

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

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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 writers' opinions.

We reserve the right to edit all letters for length as well as legal concerns. With respect to editing 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.

CLE coordinator's letter draws fire

To the editors:

As a great admirer of Suzanne Schnittman's incisive and thoughtful writing, particularly longer pieces I've seen in the *Democrat and Chronicle*, I was astonished and dismayed to see her letter about Father Paul Marx in the May 30 *Catholic Courier*.

As Consistent Life Ethic Coordinator for the Diocese, her gifting, and her job, is to consistently defend life, whether in the womb or in a foxhole, in a jail cell or on welfare. ... I applaud Ms. Schnittman's efforts in all these areas. However, it is Father Paul Marx's gifting to "specialize," so to speak, in defending the unborn from abortion.

Since each person has only so much energy, no one person, no matter how gifted, can serve the consistent life ethic completely well. In fact, I think the consistent

life ethic is actually better served if most pro-life people work as "specialists" in life issues according to their giftings. Perhaps this is what Father Marx meant when he spoke with her?

Perhaps Ms. Schnittman wouldn't fault AIDS Rochester, for example, for not also working against cancer, would she? I also don't recall her ever complaining to or about an anti-death penalty group for not also being against abortion. So why fault Father Marx for preferring to work only for abortion children? In my experience, anti-abortion activists are generally the only ones who get singled out for this kind of criticism while, for example, those who oppose the death penalty but support legal abortion are left unchallenged by many consistent life ethic leaders. Why? Surely it's obvious what an unfair double

standard this is. If Ms. Schnittman has challenged other life-issue people for failing to work for or even to support the anti-abortion cause, I apologize for having missed it.

I urge Ms. Schnittman to continue the much-needed consistent life ethic leadership she is providing, while at the same time extending her "consistency" to her treatment of all pro-life activists, whatever their "issue." It is because of the efforts of people like both Ms. Schnittman and Father Marx that the Catholic Church, with people with "different giftings but the same Spirit," is able to work toward spreading the universal Gospel of Life. God bless them both.

Karen A. Webb
Honeysuckle Terrace
Fairport

Prayer rally was 'long overdue' in diocese

To the editors:

I am sure I am not alone in being disappointed with the letter (May 30) of Suzanne Schnittman criticizing Father Paul Marx's visit to Rochester. ... Father Paul Marx's organization, Human Life International, for many years has been a powerful advocate for the unborn. In many parts of the world, HLI is the only pro-life voice combating the deception and exploitation of well-financed pro-abortion, anti-family groups. From its 50-plus branches throughout the world, HLI also effectively promotes the Catholic teachings on other life issues such as euthanasia and contraception. To say that Father Marx is somehow distancing himself from the official Roman Catholic Church is hard to understand when Pope John Paul II himself has praised the work of Father Marx, saying, "You are doing the most important work on earth."

The Consistent Life Ethics approach to life issues makes sense as the Catholic Church defends the value and dignity of human life in all stages and circumstances. It also makes sense, however, to place more resources in those areas where the need is greater. With the recent veto of the partial-birth abortion ban, the continuing assault on the value of human life through abortion in our country should be clear to all. We need to follow through the lead of Pope John Paul II and our American Cardinals in prayerfully, peacefully yet clearly witnessing to the intrinsic worth of each

human person, born or unborn.

May 18's prayerful, non-violent picket at Planned Parenthood in Rochester led by Fathers Paul Marx and Norman Weslin was long overdue. As nearby dioceses have begun recently to take bigger steps in support and promotion of the Church's

clear pro-life teachings, isn't it time we do the same? To modernize the well-known words of the famous political philosopher Edmund Burke, "Evil only triumphs when good men and women do nothing."

Robert Pokalsky
Salem Court, Fairport

Suggests CLE coordinator learn of priest's 'gargantuan' life efforts

To the editors:

May I suggest to writer Suzanne Schnittman (May 30) that she subscribe to the Human Life International newsletter and learn of the gargantuan efforts of the Father Paul Marx, OSB, for the past 30 or more years in defense of innocent human life before she presume to suggest that this "gentle giant" is in some way "outside the realm of the Official Catholic Church."

