

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 letter writers' opinions.

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, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for verification purposes.

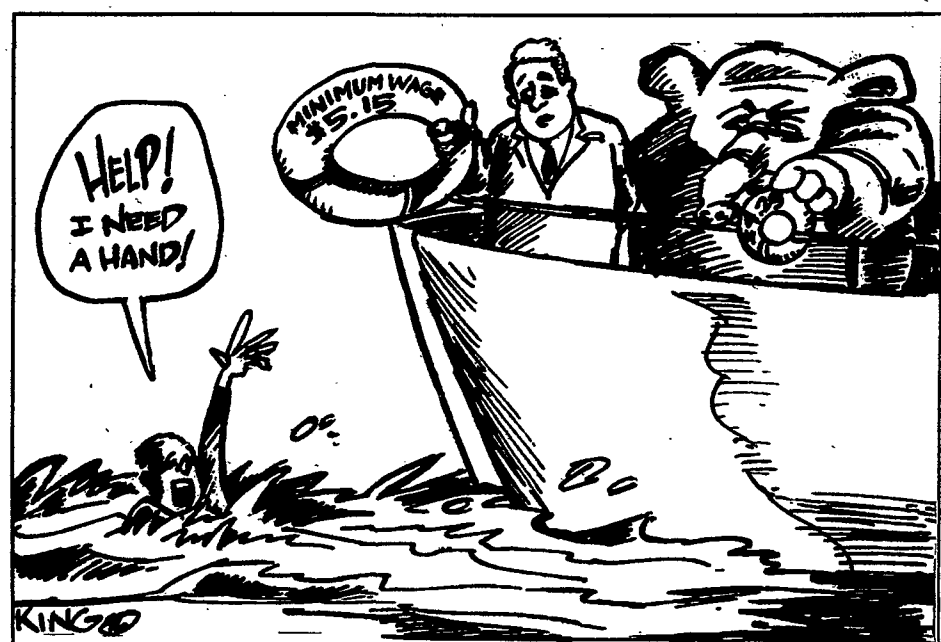
Story left questions on policy for abuse

To the editors:

Your recent article (*Catholic Courier*, April 18: "Diocese expands policy to provide protection") regarding diocesan policy on sexual misconduct, harassment, and exploitation has perhaps added more confusion than clarification. The article states, "local laws vary, but the law applicable in the diocese doesn't require diocesan authorities to report suspected child abuse by a priest." What local laws are you referring, city, state, or church? State law mandates that suspected abuse, neglect or maltreatment by a family member be reported to the N.Y. State Child Abuse Hotline. This includes allegations of intrafamilial sexual abuse. Sexual misconduct toward children by other than family members is considered extrafamilial sexual abuse. This can and should be reported to local authorities for further investigation.

State law "requires certain child care providers to report suspected abuse." This can be misleading. Mandated reporters include school personnel, social workers, medical personnel, psychologists, and psychiatrists.

It would be helpful to know what level of expertise is being brought to address these issues by the parish personnel and the Advisory Board. Not all psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and school personnel are recognized as having expertise in these areas. It is a highly



specialized field which requires ongoing education, supervision, and experience in working with victims, perpetrators, and family members.

Why does training have to take three years? The diocese has consistently demonstrated a capability of bringing us together regionally and locally through various workshops, i.e. Synod, Leadership Day, conferences. Why not use this format to train personnel and volunteers? We hear about collaboration, there are recognized experts in the field of sexual abuse throughout the diocese and in the state. Why not enlist their assistance? Basic information on sexual abuse and all it encompasses is not based on any religious denomination. These experts can be invaluable. Why "reinvent the wheel?" Will the Pastoral Center utilize appropriate staff to help administration train all personnel and volunteers regarding the diocesan policy and its implementation?

Victims and offenders come from all walks of life. We cannot assume that being a particular age, gender, or coming from a certain educational or economic

status are protective factors from being victims or from becoming an offender. In the spirit of our Synod process and its goals, this entire issue needs to be addressed with more collaboration, professionalism, and in a more timely manner. Perhaps, we can then take further steps with confidence "to walk humbly, love tenderly and act justly" as we each experience the presence of God.

