

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.

Death penalty demeans all people

To the editors:

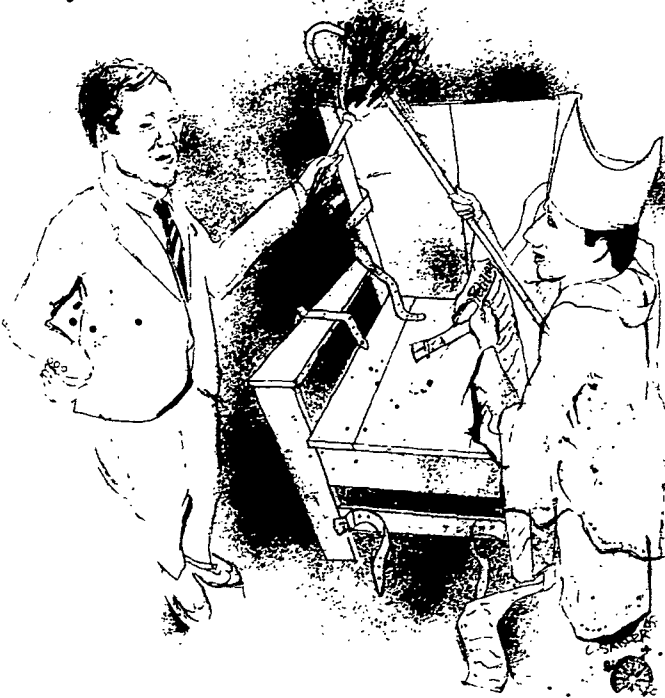
There are two levels that operate in our world. There is the law of cause and effect that we are all bound by in this world, and there is the law of grace which operates in the realm of the spiritual consciousness.

We have heard that we reap what we sow, but this is only a partial truth. We also reap what others have sown who have come before us and who live contemporaneously with us. Each of us is part of the a greater whole and we cannot so easily separate our individual activities from those of our fellow human beings.

Howard Truscott said in 1992 "Killing is killing whether committed by the individual or the state. There is no killing more cold, calculating, premeditated, and therefore inhuman than execution performed in the names of all the citizens of a state that empower that state to act thusly in their name and on their behalf. Some can say like Herod, 'I wash my hands of this business,' but killing is carried out in their name none the less."

There are some who would have us believe that imposing the death penalty is an example of the law of cause and effect, but it is not. The death penalty is not a natural consequence, but an example of human retribution which springs from fear. Kill or be killed is the logic that fuels the death penalty. This is the message that is sent to the succeeding generations when we impose the death penalty. Is this a world that we want to create to leave to our children and grandchildren?

We can hold people accountable with-



out killing them. We are a society clever enough, rich enough, skilled enough, but perhaps we are not spiritual enough. When we kill another human being even for his heinous crimes we are giving up on him. We are saying through our actions that there is no hope for redemption; there is no hope for exoneration; there is no hope for salvation. With the killing we have lost our faith and given up hope on the accused and our ability to help that person and to protect ourselves.

The state killing a killer for killing is like a parent spanking a child for hitting. The problem becomes the solution in the most misguided way.

Currently in New York State the public is scared and they want the death penalty restored in an attempt to create some semblance of public safety. Unfortunately we will reap what we sow and the homicide rates will rise as they have in other jurisdictions that have imposed the death penalty. The death penalty demeans not so much the executed as the executioners who by sanctioning the killing are no better than the killer who perpetrated the act of killing in the first place. We have sunk to his level. We have attempted to turn the

problem into a solution and only perpetuated the problem.

I hope that we, as a people of this great Empire State, not lose our faith and sink to new lows of killing in retribution. We need to hold people accountable through life imprisonment without parole and with restitution to the estate of the deceased. We need to pray for the redemption and salvation of the offender. It may not happen although sometimes it does and at the very least we have not lost hope in our humanity and our spiritual nature and given up on ourselves in the process.

**David G. Markham
Brockport**

GOP 'contract' threatens to heighten poor's plight

To the editors:

As part of their Contract with America, Newt Gingrich and the House Republican leadership are proposing to eliminate this nation's federal nutrition programs. Programs such as food stamps, school meals, summer meals, and WIC (Women, Infants and Children) would be combined into a single block grant to be given to the states. States would not be required to administer any of the existing programs. It is likely that some states would eliminate the food stamp program. States would also be able to write new restrictions for any of the programs.

Maximum first year funding for the block grant would be capped at least \$3.4 billion a year below current funding levels, a 9 percent cut. The block grant would not be an entitlement program; funding for all nutrition programs would be discretionary and would not grow to meet increased need during any given year, such as during a recession. Presently, food stamps and school meals are provided to all families which meet the income guidelines. If the Republican plan goes through, benefits would have to be reduced or waiting lists would have to be started.

The federal nutrition programs are an important safety net for low-income families and their children. In New York State, more than 2 million children ... participate in the school lunch program. Any money saved in

cutting nutrition programs will be lost later in increased health care costs and other social problems; six of the 10 leading causes of death in the U.S. are linked to malnutrition.

Eliminating successful programs that provide vital nutrition to families and children will only lead to increased hunger in this country. The Republican leadership has suggested that private charities can step in to

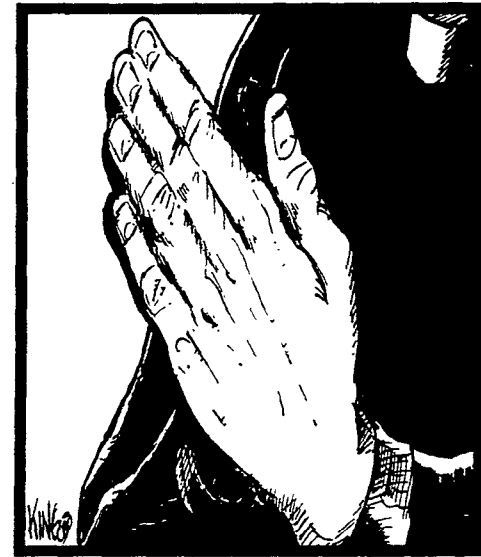
Eliminating successful programs that provide vital nutrition to families and children will only lead to increased hunger in this country.

meet any increased need for food and other services. Those of us on the front line, those who are already struggling to feed hungry Americans, know that we could not meet this increased demand. Emergency food programs are already helping to feed 2 million New Yorkers annually. These programs are already unable to keep up with the demand

and often must turn hungry people away, especially since both public and private donations of food and money have been decreasing.

Those receiving food assistance are already living in the depths of poverty. Further cuts in these programs will worsen their situation and deepen their suffering, which is something that this country can ill afford, nor allow. I hope that readers will contact their Congressional representatives to urge them to save our federal nutrition programs.

Debbie Catozzi
Associate Director
Hunger Action Network of New York State
Albany, N.Y.



Seek situations to teach others the love of God

To the editors:

Nothing makes me feel more sadness or sorrow for humanity than articles disrespectful of life including the Jan. 5 (letter) on abortion. It makes me wonder if our only purpose in this life is for recreation, to be a part of a society of empty "me-ism." If we have the choice to use the mechanics of sex without heart, have we cherished our humanity? We spend time defining our sexuality and our rights and our power with no mention of love. To me nothing is more degrading than to be considered just a body — a body to unite with another for momentary satisfaction for one or the other. Without love, without cherishing the meaning of being and creating, how can we continue to exist? We will become — if we haven't already — violent, unfeeling, mean people. People with no conscience. People who rather "kill" to correct a situation than teach God's love to prevent it.

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