

# 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.

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## Videos are alternative

### To the editors:

Thank you, *Catholic Courier*, for your excellent supplement on Parenting (Jan. 26). We were particularly interested in the article by Rob Cullivan on media literacy (page 4A). We agree with the experts cited that parents cannot "simply turn off the tube, or any other media source, as a means of dealing with commercial media's pervasive influence in their children's lives" (italics ours). We do not agree with their assumption that we therefore ought not to turn off the tube.

Certainly, media literacy is one of many skills we believe our children need to master before they leave the nest. But we do not need the mind-numbing, spirit-deadening filth that constitutes the bulk of commercial television programming piped directly into our home in order to teach our children to be media literate. Instead, we have chosen to use the money we would have spent on cable television to rent and buy videos. We also borrow from our church and public libraries. We use many of the same methods suggested in the article to promote media literacy — i.e., we set limits on time spent watching movies, we avoid shows with offensive or disturbing content, we discuss how we all feel about what we saw, and we get out the atlas or the encyclopedia whenever we feel it would be helpful.

But we go further than this. Rather than simply filtering and controlling network programming, we actively seek out programming that suits our interests and needs. For example, we will sometimes choose a topic of interest and, for several months, watch a lot of movies and/or documentaries about that topic...

With or without commercial television, teaching media literacy takes work. Far from feeling handicapped by the lack of commercial programming, we believe we actually work harder at and do a better job of promoting media literacy in our children because we don't have television. It sounds well and good to say "set limits on what your children watch," but the fact is that we have neither the time to read *TV Guide* every week nor the desire to play television police every blessed minute of the day. With videos, we can always stop the show to answer questions, look up information, or find something on the map, and we never have to GUESS how offensive or disturbing a program may be before we let our children watch it.

As long as the bulk of commercial television programming remains hostile to our Christian values, we will continue to spend our media dollars elsewhere. By saying "no" to commercial television, we believe we have taught our children the first and most important lesson in becoming media literate, which is this: we own the media; the media do not own us.

**David and Christine Bravo-Cullen  
Lee Road, Dryden**

*EDITORS' NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with space limitations.*

## Appreciated articles on teens and chastity

### To the editors:

Thank you for the articles in the Parenting supplement of the *Catholic Courier*, Jan. 26, on chastity. The article and pictures of Molly Kelly were very well done. Also the article "Parents are responsible for moral sex education" should be a help for many parents to become more involved with knowing exactly what their children are learning in school.

There are so many helpful materials — videos and booklets — available to teach chastity, parents should use them.

**Marian Buchheit  
Country Line Road, Webster**



## Has equal effort gone to eliminate abortion?

### To the editors:

We write in response to the Jan. 12 issue of the *Catholic Courier* article relating to the death penalty ("Deadly Revival"). New York Catholic bishops — as well as a broad coalition of religious, legal and civil rights groups are opposing the return of capital punishment. This is laudable — but we have a few questions to ask. Where was the Diocesan-wide petition campaign against abortion? Where were the packets "containing statements by Bishop Clark, Bishops of New York and the NCCB, Bulletin Materials, samples Homilies and petitions" opposing abortion?

When will the "Catholic Family Center, Greater Rochester Community of Churches and other groups join in a petition drive" to overturn *Roe vs. Wade*?

When will we have "Interfaith (including Catholic) Church services to pray" for an end to abortion?

When has, or when will the New York State Catholic Conference "prepare packets showing what happens" during an abortion, to be sent to the state's Bishops for distribution in parishes?

Bishop Clark has "called the people of our Diocese to a serious reflection on our Consistent Life Ethic priority and the

## Applauds effort on misconduct

### To the editors:

I am writing in response to the article written by Rob Cullivan about Father Robert J. Winterkorn. I am glad to see the Diocese of Rochester has taken steps to "weed out" one of its own, no matter how painful that must of been. To take the complaints of sexual abuse by parishioners seriously and to follow up on them shows that the church has changed its position from only a few short years ago. It is also nice to see that the church is paying for the treatment of the victims.

As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, I have been distant to the church recently as a result of past cover-ups of sexual abuse charges against priests. As I type this I hope these new steps are the rule rather than the exception.

To me the church is much better off admitting the problem publicly and taking steps to correct it. It looks to much like a cover up when outside media organizations break a story involving a priest and sexual abuse.

**Richard J. Kuehner  
Van Orden Street, Horseheads**

many serious questions raised by the death penalty debate." Life begins at conception. Abortion does not line up with "consistent life ethic."

Has the Diocesan Public Policy Committee never targeted the abortion issue for action, and prepared packets to be sent out to all parishes?

Father Bausch rightly acknowledged that many Catholics do not fully understand the Church's opposition to the death penalty. True! But many Catholics also do not fully understand the Church's opposition to abortion — and who is informing them?

Catholic teaching against abortion is VERY clear. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states "Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person — among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life" (#2270). Why is this not being taught from our pulpits?

According to research studies from 1900-1991 more than 400 people were erroneously convicted of capital crimes — 23 of those people later found innocent were executed. According to research studies from 1973-1995, 31 million babies have been aborted — all were innocent.

We are dealing with more than one issue here. When the New York Bishops, New York Catholic Conference, Diocesan Public Policy Committee and pastors put as much effort into fighting abortion as they do fighting the death penalty — perhaps we will be truly supporting a consistent life ethic.

**Shalom Prayer Group, Pittsford**

*EDITORS' NOTE: This letter was submitted by Ann and Tom Marchoff and also signed by: Helen Barnes, Barbara Leonard, Dorothea and Ed Lada, Rosemary Bilousky, Jerry Lou Raleigh, Nancy Fine, Mel Lewis, Ann DeNoon, Carol Duffy, and Joyce and George Albert.*

## Favors elimination of rule on celibacy

### To the editors:

Whenever reading an article on professional misconduct, for example disclosure regarding Father Winterkorn, I join loyal Catholics who subscribe to a 21st century objective of celibacy as an option. Celibacy as a choice might favorably impact behavior for the desired reduction in professional misconduct.

**Joseph P. Leahy  
State Road, Valois**