien's column is aptly characterized by a quote of Rev. Richard John Neuhaus — "After all, what are intellectuals for, if not to explain that things are not what lesser mortals know them to be."

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## Ending published debate, priest promises prayer

### To the editors:

I am beginning to realize why our Lord grew so exasperated with the Scribes and Pharisees, the "Magisterium" of his day. He tried again and again to show them that they were interpreting the Law of Moses narrowly, self-righteously, pridefully. They closed their minds and hearts to him and saw in him only a threat to their interpretation of the Law. The sublime last discourse of our Lord in John 15-17 would have meant nothing to them. At the risk of a further flurry of livid letters, let me once more try to make myself clear.

I support and revere the Magisterium embodied in Pope John Paul II and Bishop Matthew H. Clark. Their teachings

are clear, challenging, uplifting, inspired. I have difficulty with the Magisterium which condemned Galileo, wrote the "Syllabus of Errors," condemned Modernism, silenced John Courtney Murray, Henri de Lubac, Teilhard de Chardin. I have difficulty with the Magisterium which removed Charles E. Curran's and Leonardo Boff's right to teach. I have difficulty with a Magisterium which has need of a Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

I have difficulty; I do not deny or despise. I have difficulty; I do not condemn or curse. I have difficulty; I struggle with some of the teachings of the Magisterium. I struggle because I know that the Church is not only one, holy, catholic,

and apostolic; the Church is also sinful, as am I.

I have enjoyed sharing my ideas and insights with the readers of the *Courier*. I have been energized by the debate they have engendered. But now I grow weary. I have to put more energy into the column which I write weekly for my parish bulletin. I invite those who wish to continue the debate to contact me directly at St. Thomas More Parish. I wish all my fellow correspondents well and promise to pray for them that they may have speedy relief from their rigidity.

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