

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.

Ambiguity mars moral discourse on violence, war

To the editors:

Sister Pat Schoelles' (column of March 2) says moral theology is "... a living enterprise conducted in and for a living Church." How then does she or moral theology account for or address the level of Christian participation in death and violence in our world?

Apparently, with an acceptance of two opposed positions on warfare, though she still does not clarify at what level of teaching authority either position is taught. I believe neither one is officially taught. Perhaps it is only the U.S. Bishops pastoral, "The Challenge of Peace" she has in mind.

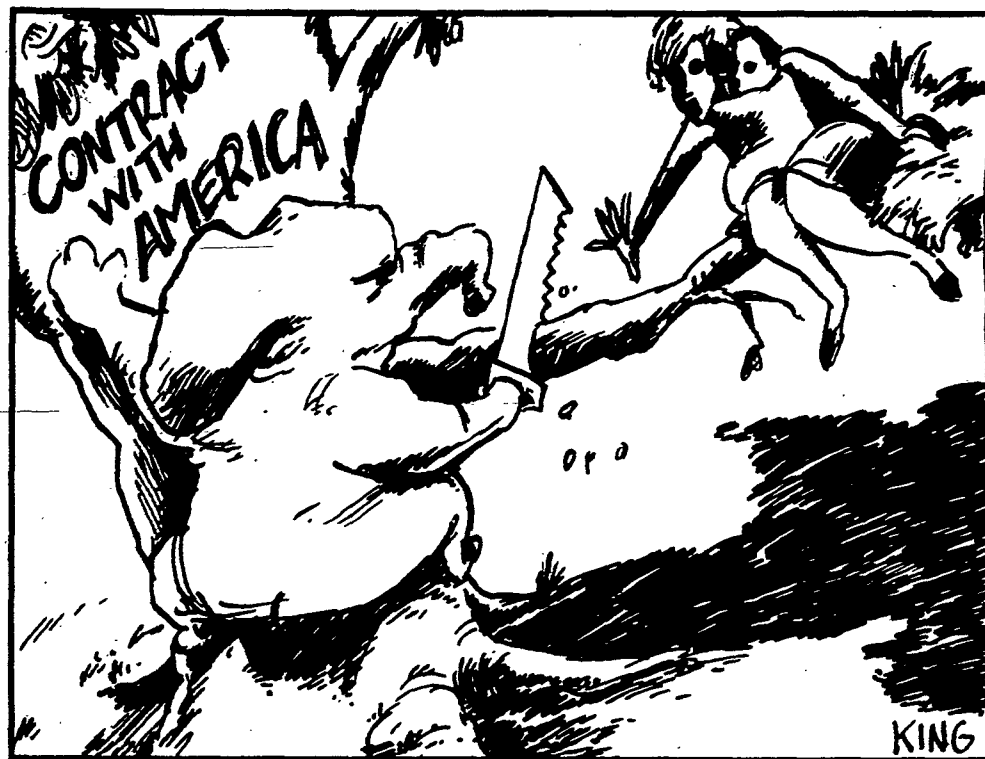
In fact, the March 2 column reminds me of how Cardinal Bernardin tried to explain the "structured ambiguity" of that Pastoral letter, which he acknowledged, to a laughing reporter. No matter how you structure ambiguity, it is still ambiguous! Various Hitlers and devils have had a field day with such teaching.

Sister Schoelles presents enough information to convince a non-Christian that Jesus and his followers adopted a radical nonviolence but she adds, "... the Gospels never report Jesus declaring that waging war is immoral, or telling the soldiers around him to leave the military life." Abortion would also fit in this category.

Consider that the soldiers around Jesus were enemy occupiers of His homeland. That He did not lead a group aiming to overthrow these enemies when he would well have done so is ample evidence of Jesus' position on violence. Of course we could not imagine Jesus joining the "first world" Roman army as a means to achieve peace and justice. Jesus is not ambiguous! He is just as relevant to our modern situation as He was to His own. The events of Holy Week make Jesus' nonviolence crystal clear. To adopt a just war position you must first make or assume Jesus to be irrelevant to the issue.

Some "adaptation and change" are OK but, should the moral theology of this column ever take hold, we will yet have just adultery and just abortion theories in our Church. Clever people have made better rationalizations for these evils than Augustine or Thomas Aquinas made for war. Moral theology, above all, will ask the hardest questions. Have we rejected and betrayed Jesus for 1,700 years by not providing a clear teaching at the highest level of authority on the central Gospel issue of violence? I humbly suggest that some answers are found to this question no one wants to ask in three books: James Douglas' "The Non-violent Cross," John Howard Yoder's "The Politics of Jesus" and Father Richard McSorley's "New Testament Basis of Peacemaking."

