

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 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.

Movement's leader finds letters to be ill-informed

To the editors:

Some letters to the editor in your May 1 edition are so crammed with misinformation that I am compelled to reply.

Carol Crossed ("Pro-choice aims harm feminists' credibility") said the Catholics Speak Out, which I direct, "coordinated the 1986 *New York Times* ad campaign on abortion rights." This is flatly incorrect. The ad to which she is referring called for dialogue on the issue of abortion, and was sponsored by Catholics for a Free Choice. It appeared in 1984, not 1986. Catholics Speak Out had nothing to do with it.

In the next sentence, she referred to Frances Kissling, the Director of Catholics for a Free Choice, as "Sister" Frances Kissling. I'm sure Frances would be honored, and the Vatican would probably love to know the name of her community, but alas, Frances is a laywoman. Carol also maintains that "many CFFC and Women's Ordination Conference Board members are the same." I've contacted both organizations, and the ONLY overlapping member that anyone remembers in the 20+ history of either group is Silvia Cancio. So much for overlapping directorates.

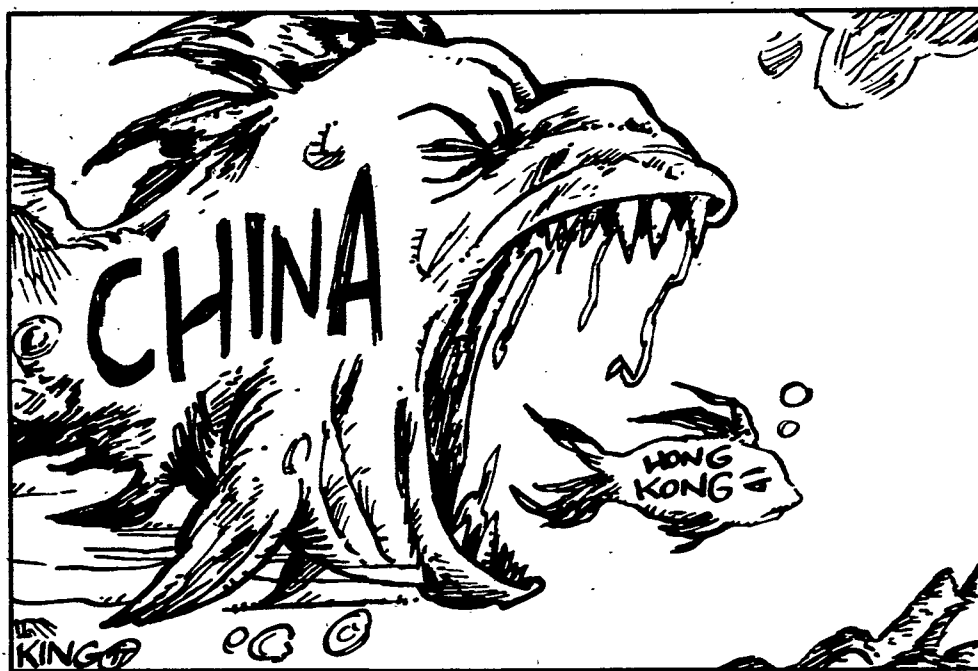
In the same issue, Vivian Rightmyer ("Forming, informing crucial when conscience is primary") claims that I said on one occasion that CFFC is one of 10 sponsors of the *We Are Church* Referendum and on another that there are 50 co-sponsors. The problem was caused by an inaccurate (Catholic News Service) story. In spite of a lengthy interview, the first reporter misrepresented what I had patiently explained. The decision-making group of the Referendum campaign is a National Task Force of 10 groups and CFFC is not among them. We also have a wide array of endorsers, and CFFC is one of about 50 groups in this supporting category. When I confronted (CNS) with its initial inaccuracy, they acknowledged their error and ran a retraction.

Finally, Ms. Rightmyer wonders what we mean by primacy of conscience in the Referendum. For the record, we mean exactly what our tradition teaches: a Catholic needs to *know* the teaching of the church and *respect* it. However, in the end, if one's conscience dictates a different path, one is *obliged to follow it*, for that is how we will be judged. As St. Thomas Aquinas — no wild liberal — said, "I would rather die excommunicated than to have violated my conscience."

