

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

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1150 Buffalo Road
P.O. Box 24379
Rochester, NY 14624
716/328-4340
800/600-3628 outside Rochester

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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.

Letters must not exceed 500 words. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable. We reserve the right to edit letters for legal and other concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only.

Mail letters to: Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for purposes of verification.

Voters have chance to avoid 'tricks'

EDITORIAL

Every Halloween, children don costumes and head out to parties or to collect goodies door-to-door.

Halloween, it so happens, comes just before elections. Like the young revelers, candidates, too, put on "costumes" — complete with smiling faces and I-feel-your-pain looks — and head out to collect votes.

Some politicians also try to frighten voters.

This year, they've been invoking such bugaboos as "Newt Gingrich" and "liberalism." And in their advertising, some candidates have tried to paint scary portraits of their opponents.

The Rochester-area campaigns of Democratic Congresswoman Louise Slaughter and her Republican opponent Geoff Rosenberger are particularly horrific: Perhaps officials in both campaigns might benefit from reflecting on the Eighth Commandment.

Adding to a wealth of voter cynicism, these dishonest tactics are bad enough. But the '96 campaigns are also fraught with the sin of omission — failing to address many more serious problems that plague our nation.

Some of these horrors have been outlined in a study recently released by Fordham University's Institute for Innovation in Social Policy's Index of Social Health. Index researchers have determined that the United States reached a new low in 1994 — its lowest ebb in 25 years.

The index, which gauges the nation's performance in addressing key social problems, shows that on a 100-point scale, U.S. social health is at 37.5 — down from 38.8 in 1993. The index compiles statistics on 16 areas, ranging from infant mortality and child abuse to housing and the gap between rich and poor.

Sadly the index released Oct. 14 reports that U.S. statistics have worsened for the first time since 1979 on four key children's issues: child abuse, teen suicide, drug abuse and the high school dropout rate. And while the child poverty rate improved slightly, it remains at its fifth-worst level during the index's 25-year history.

The report also points out that the gap between rich and poor grew at a faster rate in the 1990s than did any

other problem facing U.S. society.

The index has declined under each of the last several presidential administrations, averaging 73.3 in the Nixon and Ford years, 60.3 during the Carter administration, 43.2 during the Reagan administration, 40.3 in the Bush years and 38.1 for the Clinton administration.

The Fordham findings on children's welfare were supported by an equally frightening September report from the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

According to the HHS document, reports of child maltreatment nearly doubled between 1986 and 1993, but the number of cases investigated remained stagnant. As a result, only 28 percent of such cases were pursued, down from 44 percent in 1986.

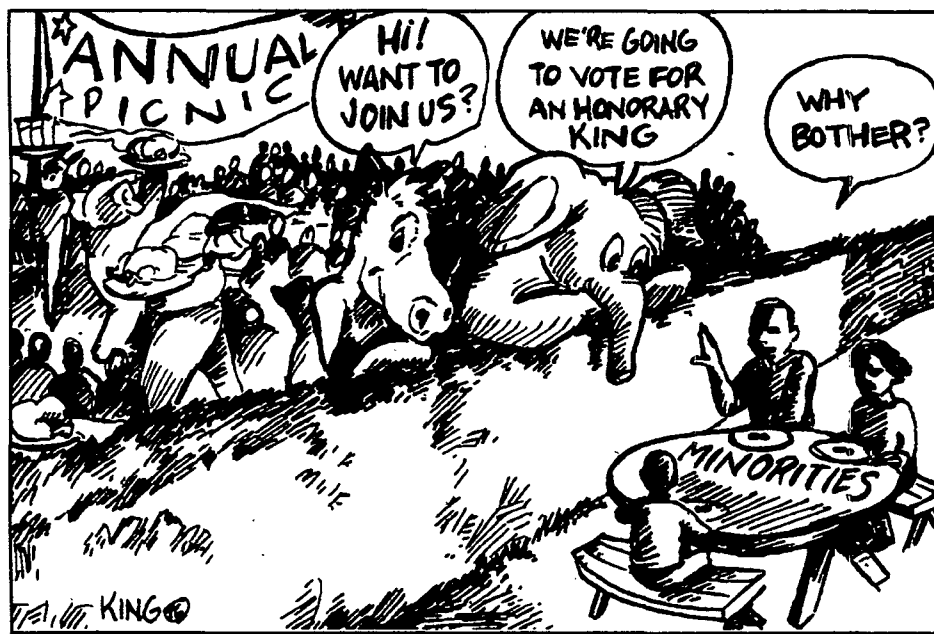
The study said girls were sexually abused three times more often than boys, but that boys ran a greater risk of emotional neglect and serious injury.