Mark Scibilia-Carver
Trumansburg



'Demonizing' poor is wrong

To the editors:

With the fall of communism, the end of the cold war, and the loss of an external enemy, we have now begun to turn on and demonize each other. We are scapegoating the poor, the children, the elderly, the disabled, and the immigrant. The hate mongers and politicians seeking political power will have us believe that it is these folks who are cheating us of our happiness, our fulfillment, our due.

Let us not forget that we are the richest society that ever existed on earth. We can send people to the moon and spend \$100 billion on the (Savings and Loan) bailout and yet the politicians tell us that we cannot afford to help indigent welfare mothers raise their children.

We would rather pay to incarcerate a man in Attica for \$30,000 per year than send him to college. We continue to build more prisons and yet we are cutting back on our colleges and tuition assistance. Our society is using punitive methods to rectify its social problems rather than investing money in our society's future by nurturing, supporting, and assisting people in their growth and development. We can pay today to help our children grow into productive citi-

zens, or abandon and ignore them and then pay for damage control later.

This talk of orphanages, and denying people assistance after two years, and failing to care for indigent children is social and emotional infanticide. Can we as a society just refuse to nurture the next generation because we have demonized their parents?

It is time for a new moral vision which calls for us to be inclusive and not exclusive, and calls for us to share and not greedily hoard what is mine, that views all of God's children as worthy of our love and care.

Remember Jesus' comment that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven.

Let's speak up for our brothers and sisters and our sons and daughters that our current politicians want to disenfranchise from our society. They are not the enemy, they are part of our human family and as such they deserve our understanding and support. We can make a better world, and it begins with us. Jesus taught us to pray "...on earth as it is in heaven." We have a way to go.

David G. Markham
Ridge Road, Brockport

Don't participate in circus exploitation

To the editors:

This is to all parents who are concerned about bringing up their children as respectful, nonviolent, and responsible adults.

Supposedly, we are aware of the problems around us. Yet, at the same time, we stand in line to buy tickets for cheap entertainment and watch in awe the wonderful feats of circus animals. Colorful pageantry disguises the fact that they are

forced to perform unnatural, and often painful, acts that some people call entertainment.

Behind the cheery, family-fun facade often lies the reality of animals routinely tormented with whips, electric prods, and beatings. Animals have their front paws burned to force them onto their hind legs, thus standing up for you. Some animals are drugged to make them "manageable." The tricks that animals are forced to perform are physically uncomfortable and unnatural. A bear doesn't wake up in the morning and decide that he wants to dance on his hind legs in a tutu. These superficial acts teach children nothing about how animals behave under natural circumstances.

The use of animals in entertainment has been restricted or banned in countries such as Sweden and Denmark. By refusing to patronize circuses, you can show those who exploit animals that cruelty ISN'T entertaining. Now that we've learned so much about the natural world and the needs of animals, animal circuses seem sad and outdated. Animal circuses teach children that it is OK to dominate, whip, chain, and beat another living being. The big top is no home for animals. Alternatives are available. This insensitivity is NOT what most parents want their children to learn!

Marcia B. Napolitano
Schlegel Road
Webster

Withdraw invitation to 'dissident' priest

To the editors:

Jesuit theologian Father Richard McCormick has been selected by the Diocese of Rochester to lead this year's convocation of priests. What makes this particular choice noteworthy was illustrated during debate over the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster for U.S. Surgeon General. Father McCormick, having served with Dr. Foster on an ethics advisory board during the 1970s, has been questioned recently about transcripts from those board meetings in which Dr. Foster admits to having performed several hundred abortions.

Responding to the inquiries, Father McCormick replied that "the fact that he has performed abortions should be no reason to sink the President's nomination for U.S. Surgeon General." In its report of this comment, *Our Sunday Visitor*

(Feb. 26, 1995) identifies Father McCormick as "a critic of Church teaching on birth control and abortion."

The selection of a "critic of Church teaching" to lead the priests' convocation verifies the ongoing infatuation with dissent in the Diocese of Rochester. Is this how we nurture the priesthood, or build up the Body of Christ? The invitation to Father McCormick is ill-conceived, and ought to be withdrawn.

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EDITORS' NOTE: Our Feb. 16 edition carried a front-page *Catholic News Service* article ("Proposed surgeon general clashed with priest on ethics"), showing that *Father McCormick and Dr. Foster disagreed substantially during 1978 hearings of the Ethics Advisory Board.*