I would not presume to speak for Father Marx since he is so well able to articulate the authentic teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on matters of contraception, abortion, and euthanasia, but I do firmly believe that his record of years of undying devotion to the cause of human life speaks for itself. I would sincerely challenge anyone in the Rochester diocese to try to match Father Marx's heroic efforts to defend the unborn and

to speak out against colossally powerful forces such as Planned Parenthood. I know of no person who has expended such energy, in spite of rejection, ridicule, and scorn, for the sacred cause of the defense of innocent human life.

I believe Father Paul Marx is a man who "says yes when he means yes" and "no, when he means no." For this attribute, he no doubt has made enemies. ...

Finally, if I agree wholeheartedly with Father Marx's statements regarding the "consistent life ethic" and its "diminishing" of efforts to regain legal protection for the helpless unborn, does this cast me outside the "official Roman Catholic Church?" God Bless Father Marx, the pro-life ministry of Holy Spirit Church and the other organizations which sponsored Father Marx's two-day visit to Rochester.

Jane E. Callahan
Elmira

Opinion made organizer regret invitation

To the editors:

This letter is in response to Suzanne Schnittman's opinion in the May 30 edition of the *Catholic Courier* regarding the recent visit to Rochester by Father Paul Marx, founder of Human Life International. First, to correct an error, the groups who sponsored the event did not invite her to meet with Father Marx; I did personally. I also submitted a letter in support of Ms. Schnittman when the Diocese was searching for a CLE coordinator.

I now regret both the invitation and the recommendation. It is irresponsible and childish for a person in her position to attack Father Marx and the pro-life groups who invited him to Rochester. Ms. Schnittman's letter left the impression that Father Marx is not consistent in defending life, but no facts were given to support this.

Ms. Schnittman, as Consistent Life Ethic Coordinator, is promoting monthly public demonstrations against the death penalty, which is an important issue and one that the Church must speak out against. However, Ms. Schnittman has joined forces with groups and individuals in a coalition against the death penalty that are publicly pro-abortion and pub-

licly pro-contraceptives. If she is able to work with people who strongly advocate against the teachings of the Church, one would think she could work with Father Marx or any pro-life leader who is not advocating against other life issues.

... The Pro-Life Planning Committee has invited Ms. Schnittman to join us at the existing death chambers in Rochester to defend children in the womb.

Bob Dorscheid
Aspen Drive, Rochester

Focus enables groups to succeed

To the editors:

Father Frank Pavone, director of Priests for Life, ... gave a beautiful answer to those who always seem to accuse pro-lifers of being "one issue" people. He replies that without "life" all other issues lose their entire importance. The dead cannot be poor, cannot be unemployed, cannot even be executed for a crime. That's why abortion is a key issue — because it all comes down to LIFE! Deny a person that and you actually undercut the importance of every other issue. Abortion, therefore, is so much more than "just" abortion — it IS the seamless garment all in one!

Father Pavone compares our concern for the unborn with the American Cancer Society's concern for the cancer patient. Do we chastise the ACS for not doing research in the fields of diabetes or

dementia? Of course not! The ACS does invaluable work for the cancer patient because it has a focus — it doesn't dilute its efforts by trying to be everything to everybody. This doesn't say that the ACS doesn't recognize the importance of research in other "need" areas.

Father Paul Marx ... recognizes that we must be focused in order to end abortion. This Catholic priest is soft-spoken, non-violent and Pope John Paul II has called him "the apostle for life." He is a priest in good standing within the Church and has the courage to speak out about the evils of birth control, sterilization and abortion. For an employee of the diocese to question his catholicity and his peacefulness is both wrong and uncharitable.

Barbara A. Fredericks, MD
Birr Street, Rochester