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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.

Accepting two views eviscerates the Gospel

To the editors:

Sister Patricia Schoelles wrote in her November 3 column ("Differing moral stances test ties that bind") that the church presently recognizes, at some — unstated — level of teaching authority, two moral positions on warfare. Having two rather than one morally valid position on an issue has meant a clear change in her understanding of church moral teaching.

Sister Schoelles counsels that this change "... requires that we find ways to be a community bound together in faith while holding different positions on moral issues." Apparently this anticipates a time when the Church will recognize multiple positions on other issues as well.

Since, thanks to warfare, we must now accept opposing stands on moral issues, Sister Schoelles goes on to suggest that by focusing on our unity in Jesus "... we will give ourselves new freedom to recognize the relative importance of other elements in our tradition." This takes the guts out of Jesus who, after all, was not so unitive in his own time. Jesus was often rejected and he warned that he would be the cause of dissension and conflict even in families.

In fact, what Sister Schoelles recognizes as "probably the central moral issue of the 20th century," is precisely the issue that produced a rejection of Jesus by his closest followers as they fled his arrest scene. Rather than start the expected holy war, which would logically have started with a violent response to his arrest, Jesus' passion gave example of the nonviolent love of enemies.

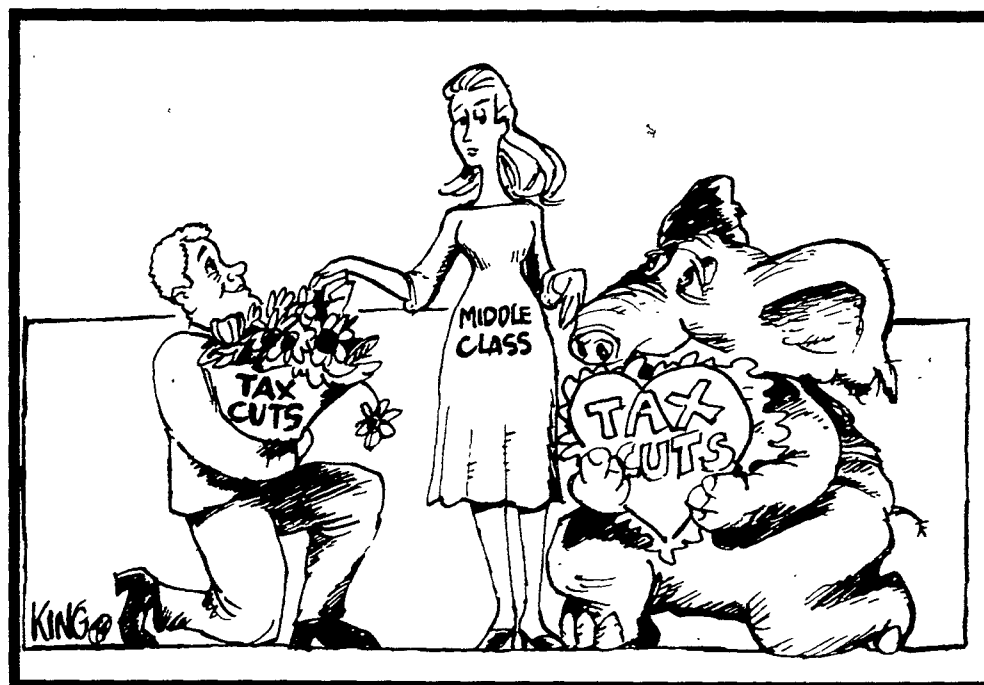
After the resurrection, it took the Holy Spirit to produce unity and a faithful following of Jesus, not "I'm OK, you're OK" morality. Changing our earliest exclusive practice of nonviolence has been Catholicism's greatest betrayal of Jesus. Two teachings on warfare should not be seen as progress or an opening to other issues.

I agree that moral discourse and questioning are good, necessary for each of us and likely to provide openings to God's grace. The trouble is we are not like the Quakers, a community where each has an equal voice and moral teaching is arrived at by consensus. The pope and bishops have a particular responsibility for moral teaching. We need and should expect that church teachings will be based on Jesus and clearly presented. Then it is up to us to form conscience and respond with all the grace we have. As a delegate, I believe this was the original thrust of the Synod's Catholic Moral Education priority in which Sister Schoelles subsequently played a key role.

