

OPINIONS

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.

Renouncing war is first step to peace

To the editors:

The tragedy of Bosnia is the Kingdom of God commands less allegiance than the ethnic backgrounds of Christians who have hated each other for centuries.

In this century, Croats sided with the Nazis and operated extermination camps for Serbs. In recent years, the Serbs have been the most powerful aggressors and practiced ethnic "cleansing" themselves. They have been senselessly brutal in their siege of Sarajevo where their extremists cannot stand Croats, Serbs and Muslims living together in relative harmony. On the other hand, there have been reports that Croatian atrocities in their attack on Mostar were greater, if anything, than Serb atrocities in Sarajevo.

Pope John Paul II has, for several years, volunteered the philosophical support of "just" war theory for such actions as the recent NATO attacks on Serb targets near Sarajevo. In the article "Vatican paper terms air raids a warning," (*Catholic Courier*, Sept. 7) he says the attacks are aimed at "restoring hope to

the martyred people of the region (and ... cannot and should not be considered an act of war against one party." Hope? Yet the world sees the scandal of NATO Christians killing Christians who are killing Christians.

Alas, hope has also been restored to the Croatian army by NATO and \$1 billion in weapons purchases. Since attacks began August 30, almost all the territory seized by the Serbs has been retaken with a new wave of atrocities. Should Croats be hopeful when the Pope does or does not urge world powers to respond with warnings to their atrocities?

Religiously justified violence is a root cause of this conflict, not a solution! The root goes back to the beginning of "just" war and Constantine who set the stage for the split between Catholic and Orthodox. Following this root, the Pope believes that when it gets down to it — and it always does — force must be met with force.

St. Peter was once confused, embarrassed and terrified by Jesus' nonviolence. He would have fought in the

Garden and beyond but fled when Jesus refused his sword. Had Jesus allowed a violent defense and survived, He could have been with His disciples longer. The Gospel would then be unrecognizable and the Eucharist could not have fed Christians for a journey out of slavery to violent means that lasted until Constantine. St. Cyprian, a bishop, wrote in the Third Century, "Adultery, deceit and the taking of life are mortal sins ... after partaking of the Eucharist, the hand is not stained with blood and with the sword!"

Placing hope in the mercenary force of centralized world authorities like NATO or the U.N. is an illusion like Jesus' third temptation. Hoping in Jesus has infinitely more in common with Gandhi's "truth force." The first step to peace between Catholic and Orthodox is to renounce "just" war and teach clearly Jesus' nonviolent truth. Otherwise, there may not be much blood left to spill by the Third Millennium and surely there could be no Jubilee Year.

Mark Scibilia Carver
Cold Springs Road, Trumansburg



File photo
Pope John Paul II blessed the crowd at the end of the Mass he celebrated Oct. 6 at Aqueduct Raceway in Queens, N.Y.

Violent model for ending warfare undercuts pope's efforts for peace

To the editors:

We have a dear Pope with such a great, warm, Polish heart who is tortured by the situation in the Balkans. He is extremely sensitive to the suffering on all sides and it is a great scandal that Christians have savaged each other as well as the Muslims for so long. John Paul II desperately wants the violence to end. All his training in the Church and personal experience have taught him that "just" war is the bottom line answer — violent force must be met with violent force. One trap here is that a person must side with one Christian group or the other.

All but forgotten is the tradition of the Church from the first three centuries. It was once the nonviolent love of enemies that especially marked Jesus' followers. Foolishness to those around them, it was, nevertheless, the power and wisdom of God; the example left and commanded by Jesus.

It is acceptance of a just war theory not found in Jesus, the Gospel or the early Church that keeps the power and wisdom of God from showing forth in Christianity today. The imagination and creativity of nonviolence is little encouraged and violent extremists are able to have their way. Of course, since even those most inclined to peace believe that violence is the only effective force when it gets down to it!

It is a daunting task to even list war after Christian war since Emperor Constantine. The un-Christlike violence brought to the world by Christians is staggering to consider. Today, "just" war makes a mockery of all our Consistent Life Ethic hopes. The pastoral task of undoing 1,700 years of "just" war is not easily assumed even by those bishops with the courage to look at the reality of our history. The Church, as a body, does not seem to have a model for confession, repentance, penance and reconciliation that Yom Kippur offers Judaism.

That is why we, a small group of Catholic friends, gathered at the Pastoral Center on October 4 to spend time in prayer and fasting. We prayed that the spiritual energy available with the coincidence of Yom Kippur, the Feast of St. Francis and the Pope's visit to the U.S. would create a new moment of grace in which our teachers might see that a clear proclamation of the prophetic nonviolence of Jesus is their true and pastoral task in the midst of the nations.

**Jan Bezila; Judy Curtin;
Paul F. English, CSB; John W.
Honeck; Rosemary Ingraham;
Tom Malthaner; John McCarthy;
Harry Murray; Vivian Rightmyer;
and Marianne Simmons
Pax Christi Rochester**

Trips have failed to inform pope about problems in U.S. church

To the editors:

The present pope is a very holy man yet a skilled diplomat who thoroughly understands many cultures. He seems, however, to have little real knowledge or understanding of U.S. Catholicism.

His visits here are largely media events which don't give him a clue as to what's going on in the nation's pews.

We have many serious problems here: clergy who ignore his directives; a declining respect for the Eucharist; no two churches with the same liturgical format; homilies that are bland, with the required Scripture base not made relevant to contemporary situations; and most important, a dire and growing shortage of priests which could be alleviated by the priestly ordination of married already ordained deacons.

Instead of all the hoopla of public visits limited to one small area of the country and directly affecting only a handful, the pope might better stay in Rome and address the problems which directly affect all U.S. Catholics. His worldwide stature as an outstanding religious leader would still be maintained.

Marcella S. Ennis
Bonesteel Street, Rochester

Pope's visit showed solidarity of church despite sensational depiction by media

To the editors:

When one reads the papers and listens to the media they are given the impression that the American Catholic Church is so fragmented that it is ready for the proverbial handbasket. Then Pope John Paul II comes to America and what we see is a magnificent picture of solidarity far different than the media portrays. This is an expression of truth where our national sensationalistic media preach a "pragmatic" gospel attuned to the fringe area Catholics and malcontented others.

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