

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.

Columnist
gives aid
to anti-life
campaigns

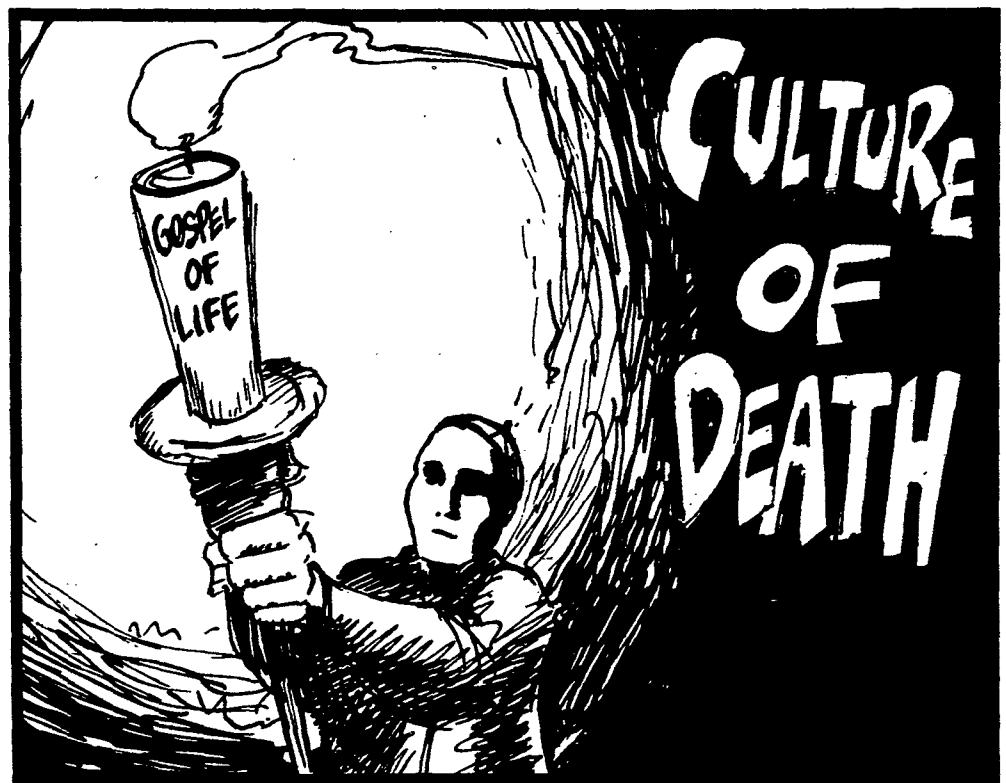
To the editors:

The new encyclical "The Gospel of Life" has generated much interest concerning the sanctity of all life and has inspired many to fight those ideas which devalue human beings.

Father McBrien expresses difficulty believing human personhood begins at conception citing that development of twins occurs six to 10 days after conception. He also implies anencephalic babies might not be human and thus can be aborted.

Human dignity is either bestowed by others according to usefulness and function or it is given by God who loves us simply because we are created in his image and likeness. A human zygote, formed by the union of sperm and egg cannot be viewed as a human who can divide into twins. It appears there is at least one individual present at conception and possibly more. Geneticist Jerome Lejeune has indicated human personhood is present at conception but we do not yet have the technical capacity to discern how many individuals are present at that point as this relates to multiple births.

Jesus became like us in all ways but sin. He like us was a zygote and experienced nine months of fetal development. His taking on our entire human nature, both pre birth and post birth gives our



fetal development full human dignity. It is hard to imagine Jesus, six to 10 days after conception as a non person.

Father McBrien also describes anencephalic babies as having no brain. This is inaccurate because they possess all human brain components except most of the cerebral cortex and it is thought they lost this due to a stroke, four to eight weeks after conception. It is unlikely God would confer human personhood on someone and then withdraw it because of physical misfortunes.

Although many anencephalic babies die at birth, some live past age 7 and are able to develop human emotions. It would be tragic to designate these unfortunate humans as non persons and justify their killing through abortion. We physicians do not know beforehand who will die at birth and who will live, just as

we often cannot predict who will recover from illness or how long someone with cancer will live.

