

Catholic Courier

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

President

Bishop Matthew H. Clark

General Manager

Bishop Dennis W. Hickey

Editor/Asst. Gen. Mgr.

Karen M. Franz

Editorial Department**Managing Editor**

Richard A. Kiley

Senior Staff Writer

Lee Strong

Finger Lakes

Staff writers

Rob Cullivan

Genesee Valley

Mike Latona

Southern Tier

Staff Photographer

S. John Wilkin

Photo Intern

Wendy Longlade

Business Department**Circulation Manager**

Jeanne A. Morin

Office Manager

Mary DiPonzio

Receptionist

Lenna Hurley

Advertising Department**Advertising Director**

Ray Frey

**Assistant Ad Manager/
Classified Director**

Kathy Welsh

Sales Representative

Bernie Puglisi

Production Department**Graphics Manager**

Lorraine Hennessy

Graphic Artist

Kim Parks

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.

©1995, Rochester Catholic Press Association

School choice a matter of justice**To the editors:**

Today legislatures are working on agendas for our future and the financing of education appears to be a significant concern. It would seem appropriate to us that our elected officials should study carefully the concepts concerned with school choice. This is a concept which is not contrary to the principles of American democracy and it may be a vital solution to the problems plaguing our modern school system.

Democracy requires choice. In the name of equity, choice in education is mandated to be consistent with other areas where there is choice. After grade 12, there is a choice for higher education. Over \$900 million goes to private colleges and universities in the form of Pell grants. The children of upper class families have a choice in their schools because of their economic situation. Families have a choice in how to spend their government funds in all other areas of life except education. They can choose the doctor or hospital to receive Medicare funds and they can select the grocery store which will receive their food stamps. All other democratic industrial nations offer choice in education.

The real problem in schools today is the inability of public education to address morals due to societal diversity in values. Choice schools can have a singleness of vision that allows for moral education because attendance there is a choice and the school is selected on the basis of its philosophy. Choice will allow the development of the whole person; body and soul, mind and spirit.

In an age that cries for accountability in education, choice would provide marketplace accountability. In our present system accountability is sometimes shoved to the back burner. Parent choice would naturally lead to support of those



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
Jamaal Nathan, a seventh-grader at Siena Catholic Academy in Rochester's southeast quadrant, concentrates on his work during his homeroom period on a recent school day.

schools that are providing effective education for our democratic society. In addition the cost of public education has escalated while private schools have proven their cost effectiveness. In the long run, parental choice may decrease the taxpayers' cost of education.

For these reasons the Administrators of schools associated with the Sisters of Mercy who belong to the Regional Community of Rochester have developed the following Statement on Choice in Education.

We, as Administrators working in the educational ministry, rooted in our tradition of Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, are committed to serve the poor,

the sick and the uneducated.

We believe that education of the mind, body and spirit is essential to a full and dignified life.

We believe that all have a right to this integrated education.

We believe that the choice for the place and environment for education should be the right of all parents.

We believe that economic status should not be a deterrent to the kind of education available to all in a democratic society.

We believe that educational choice is a matter of justice.

Therefore, we as Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Administrators, believe in and will work for legislation that gives parental choice in education.

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter was signed by Sister Judith Heberle, RSM, of the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester Leadership Team and the principals - both lay and religious - of 11 diocesan schools operated by the Mercy sisters.

Protecting unborn eclipses other issues**To the editors:**

What concerned me as I read the letter sent to President Clinton from the St. Mary of Auburn's Confirmation class (*Catholic Courier*, Dec. 8: "Auburn class pens letter to Clinton; awaits reply") was an obvious omission: a strong moral concern for the ongoing slaughter of more than 1.5 million unborn children yearly in the abortion mills of our country.

While a brief mention was made of the group's wish to "uphold humane treatment for every living person and creature on the earth," far greater concern was displayed over environmental issues such as recycling, pollution, and a "clean and safer environment." In fact, the letter stated directly that "recycling and care of the earth should be a top priority."

I would like to think of Confirmation preparation as a valuable opportunity to try to help our youth to form strong moral conviction, to refine a young person's conception of right and wrong, and, perhaps, to inspire Confirmation candidates by pointing out the moral heroism of saints such as John Fisher, Thomas More and Joan of Arc.

In my opinion, however, perhaps many of our young people have been short-changed; instead of looking to saints of great heroic stature to point out the meaning of strong moral conviction, our educational system and culture have led them instead to groups such as the Sierra Club or a group such as "Greenspan" to influence conscience formation. Why is it that a Paul Ehrlich or a Carl Sagan have had more impact

on our youth than a Thomas More or a John Fisher or a Mother Teresa?

Could it be, also, that the emphasis in our diocese of a "Consistent Life Ethic," incorporating the environment, poverty, war, and the like along with abortion and euthanasia, has resulted in a diminishing of the importance of the all-important principle of the sacredness of human life from conception until natural death? Have we made abortion only a peripheral or secondary concern among our people?

Perhaps we need to re-educate our youth and Christian adults, pointing out that nothing is more morally compelling than the "silent screams" of our unborn children. Not even the environment.

**Jane E. Callahan
Elmira**

Language should not serve intellectual elite only**To the editors:**

The church needs to be careful that when it writes communications that it does not only address an intellectual elite. The legal approach to written English, or the approach often used by government agencies should have little place in the Church.

The recent insert in the Jan. 5 *Courier* showing the "Pastoral Plan" is a case in point. It is printed so that all Catholics may know and understand what the diocese will be emphasizing for the next few years. Yet, when you read the mes-

sage it becomes obvious that the language is not inclusive of those members of the diocese with education below that of senior college.

As an example note the introductory statement to Goal 3: "More than any other goal, the spectrum and strength of opinions on the role of women reflect the diversity of views existing within the church." Just what does that mean? From the same section what is meant by; "Action steps affirm ... women in general;" or "Action Steps are respectful of ecumenical and interreligious relation-

ships?"

The documents says that by 1996 inclusive language will be defined and guidelines be created. Hopefully this will mean more than replacing the word "he" by "she." We must be careful not to exclude a large percentage of Catholics by taking an overly intellectual approach to communication. Words, sacred images, and icons needs to be considered in the move to inclusivity.

**Gerard E. Muhl
Williston Road
Rochester**