

# 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 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 full name, phone number and complete address for verification.

## Pro-choice aims harm feminists' credibility

### To the editors:

In the *Catholic Courier* (March 27: "Abortion group among 'We Are Church' co-sponsors"), Sister Maureen Fiedler, coordinator of We Are Church - A Catholic Referendum which seeks to influence the Vatican regarding women's ordination among other things - dismissed the relevance of Catholics For a Free Choice (CFFC) as one of "about 10" sponsors of the project. I disagree.

Fiedler is director of Catholics Speak Out, the group that coordinated the 1986 *New York Times* ad campaign on abortion rights.

Sister Frances Kissling, Director of CFFC, the Latin American Director, and members of CFFC's Board have repeatedly led workshops at Women's ordination events. Many CFFC and Women's Ordination Conference Board members are the same.

I went to hear Frances speak on the two occasions when she visited Rochester. One of the hallmarks of her opposition to the Pope's position on abortion is her perception that the Pope really doesn't respect women. If he did, surely he would ordain women.

If we were able to get a candid answer from the Pope about why he doesn't favor women as priests, he may say that women's ordination leaders, like Kissling and Sister Fiedler, are pro-abortion choice women and are really interested in power, not servanthood.

This dilemma was similarly expressed in a letter published in the *National Catholic Reporter* (in May of 1995) by Marjorie Reiley Maguire, a founding member of Catholics for a Free Choice. Ms. Maguire left the organization because CFFC "promoted every abortion decision as a good, moral choice."

In addition, CFFC "persuaded society to cast off any moral constraints about sexual behavior." Ms. Maguire concludes, "CFFC's 'in your face' style of dissent has hurt Catholic women by making the Vatican think that all feminists are like the radical feminists of CFFC and that feminism and Catholicism are therefore incompatible."

I am in favor of women priests. But as a member of my extended family said recently, "I don't know why women wouldn't make good priests. It's just that I don't know any."

Abortion is about power over another, not servanthood like the women promoting ordination claim to want. Women ordination leaders have as much credibility with the Pope as a "hell and damnation" anti-abortion fundamentalist minister has with them.

Because I am a Catholic and a feminist, I am deluged with information from groups that promote women in the priesthood like WICCA, WOC, and Women-Church Convergence. Their language proliferates about women's oppression: "use of violence," "fundamental issue of justice," "oppression and inequality," "marginalization," the need for "fundamental rights of every person."

But not one crumb is dropped for the unborn which, ironically enough, are subject to all of the above and then some.

Should being proactive for rights for the unborn and women's ordination be pitted against one another? Where is our wisdom?

**Carol Crossed  
Pickwick Drive  
Rochester**



## Forming, informing crucial when conscience is primary

### To the editors:

I am writing regarding the April 10 *Catholic Courier* article on the We Are Church referendum. The referendum advocates changes in Church policy on women's ordination, priestly celibacy, married clergy, sexual orientation, and matters of conscience. Original information released by Sister Maureen Fiedler, the national coordinator (*Catholic Courier*, March 27: "Abortion group among 'We Are Church' co-sponsors") stated that 10 organizations were sponsors of the referendum of which Catholics for a Free Choice is one. In the subsequent article (*Courier*, April 10: "We Are Church drive draws support, criticism") she states there were 50 sponsors. Which is correct? On the referendum itself these sponsors are not listed. Catholics for a Free Choice has over a \$1 million budget received from non-Catholic related sources and also population-control sources like the Ford Foundation. I researched the original 10 sponsors and ... noted that most were not contributing financially and it appears that Catholics for a Free Choice was the major funder.

The referendum affirms the "Primacy of Conscience" in deciding issues of sexual morality; for example, birth control. Michael Walsh states in *The Tablet* of London, England (Feb. 1997), "We Are Church has an answer of sorts. They want 'a Church which affirms that a person's individual conscience is foremost in the making of moral decisions.' That is fine, but begs a question. If conscience is foremost, what are the other arbiters of moral judgment? Conscience may have the final

say-so, may be that by which, ultimately, we shall be judged, but moral decisions are rarely wholly individual in intent, or isolated in their consequences. They have to be made within a framework of accepted values...."

We cannot uphold the primacy of conscience of a person who commits homicide over the loss of life of the victim; of the rapist to the person who was raped; of the corporation head who relocates where labor is cheaper to the person who loses a job. The Church's role is to study, understand and teach prayerfully the Biblical wisdom in light of the moral decision.

The qualities of an informed Christian conscience encompass focusing one's prayer life on moral decision-making and educating oneself through Scriptural study. Primacy of conscience has always been Church teaching; the question is how and using what sources of wisdom will we inform our conscience. I question whether there is a hidden agenda to this referendum and its talk of primacy of conscience is in actuality an attempt to neutralize the moral opposition of Catholics to abortion.

There are good reforms in the referendum. I would have wanted to sign it if more information had been given regarding the sponsors and the formation of a conscience. I'm afraid good people sign these referendums without the time to carefully read and discern the implications.

**Vivian D. Rightmyer  
Leibeck Road  
Churchville**

## Neither fringe represents church

### To the editors:

It seems that these days various groups are claiming to represent the Catholic Church in America. I believe that the true Church is neither those who worship rituals more than they worship God and are always prepared to burn heretics at the stake, nor the "We are the Church" disciples who act as if they have received permission from God to rewrite the Holy Bible. The true Church is those who

silently struggle everyday with temptation and sin, and have remained faithful to Jesus Christ and his Church for almost 2,000 years and will do so until his second coming. We should ignore the "self righteous" whose real agendas are dominance not faith, and leave their judgment up to God.

**Ray Liutkus  
Hardwood Lane  
Webster**

## Why accept pro-choice-funded solicitation?

### To the editors:

In response to the We Are Church referendum petition being signed at Corpus Christi church, Father Callan agrees with Bill Slavick's comment that states "If it were an endorsement of abortion, I wouldn't support it at all." I have a ques-

tion for him: Why, then, would you allow Sister Maureen Fiedler, who receives financial backing from Catholics for a Free Choice, to solicit support at your parish?

**Margaret Smerbeck  
Kirklees Road  
Pittsford**