

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

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Rochester, NY 14624
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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.

Penalty has poor effect on all lives

To the editors:

There was a fictional movie I saw a few years ago with a friend of mine. I remember how I was disappointed that there was so many violent killings by an individual in the movie. My friend said he was more bothered by the cold, calculated killing from a distance carried out by the CIA in the movie. As I thought more about this, I came to agree with him. I think this insight has bearing on the recent debate about the death penalty.

There are many people on death row who have done some brutal murders and don't by any societal standards deserve to live because of what they did. The question for us though is even though they deserve to die, do we want to kill them?

In the fictional movie I mentioned above, the more bothersome killings were the ones done in a cold, calculated way. That is what the death penalty is also. It is not done because someone was drinking or angry or mentally ill or because of their own brutalization growing up. The death penalty is done because of rational people in society in a cold, calculated way.

I fear what carrying out the death penalty does to us as a society. It feeds the furnace of violence and revenge that is already raging in our society. Selling arms to other countries, the decay of our cities, the promotion of cigarettes, abortion and physician-assisted suicide all promote some form of violence in our society. All of them lessen the incredible dignity of human life and poison the value of life in our world. Many television programs and movies mirror our society's solution to problems - violence. Our quick fix for very complex problems is violence.

So one of the biggest concerns in the death penalty debate is not what happens to the killer, but what it does to us as a society and as individuals. Not only does a killer lose their life but we cheapen the value of life in general and ours in particular. We all lose by the current law because it reflects and forms a value that will continue to erode our respect for life, our lives as well.

Father James E. Hewes
Newman Community of Genesee
Franklin Street, Genesee

Committee intends to establish program for people grieving over past abortions

To the editors:

Project Rachel is a Catholic outreach to women and men experiencing grief and remorse due to a past abortion. It involves the Sacrament of Reconciliation by specially trained priests and also counseling and guidance with trained staff. Such counseling along with the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps the person sort through feelings and deal with unresolved conflicts.

Project Rachel is a means for a grieving person to receive the healing grace of God and to work through the problems associated with abortion.

A group of people is now assembling to bring Project Rachel into the Diocese of Rochester. Anyone interested in working on the committee should call 716/865-3060. Thank you and God bless.

Michael R. Aiello, M.D., President
Catholic Physicians' Guild
Room 2715, 89 Genesee St.
Rochester



Sees Spirit in Nebraska case

To the editors:

Here we go again! Why is everyone so upset? Can't they see that the Holy Spirit is working through Bishop Bruskewitz? He is sincere in his own mind and we should not condemn him. He believes that all must strictly adhere to what is promulgated from Rome.

As one brought up in pre-Vatican II days, I remember the "Pray, Pay and Obey" mentality and I was afraid even to have thoughts that might remotely differ from what the church taught, let alone express them aloud. If I did, I was convinced I was hell-bent for Hell for everlasting damnation! Yet history proves there have been grave mistakes within the church.

Your writer Kay Yankton (May 9) said Bishop Bruskewitz "has seen parishioners leave the pews of his church to go attend pro-abortion, pro-suicide, assisted suicide meetings." I hardly believe there are many Catholics who are pro-abortion or pro-suicide. We believe in the consistent life ethics, "the seamless garment." Bruskewitz' animus is directed more specifically toward Call to Action.

I doubt if many of your readers are familiar with Call to Action, so I suggest

you do an article about this movement and the people, including clergy and religious, who are active in it. Members are deep-thinking individuals who want the very best for the church. They are not "Pope-bashers" as some mean-spirited people have called them and in no way heretics or hypocrites.

Our primary Synod Goal is for lifelong faith formation. There are wonderful adult-education opportunities available through the diocese and I strongly recommend that the faithful attend classes and/or read materials provided. There's not sufficient space to write a whole treatise. Actually it would take several books! Our change in focus should be no to the church as an institution, as in the past, but a community of faith. "God love you" is freeing, and we must build on that. There is a great need for education.

I believe that history will prove that the controversy in Nebraska is the catalyst to bring about a better understanding of what it means to be Catholic. That's healthy! Hurrah! The Holy Spirit is always with us. No need to be afraid!

Grace B. Carnes
Eagle Ridge Circle
Rochester

Story's subject 'diminishes' efforts

To the editors:

This letter is in response to the story ("Human Life founder stumps against abortion") in the May 23 Courier by Rob Cullivan about Father Paul Marx, who visited Rochester May 17-18. The groups who sponsored Father Marx invited me to meet with him, so we had the opportunity to talk before Rob's interview. I appreciated that chance to discuss with Father Marx his ideas about defending life. When he learned my job title, coordinator of the Consistent Life Ethic, he made it clear that this was not a role he considered authentic for the church. In fact, he expressed concern that concentration on the broad advocacy for life that the Consistent Life Ethic urges diminishes the efforts to eradicate abortion, which he recognizes as the greatest threat to humankind.

In its 1995 Political Responsibility Statement, the Administrative Board of the U.S. Catholic Bishops demonstrated the Church's priority support for consistency: "We stand with the unborn and the undocumented ... we defend children in

the womb and children on welfare, we oppose the violence of abortion and the vengeance of capital punishment? We oppose assault weapons on our streets and condoms in our schools. Our agenda is sometimes counter-cultural, but it reflects our consistent concern for human life."

Besides questioning Rochester's advocacy of the Consistent Life Ethic, which is our Synod Goal Two, Father Marx distanced himself further from the official Roman Catholic Church. When asked if the organization he founded, Human Life International, was connected to the Catholic Church, he answered, "Thank God, it's not."

These two responses from Father Marx demonstrate his discord with the advocacy our Diocese is trying to promote in our defense of life. When we embrace such religious leaders as Father Marx, it diminishes the work we are non-violently pursuing for life in our diocese and in our community.

Suzanne Schnittman
Consistent Life Ethic Coordinator
Diocese of Rochester

Disturbed by church involvement with labor

To the editors:

Your May 16 front-page article regarding the church's recently renewed alignment with labor unions is disturbing. For centuries misguided church officials befriended politicians, kings and queens, and wealthy business people. We realize this was wrong because Jesus told us, "My kingdom is not of this world." Do we now believe His kingdom can be found in la-

bor union leadership? Only naive souls would say so.

Economic justice is a worthy goal. Understanding what God means by it still needs thought and prayer. The parable of the vineyard owner paying each laborer the same wage, regardless of how long he worked, quickly illustrates that our assumptions are not always God's.

Anne Petrantoni