Between 1986 and 1993, the HHS estimates, our nation saw a jump of 83 percent in the number of sexually abused children, a 102 percent rise in the number of physically neglected children and a 333 percent increase in the number of emotionally neglected children.

These reports paint a scary picture, but they do not even address all the horrors before voters this year: the demonizing of welfare recipients; partial-birth abortions and more than 30 million abortions performed since 1973; executive salaries skyrocketing as workers face layoffs; attempts to legalize physician-assisted suicide; and the scapegoating of immigrants.

This election year, it would be a *treat* if Catholic voters ventured beyond campaign rhetoric to carefully research these issues, determine where the candidates really stand, weigh the issues in light of church teachings and guidelines put out by this nation's bishops, and then voted accordingly.

Otherwise, we may be *tricked* into more horrors in the years ahead.



Appreciated article on 'visionary'

To the editors:

Thank you for printing the article regarding the Inner Locutions and Visions of John Leary which appeared in the Sept. 19 issue of the *Catholic Courier* ("Greece 'visionary' warns of coming tribulations"). I have known John and his wife Carol for many years and have attended their Rosary prayer group for four years. I believe John when he says that he is receiving messages and visions from God and the Saints. John Leary, 53, has attended daily Mass and Holy Communion since he was 17 years old. He is a very holy and humble man.

While the article was informative, I believe a few clarifications are in order. First, I believe that John Leary has NOT sought official Church approval of his books from Bishop Clark. In truth, very early on, Father Leo Klem, CSB, John's Spiritual Director, presented Bishop Clark with the first 150 pages of John's writings as a courtesy. This was to inform the bishop of what John was experiencing, so that the bishop would not hear it second or third

hand. The bishop's response at that time was to keep things quiet.

Secondly, I find it difficult to understand that Father Timothy Brown, secretary to Bishop Clark, would say that the Church does not review personal — i.e. private — revelations. While we know that all public revelation ended when Jesus Christ ascended in to Heaven on Ascension Thursday, we also know that Fatima, Lourdes, and Guadalupe are Church approved private revelations.

Thirdly, in addition to the apocalyptic messages which the *Catholic Courier* article focused on, there needs to be some balance. John has been given many messages by Our Lord, Our Lady and the Saints which deal with love, faith, spiritual direction and hope.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity for allowing me to clarify the article written by Rob Cullivan. These messages are TOO important and need to be reported accurately.

Joseph J. Guido
Post Avenue, Rochester

Urge voters to take action on the issues

To the editors:

...On November 6, 1996, the presidential and congressional elections will be over. Will historians indicate that the lowest percentage of eligible voters actually bothered to go to the polls? Have negative advertising, name calling, stump speeches, that may include half-truths; caused voters to be cynical about our elected leaders' goals and subconsciously punish them by staying away from the polls. If this is true, our democracy is threatened.

Two members of the community, Rev. Paul Gongloff and Rev. Paul Womack, who are active in forming a local chapter of the Interfaith Alliance, (spoke) at the Downtown Community Forum on Oct. 30 on the topic, "Scaling the Walls: Civil Discourse in Political Life." DCF is held at St. Mary's Church, Rochester.

The Interfaith Alliance was organized by prominent national religious leaders for the express purpose of providing a voice on public matters for the millions of Americans — Protestants, Catholics, Jews and others — who share the basic ethical principles of the major religions.

We urge people who share our concern about the current state of public discourse to take this opportunity to hear about an alternative way.

Mary M. and Paul W. Brayer
Vassar Street
Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: A backlog of letters prevented earlier publication of the Brayers' letter, which was sent Oct. 9. A calendar notice on the Oct. 30 event did appear in our Oct. 24 edition, however. Further information on the Interfaith Alliance may be obtained by calling Rev. Gongloff at 716/334-1180.