I wonder if these letters, so filled with disinformation and innuendo, are part of a smear campaign against the Referendum and the growing movement for church reform. If so, they will not succeed. Many faithful Catholics, pained by many church policies, want the reforms cited in the Referendum. They want lay participation in selecting pastors and bishops, equality for women in all ministries, including the priesthood, optional celibacy for the clergy, respect for the human rights of all persons regardless of sexual orientation, respect for primacy of conscience and a new day when silencing and excommunications are replaced by dialogue.

Maureen Fiedler, SL, National Coordinator, Catholics Speak Out and We Are Church Referendum Hyattsville, Maryland

EDITORS' NOTE: The misidentification of Frances Kissling as a sister was our error, produced by a garble in the typesetting process. The Courier regrets the error.



Believes church unity only in ancient Tridentine Mass

To the editors:

Many today call themselves Catholic yet lack unity, a mark of the Church. It is dogma, should any of four marks be missing in the witness of faith, then the church cannot be found in what is being witnessed to.

Do Catholics protesting gay Masses have the same essentials of faith as those participating? Do priests offering clown Masses have the same belief in the real presence as priests offering Mass in an orthodox manner? What of a priest who directs us to remain standing for the consecration or who has removed the kneelers from his church? What of priests continually offering general absolution without adhering to limitations of it allowed by church law? Do they believe the same as priests refusing to break that law? Do those shopping to find a priest for absolution from artificial contraception believe essentially as those accepting *Humanae Vitae*?

The travesties mentioned above occurred in this diocese and can be supplemented with an extensive list of others. Sadly, they take place without repercussion at any level.

We mix wheat, church teaching, with chaff, popular practice. A great example is the form of consecration of wine used in most Masses today. The exact words that are not to be used for consecration, clearly explained over 400 years ago in the Catechism of the Council of Trent as to why, are used extensively.

The mark of Catholicity — same teaching throughout generations — where is it

evident today? Without saying it doesn't exist anywhere else, I can say it still exists in the Tridentine rite. A rite which maintains the proper consecration but has been largely suppressed for 30 plus years.

If candidates for the priesthood intend maintaining the essentials of their faith including the four marks of the church, how do they in the non-Catholic Colgate Rochester Divinity School? It hasn't worked well if at all. The formation process has evolved to a non-attracting, non-production system. It's not a situation of quality over quantity. The number of problems among the ranks proves otherwise. Is the old formation process of priest — pre-Vatican II, which still works superbly in the few places it is allowed to exist — hated that much? It seems to be by those with authority to change it. I say this because those institutions remaining faithful are not just holding on; they are overflowing with vocations.

When the rights and majesty owed God is preserved in our public worship, when the religiosity of our "faith communities" is measured by the number of confessions as well as the number receiving communion and the formation process of seminarians is corrected, vocations will cease to be in crisis. Like Israelites of old we have forgotten our faith and clamor for a golden calf. The Church always recognized vocations relate to the faith of its leaders. Their loss is merely a symptom of the problem.

**Antonio M. La Pietra
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'Legal chaos' arises from abortion, not from non-violent disobedience

To the editors:

On June 9, U.S. District Judge David G. Larimer found 11 members of the pro-life group Lambs of Christ guilty of violating the federal Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE). Four of the defendants, including the Lambs' leader, Father Norman Weslin, OS, were sentenced to prison, while the remaining seven were ordered to perform community service. The convictions stemmed from a Dec. 7 "rescue" by the Lambs outside the offices of Planned Parenthood of Rochester and the Genesee Valley at 114 University Ave. on Dec. 7.

Judge Larimer stated that if the Lambs were allowed to go free without punishment (this) would send a signal that others could break laws with which they dis-

agree, and hence invite legal "chaos." John J. Broderick of Long Island, the lead defense attorney for the Lambs, said that the defendant's civil disobedience did not invite legal chaos because the defendants never used violence. Planned Parenthood has to FACE the fact that they are guilty of violence when an abortion is performed on an unborn baby who is capable of feeling pain.

God has a plan for each and every baby that He creates and abortion only interferes with this plan. Unless we turn this nation around and once again make abortion illegal, God's plan will never have a chance to materialize.

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