In justifying the killing of anencephalic babies with no "apparent usefulness," Father McBrien unknowingly gives support to those who favor euthanasia. His reasoning could be threatening to the elderly and those who are near death because they have also lost much of their usefulness. Let us instead be inspired by the actions of St. John the Baptist who as a six month old fetus leaped in the womb of his mother Elizabeth when he experienced the presence of Our Lord, who at that time was probably a six or 10 day old fetus. Let us work for the sanctity of all human life.

Michael R. Aiello, M.D.

President

The Catholic Physicians Guild

Disagrees with interpretation of phrase

To the editors:

It is not my intention to lock horns with Patricia Schoelles, SSJ, with whom I go back a long way. However, my conscience will not allow me to ignore a statement which she made in her May 18 column concerning the value she places on church teaching in the formation of conscience. I believe her thoughts give new meaning to conscience-forming and could well be the source of confusion to many.

In quoting a passage from "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," Sister Schoelles takes the time to make some "minor editing." Evidently, her point in using the quote, aside from changing it to meet the needs of those who insist on "inclusive language," was to show the importance of conscience in making moral decisions.

Further on, she quotes from the "Dec-

laration on Religious Liberty," a document from the Second Vatican Council, which says, "In the formation of their consciences, the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the church." Sister Schoelles explains that this passage originally read, "The Christian faithful ought to form their consciences according to the teaching of the church." She interprets this change in language as a "less restrictive meaning," and thus "our obligation to follow the teaching of the church does not make it the exclusive basis of moral judgment."

I disagree. I believe that the words, "to attend to" were deliberately placed in the statement to make it more restrictive. If one looks up the word "attend," one will find that it is from the Latin word, "attendere," which means, "to stretch toward," whereas the words "according to"

mean "in agreement with." To my way of thinking, to "stretch toward" something has more force than does "in agreement with." When you stretch, you are reaching out forcefully.

When Sister says that the church insists upon being our teacher, she is right. Thus, our consciences must be guided by its teachings, not only because Christ entrusted that mission to the church, but also because those teachings will enlighten our consciences at those times when we are placed in situations which will require moral judgments on our part. However, when she notes that the church is not our "moral parent," I believe she is wrong, because tradition has always insisted that the church is "Holy Mother Church." She was not called that for nothing. Sorry, Pat.

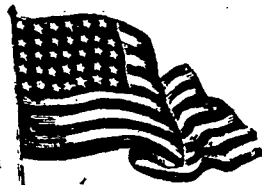
George A. Goodwin Jr.

Laredo Drive, Rochester

Church should not fear appearance of patriotism

To the editors:

Today I was appalled to find out that we could no longer have the American Flag in the front of Catholic Churches in the United States. For those not familiar with



Catholic Churches this means in front of the congregation. This has been for some time now I was told. The only reason I became aware of this fact was because I had noticed both the American Flag and the Papal Flag in the corners of the back entrance of St. Patrick's Church in Corning. I asked that due to today (April 23) being a day of national mourning for those killed in Oklahoma

City they be brought to the front of the church. The response from one individual was as if I had committed a sin, while the other person was quite diplomatic about it. I was told that the church could not give the appearance of being patriotic.

Not only have the courts gone too far in the separation of church and state it appears as if the Church has also. What are the ramifications of this? Does this also mean that on Scout Sunday Boy Scouts can no longer carry in their flags for fear of being patriotic in the church? Can we no longer cover the casket of United States-service personnel, police officers or firemen with the American Flag in Catholic Churches? Does this mean "God Bless America," "America the Beautiful," "God of Our Fathers," and the National Anthem can no longer

be sung in church for fear of being patriotic in church?

Of all the restrictions handed down, why is this one followed? Up until recently, girls were restricted from serving as altar boys by Paper Order. Yet American Catholic Churches ignored this order. Studies show that many American Catholics ignore the Church's stand on contraceptives and abortion. But this is not acted or commented on. What is the fear-the Church has in placing the flag of our country along with the flag of our church in the front of the congregation? Other American Churches are proud to display the flag of their country all too often. Why can't we have one symbol of our country in the Catholic Church?

Daniel Kane

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