

OPINIONS

Iraq's people suffer war's effects

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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 pur-

To the editors:

Many people are not aware of what is happening in Iraq since the Gulf War. The imposed sanctions are still in place and this is causing mass starvations and catastrophic illness, especially to children. Over 600,000 Iraqi children have died since 1990. Every three minutes a child dies. Medicines and vaccines are very scarce. Children have had gangrenous limbs amputated without anesthetic because there is no anesthetic. There isn't even any clean water for the doctors to wash their hands before attending the next patient. The water purification systems can't be repaired because there are

no parts. More people have been killed by the sanctions than by the 88,500 tons of bombs that dropped on Iraq during the Gulf War.

Small delegations of people, part of a group called Voices in the Wilderness, have been bringing medical supplies to Iraq, in spite of the threat of long prison sentences and huge fines for violating these sanctions. Locally, Tom Malthaner has recently risked these punishments to bring medical supplies to Iraq. Pax Christi/Rochester and Corpus Christi Church have sponsored actions at the Federal Building including attempts to mail medical supplies to Iraq. This is in

order to bring an awareness of this immoral situation to the people of Rochester.

Civilians should not have to suffer for the crimes of their government, but they always do. In every war the innocent are always sacrificed for the demands of their leaders, and one day this could happen to us. What we sow in Iraq today is what we shall reap in Iraq, and the world, tomorrow someone and something far worse than Sadaam Hussein. Rather than overcoming evil, we have become perpetrators of a greater evil.

Vivian Rightmyer
Leibeck Road, Churchville

EWTN ignored other moments

To the editors:

Two letters published in your Opinions column of August 28 applauded EWTN, the Global Catholic Network, as the champion of our Catholic faith ("Better teaching could dispel confusion among Catholics" and "Reality of Eucharist sacrifice substantiated, by Jesus' own statements at the Last Supper.") While I rejoice in the network's spirit of devotion that helps to keep alive some of our religious traditions, it like all human endeavors sometimes misses what is truly of God.

I remember viewing EWTN's coverage of Mother Teresa's funeral last week. (Sept. 13) They rebroadcast their coverage throughout the following day, filling a void left by ABC, NBC, and CBS. How many hearts may have been turned toward the needs of the poor had the major networks devoted the same amount of airtime to Mother as they had for Diana, Princess of Wales?

Mother Teresa's funeral spoke eloquently of her life and mission for Christ. Of major impact for me was the way she humbly served across all divisions of culture and faith, a contribution that was gratefully honored by her adopted India. Voices were raised in prayer and thanksgiving by representatives of many faith traditions, voices which Mother had honored and respected as voices of God on behalf of her beloved poor. Unfortunately, EWTN missed the significance of this moment of the service, choosing to interview their various commentators instead of broadcasting the words of the representatives of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, et al. Teresa of the Poor would have been attentive. By failing to hear the voice of diversity, we fail to hear her voice as well.

Michael J. Nicosia
Governor Terrace, Rochester

Rules show mercy toward dissidents

To the editors:

Designed to safeguard the rights of theologians, according to Catholic News Service, the Vatican's recent updating of its 1971 rules for handling theological dissidence is most encouraging. It may, for example, be a welcome sign that Pope John XXIII's 1962 plea for the church's "use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity" is now being heard.

For the past 20 years its record of dealing with dissidents, such as Rochester's Father Charles Curran, has not been — to use a churchy word — edifying. If in society we respect the principle that justice not only ought to be done but also ought to be seen as done, then the church should be held to nothing less.

E. Leo McMannus
Venice, FL



Equal stances should apply decrying war and abortion

To the editors:

The level of Catholic participation in the war and militarism of the U.S. Empire is basically indistinguishable from that of most other segments of our society. Catholics are largely pro-choice on war. Despite the fervent prayers and efforts of anti-abortion folks, many Catholics are now pro-choice on abortion as well.

Father Dan Berrigan has said that, "Abortion is war (to the unborn), war is an abortion." If one accepts that the issued are thus connected, a problem can immediately be seen that would explain why acceptance of abortion has crept into the Church: Church teaching allows no abortions but provides a loophole for a theoretical "just" war. We have a glaring lack of consistency.

Of course, there really was a time when catechesis and the Eucharist made it unthinkable for followers of Jesus to participate in state sponsored killing (war) as well as abortion. Acceptance of "just" war brought about the greatest changes ever in Church history and Christian practice. By effectively granting prerogative to the emperor, the Church became pro-choice on war. This favored war after war the same way "pro-choice" favors abortion today.

Space does not allow me to illustrate the many ways in which the equation of war and abortion is accurate. One example: The violence and trauma of war directly causes abortions. Thousands took place during the war with Iraq as surely as they did in U.S. abortion centers. To choose war is to choose abortion for "enemy" unborn. It is not such a great step to aborting our own.

Jesus' command to love our enemies did not imply an academic or philosophical exercise with no personal cost. Jesus lived his whole life in a worst case scenario. His country was already occupied by a brutal empire under a Saddam Hussein of another era. If there ever was a just war, Jesus would have started one! He had leadership quality, good opportunities and more than one temptation. If war could bring justice and reconciliation, Jesus would have shown us that way! But war reverses all the works of mercy and the poor suffer most. In the four corners of the Gospel, there is nothing expressed or implied to justify any abortion or any war. In the life ethic of Jesus means and ends are not separated. We must give up the myths of empire (classically cited by B. Byrnes, "Took offense to Fr. Hewes' Iraq analogy," *Catholic Courier* 8/21/97) to follow His way.

War/abortion has been our greatest failure to live the ethic of Jesus. A consistent teaching of Jesus' nonviolence remains our only hope. I believe this teaching must now come from the highest level of authority, that is a Council of the Church such as Vatican II.

The idea of a CLE (consistent life ethic), no matter how it is defined, will not succeed in shutting the door on abortion in the Church, much less society, unless it can serve to challenge the teachers to shut the door that they once opened for war. It's the same door!

Mark Scibilia-Carver
Cold Springs Road, Trumansburg

Editors' Note: Parts of this letter were taken from a speech given by Mr. Scibilia-Carver at the Celebration of Life, May 10, 1997.

Send us your opinions by e-mail. Our address is:
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