Rachel D. Plano
Genesee Street
Geneva

EDITORS' NOTE: The U.S. Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse advises bishops to comply with the state and local laws applicable in their own dioceses. In some U.S. municipalities, church officials are required to report suspected child abuse. However, even the Monroe County District Attorney's office could not say whether any local governments within the Diocese of Rochester had such additional requirements. And, indeed, state law requires more than two dozen professions - among them dentists, optometrists and employees of residential care facilities, but not clergy - to report suspected abuse.

Encourage Congress to override ban veto

EDITORS' NOTE: The following letter contains a graphic description of the partial-birth abortion procedure. It may not be suitable for reading by all family members.

To the editors:

All the active U.S. Cardinals and Bishop Anthony Pilla, president of the American bishops conference, blasted the President's veto of the Partial Abortion Ban Act that both houses of Congress had passed!

I want to tell you what the partial birth abortion does.

1. Guided by ultrasound, the abortionist grabs the live baby's legs with forceps. At no time before or during this Nazi-like butcher's carnage is the live baby given any painkiller! Dentists give painkillers before pulling a tooth, right?

2. The live baby's legs are pulled into the birth canal.

3. The abortionist delivers the live baby's body except for his or her head.

4. The abortionist jams a scissors into the live baby's skull at the base at the back of his or her head! The scissors are opened to make the hole bigger!

5. The scissors are removed and a suction tube called a catheter is inserted in that hole! The live baby's brains are sucked out, its skull collapses and the baby, now dead, is delivered!!

It is no wonder both houses of Congress had voted against this savage, brutal, cruel, wicked deed!

The U.S. Cardinals and Bishop Pilla said to the President "Your action takes our nation to a crucial turning point in its treatment of helpless human beings inside and outside the womb. It moves our nation one step further toward acceptance of infanticide."

They vowed that "each of us will do all we can to inform voters."

The letter was signed by Cardinals

Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, Anthony Bevilacqua of Philadelphia, James Hickey of Washington, William Keeler of Baltimore, Bernard Law of Boston, Roger Mahoney of Los Angeles, Adam Maida of Detroit and John O'Connor of New York, and also Bishop Anthony Pilla!

Call your representatives and senators and tell them you want them to override the President's veto on the Partial Birth

Abortion Ban Act!

They are in the Blue Pages, page 11 in (the Rochester) phone book. Their local office will forward your message that day to their Washington office. "Be not afraid!" as Pope John Paul II says. Thanks for your help and God bless you!

Mary Rita Crowe
Main Street
Rochester

Prison's job lure is a bad bargain

To the editors:

We in Steuben County face a dilemma! It has been proposed to place one of the three new maximum security prisons, to be built in New York State, here. There is a one in three chance of a "death house" possibly being part of it. The "carrot" being held out to us is the promise of jobs, in an industry poor area. We are asked to compromise our beliefs in favor of jobs. As there are already 15 maximum security prisons in 11 counties of New York State, I feel taxpayer money could be better spent on less costly Rehabilitation Units for first time and non-violent offenders thus, freeing up room for violent

offenders to be housed in existing facilities. And the chance of a "death house" goes against my beliefs and consistent life ethics. The death penalty has been proven not to be a deterrent to violent crime by the states that have invoked it, and innocent people have been put to death in the name of justice. Remember, Christ himself was a victim of the death penalty.

Please pray for us, that our wise, hard working, ever looking for industry officials will see the prison for what it is, just another temptation.

Peggy Brewer
Cedar Street, Hornell

Hopes voters will be swayed by veto of ban

To the editors:

Now that the Vatican has condemned President Clinton's veto of the Congressional ban on partial-birth abortion, I wonder how many people will veto President Clinton in November?

Unfortunately there are people like Catholic Senator Christopher Dodd who support the president's veto.

However there is a possibility that a majority of the electorate will recognize

the paganistic direction of the Clinton White House and vote accordingly.

This would be good news for the pro-lifers and the partially born as well as those who oppose sinful lifestyles.

As Catholics we can and should use all the spiritual and material means at our disposal to improve the current moral climate in our nation.

Robert Bart
Ithaca