

# 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 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.

# Celibacy rarely cited as path for gays

### To the editors:

I probably risk being called intolerant by some readers, however, I wanted to offer comment on the recent collaborative effort begun by the diocese with Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry, a pastoral support group convened by Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata of St. Mary's Parish, Rochester.

My intention here is not to criticize this ministry for families who have homosexual children, nor to downplay the sincerity of the Lopatas or question their Christianity. However, based on comments made by them last fall in a letter to the *Courier* (Oct. 12, 1995), I am cautioned on where this ministry may lead.

Father Robert L. Collins of St. Thomas More Parish, Rochester, solicited dialogue last year on various propositions about homosexuals, including sexual union between them. He also commented that in recent years, "many Catholic priests and lay people engaged in pastoral counseling have become aware that conversion of a homosexual to heterosexual orientation or the total abstinence of a homosexual from all sexual expression are no longer practical pastoral aims in a majority of cases with which they deal."

I responded to contest Father Collins' comments. The Lopatas also responded, however, with two affirming letters, wherein one they cited the 1980 supporting comments by Welsh and English bishops who said, "Pastoral care does not consist simply in the rigid and automatic application of moral norms. It considers the individual in his (or her) actual situation with all his (or her) strengths and weaknesses... (P)astoral counseling of homosexual persons cannot ignore the objective morality of homosexual genital acts, but it is important to interpret them, to understand the pattern of life in which they take place, to appreciate the personal meaning which these acts have for different people..."

Also cited in the Lopatas' response, was a 1986 Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith letter which stated, "circumstances may exist ... which would reduce or remove the culpability of the individual (engaged in homosexual activity) in a given instance." CG&LFM, formed by the Lopatas in 1992, and now a consultant to the diocese, embraces this letter as a foundation of its ministry.

As I have said before, I am neither counselor nor priest; thus, perhaps I am ignorant. However, because of what has been written, and the fact that the diocese has now turned to CG&LFM for consultation, it appears as if our leadership is inclined to accept the above way of thinking also. Personally, I do not agree with the aforementioned bishops nor the excerpt from the 1986 letter.

This ministry appears to have been founded — with good intentions — to help parents and families foster a better under-

standing and relationship with loved ones who are gay. Yet, based on what its convenors appear to support, I cannot help but feel that acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle and sexual activities, as normal for some persons in certain situations, will be purported as a viable option for parents and family members to contemplate.

I hope to never know the struggle of a parent who has to wrestle with the fact that his son or daughter is gay. And I have

never known the inner struggle of a gay person who wishes to leave the lifestyle, or just cope with life itself, but seemingly has not yet found the way. Yet, I sincerely believe that in both situations, these persons are genuinely hurting and deserve love and compassion. But, I also believe there is help and a way out, neither of which is hardly ever spoken about...

**Richard D. Stoffel**  
Spencerport



## Knowledge remains limited

### To the editors:

I felt it very necessary to respond to Mr. Discavage's letter from the October 10 issue ("Church teachings enlighten") because I happen to know him personally as a deeply Christian and loving man. I felt the need to make sure people like Mr. Discavage were at least using the correct terms when speaking of a group of God's children.

In observing people and families I know, it seems obvious to me that there is no such thing as a single homosexual lifestyle, just as there is not such thing as a single heterosexual lifestyle. People are single or married; celibate, monogamous, or promiscuous; rich or poor; parents or childless; material or spiritual; evil or good — without respect to sexual orientation.

In fact, the Catechism of the Catholic church is very careful to distinguish between a person's intrinsic sexual orientation and the lifestyle that the person may lead (paragraphs 2357, 2358 and 2359). So when a misworded quote is presented such as, "(the church) cannot condone (the homosexual) lifestyle", it should be plainly stated that the church does, in fact, condone some homosexual lifestyles, just as it does not condone some heterosexual lifestyles.

In paragraph 2358 the Catechism states, "The number of men and women who have deep seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. They do not choose their homosexual condition." So in effect, the state of being either homosexual or heterosexual is exactly similar to the state of being left or right handed.

With regard to both states, research continues to see if they are genetic traits or learned behaviors.

Neither state is, in itself, evil or sinful. It is how a person uses their hands, or how someone treats their sexuality that sheds light on the way they will be judged by God. A hand can just as easily pull the trigger of a gun as it can feed a neighbor or reach out in peace. As the Catechism also teaches then, all humans, single or married, heterosexual or homosexual are called to sexual chastity (paragraphs 2349, 2359 and 2365).

It seems to me that the debate over homosexuality is not over. The Catechism states in paragraph 2357, "(Homosexuality's) psychological genesis remains largely unexplained." Many people are still learning what homosexuality means and are being confused by those in the media and those of certain coalitions who have discreet political agendas.

Only in recent medical history has it been realized that homosexuality is not a psychiatric disorder. Geneticists, sociologists, and catechists continue to seek what is the truth about homosexuality and have come closer than ever to saying that gay people are created, that choice was not an issue. I believe that we as a Christian people need to pray with and for our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters for the understanding of the Spirit and the gift of taking the actions, not of hate, fear, or law, but of love — just as Jesus encouraged us to do.

**Jim Buckheit**  
Enterprise Street, Rochester

## More must be said about the evil of contraception

### To the editors:

Bishop Clark's recognition of the month of October as "Respect Life Month" deserves to be lauded as a means to focus our attention on life issues. I respectfully suggest, however, that in addition to pointing out the evils of abortion and euthanasia that our attention also be directed toward artificial contraception. The bishop shows courage in this day and age to speak about the need for a consistent life ethic. But life is affected just as much when it is prevented from occurring at all as when it is killed.

It has long been established — by such notables as Alan Guttmacher of Planned Parenthood in 1974 — that as the use of contraception increases, the number of abortions also increases. Studies do not address the heart of the issue, however, and I believe that contraception opened

the door to a host of social evils because it placed the will of man above the will of his Creator. Contraception prevents total openness between a married couple, who vowed before God to love each other for better and for worse, but who, in actual practice, refuse to love each other for the imagined worse of having a child. In effect they tell God that they know better than He what they need in their lives and when they need it.

Not long ago, children were regarded as gifts. Now they are regarded as a right. The acceptance of contraception has made the worth of a child primarily determined by his *wantedness*. How many times have we heard a newly married couple say they don't want to have children until they are "ready?" How many times have mothers who abort their children used the same reasoning? Is it any won-

der that child abuse has skyrocketed since contraception was almost uniformly accepted in the 1930s, or that now we read horror stories in the paper about babies being cut out of their mothers' wombs because someone else "had to have" a baby? Thinking of a child as a "right" denies the inherent dignity of that child as a *person*, created by God and conceived by his parents.

Until more is said about the intrinsic evil of artificial contraception, I fear that abortion will continue to be seen as somehow acceptable. All too many people, Catholics included, see nothing wrong with contraception, in large part because the American Church has been so silent on the issue.

**Catherine A. Lawson**  
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