A different "role" could have been played in the warfare issue. Because "just war" and Christian nonviolence are so opposed, any teaching that accepts both positions amounts to a non-teaching on this central Gospel issue. Meanwhile, the world witnesses Christian participation in war and militarism accelerating into the next millennium.

One might, instead, advocate for a re-examination of Scripture and Church history and the need for clear teaching in this area at the highest level of authority.

Mark Scibilia-Carver
Cold Springs Road
Trumansburg



Priest counters arguments

To the editors:

In his letter of November 17 ("Christians can't imply approval of abortion"), David Moore asserts that abortion is always wrong and that there is NO alternative once a woman is pregnant. I agree with his first assertion, but I retort that the wrongness can be diminished considerably by circumstances. There is a vast difference between a wealthy socialite seeking an abortion because a pregnancy would interfere with the skiing season and a poor woman seeking an abortion because her husband threatens violence or desertion if she doesn't get an abortion. I disagree with his second assertion because it offers no possibility of dialogue and discussion. I think that pro-life people could find common ground with Planned Parenthood in opposing abortion after the time when the developing child can live outside the womb (viability). I doubt whether any consensus is possible about the morality of abortion before viability. Of course, the advances in the medical science of Neonatology, saving the lives of ever younger developing children, may render the whole debate

moot.

Rita Sartori ("It's OK to go against grain") makes the analogy of the struggle against slavery to justify the tactics of Operation Rescue. I counter with the observation that the struggle against slavery has not yet been won. Physical slavery has been replaced by economic and social slavery. Racism is alive and well in America. Regrettably, sadly, abortion will always be with us. I see hope, however, in the continuing expansion of Birthright-type programs and the willingness of some bishops to listen to the voices of both "pro-life" and "pro-choice" women and to encourage dialogue between them.

Do I lack compassion for the aborted unborn child? I find it difficult to feel compassion for one who now sees God face to face. I feel compassion for all of us sinners struggling to remain hopeful in the face of evil, struggling to remain civil in a bedlam of angry shouting, struggling to remain loving in confronting an issue charged with violence and hate.

Father Robert L. Collins
East Avenue, Rochester

Why didn't Courier cover story?

To the editors:

The weekend of November 4-6, 1994, saw over 3,000 Roman Catholics gather in Chicago for the annual Call to Action conference, "We Are the Church: What if we meant what we said?" Edwina Gately spoke of Authentic Conversion and Sister Joan Chittister challenged us to be people of vision and tradition. There were moving liturgies, inspiring dramatizations, workshops on small faith communities and racism, seminars on cultural diversity in the church, and connecting the Eucharist with social justice — all helping us understand what it means to be "one, holy, catholic and apostolic."

Over 25 people from the Rochester diocese attended this faith-filled gathering. We are disappointed to find nothing about the Call to Action in the *Catholic*

Courier. But Mike Wallace and the "60 Minutes" crew were there, so we will hear the secular media's interpretation of the event.

"We all need to hear about the holy and hopeful events that remind us we are the church and call us to mean what we say. Wouldn't it be nice if we could read about them in the Catholic press?"

Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata
Linden Street
Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: A *Catholic News Service* article on the conference actually was scheduled for publication, but space limitations forced its elimination in favor of articles of broader appeal to our readership. Knowing in advance that 25 local people attended might have weighed in favor of publishing the story, however.

Didn't need results of scientific study to know that prayers really are effective

To the editors:

In regards to your Oct. 6, 1994 (cover story) "Scientific studies build evidence that prayer leads to better health:"

In late August 1993 I was diagnosed with a tumor the size of a tennis ball, with two types of cancer in the lung. It was too close to the heart for surgery. So for one year I was on the prayer list, both on the altar (three masses) and the Bulletins, every week — plus six months of chemotherapy and 21 radiation treatments — and a team of wonderful doc-

tors.

Now on August 1994 I was told by my doctor that my cancer was gone.

On Jan. 1, 1995 a Mass of Thanksgiving (was) said for all the prayers I have received. The Mass (was) at Holy Family Church at 8:45 a.m.

Praise Be to God Prayers do work.

Betty Boehm
Spar Circle, Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: We apologize for failing to publish this letter prior to the Mass of Thanksgiving.