

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.



Dialogue is way to understanding, respect

To the editors:

I am responding to Father Collins' (letter to the editor) in the October 13, 1994 *Catholic Courier* regarding dialogue with Planned Parenthood. He raises the point of dialogue when abortion is at issue. We do have an abortion war in the United States, with Planned Parenthood and the Catholic Church on opposite sides. This war, like any other, has generated violence of all sorts, including arson, assault and even murder. It has also caused rifts within families and communities.

I have experienced all these events as the Executive Director of Planned Parenthood. I am a stranger in a strange land — a Catholic in Planned Parenthood. While many Catholics work at and support Planned Parenthood, few of my colleagues feel welcome in the church. Many have left, and those who remain are marginalized.

Dialogue can be so healthy. Yet little occurs about the philosophies of Planned Parenthood and the Catholic Church. In my experience of faith, which is embedded more in doubt than in certainty, it requires compassion, understanding and humility. Those values have driven my work, where I have often seen the pain and the tragedy of failed parenting. Children as the victims of parents unwilling or incapable of providing love, as essential for life as food or

water.

What to do? The Planned Parenthood response is to educate and otherwise assist people in planning their families, helping them to prepare for the lifelong commitment to parenthood. Planned Parenthood and the Church come together on the end goal of healthy families built on committed parents. This convergence is overwhelmed by the passion in the question of when life begins. While I don't know the answer to that question, I do know the tragedy of unwanted, unloved children and I have felt

both the pain of and compassion for people who find themselves pregnant and know they cannot assume the lifelong commitment that they face.

Dialogue, not diatribe, is the path to understanding that faith and respect for life exists within both of these organizations. I applaud Father Collins for his courage for speaking his mind and motivating me to do the same.

Gregory Soehner, executive director
Planned Parenthood of Rochester
and the Genesee Valley
114 University Ave., Rochester

It's OK to go against grain

To the editors:

I was troubled and deeply saddened by Father Robert L. Collins' letter that appeared in the October 13 issue of the *Courier*. His letter seemed to convey the same message that many of the politicians are saying "I don't believe in abortion but others should have the right to choose." He even maligned an organization that is committed to restoring the right to life for the unborn infants and wishes that we would establish dialogue with an organization that is totally committed to sustaining abortion for all who demand it.

He clearly stated, "Operation Rescue goes against the American grain and simply will not be an effective means of deterring abortion." We should look back into our history and recall how Abraham Lincoln "Went against the American grain," in spite of Dred Scott Decision and popular choice. In more recent history, prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, many people vigorously "Went against

the American's grain" in order to establish equal right for all people. Finally we know of the greatest man that ever lived went against the grain of the people of His time. Jesus, indeed, was a thorn in the side of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The saints and martyrs, also, never seem to be in step with popular trend of their time. Though scorned and laughed at and even put to death, they stood for truth and justice.

Father Collins wishes us to show more "compassion, love and mercy toward women who have had abortions," and rightly so. However, what saddened me is that he did not offer a single word of sorrow or compassion for the million and a half infants that are condemned to a painful death by abortion, yearly. They are the true victims, without a choice, whose only crime was to exist. May we pray daily for those little victims to once again have the right to life.

Rita B. Sartori
West Clinton Street, Elmira

Priest showed great courage

To the editors:

Many congratulations to Father Robert L. Collins who wrote the (letter) entitled "Priest suggests dialogue with Planned Parenthood" in the Thursday October 13, 1994 issue of the *Catholic Courier*. I happened to pick up a complimentary copy of your Thursday October 13, 1994 publication, since our parish, Immaculate Conception was prominently featured in your newspaper that particular week.

Father Collins shows great courage when he says he thinks the Catholic Church needs to tone down its anti-abortion rhetoric and broadcast its compassion, love and mercy. Let us pray that his opinion is not merely a voice in the wilderness. I would be very interested too if you could tell me more about Father Albert Bartlett, whom Father Collins

mentions in his (letter).

I find it very ironic then, that alongside issues of your publication were copies of Brochure #4 from the Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities (which was) inserted into every bulletin at Immaculate Conception this past Sunday. After sifting through all this "anti-abortion rhetoric" put out by this group in Nebraska, I wonder how many of our parishioners ever made it to Father Collins' commentary in your paper.

Pat Dzur
Genung Circle
Ithaca

EDITORS' NOTE: Father Albert Bartlett, SJ, was rector at McQuaid Jesuit High School from 1966-1972. He can be reached at the Jesuit Community at Fordham University, 441 E. Fordham Road, Bronx, N.Y. 10458.