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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.

By Lourdes and Evelio Perez-Albuerne

After decades of forced silence, the Cuban church has experienced a resurgence culminating in Pope John Paul II's recent visit. "I have come to Cuba as a messenger of truth and hope" the pope proclaimed, making clear the church's determination to play an increasing role in solving problems that afflict the Cuban people and nation.

At Havana's airport the Holy Father said he had come as a "pilgrim of love, truth and hope, wishing to give new impetus to the evangelizing work that, even in the midst of difficulties, this local Church maintains with vitality and apostolic dynamism" and to "proclaim the truth about Jesus Christ..." Connecting Jesus' message with its impact on society is central to the church's approach toward the majority of Cubans, who are nonbelievers.

Reports by independent journalists describe the reactions of those who attended the Mass in Santiago: "It is indescribable the sensation felt in our hearts when we heard the often-stated words 'do not be afraid,' that later were repeated by those there," wrote Emily Rodríguez of the Agencia de Prensa Oriental.

Optimism permeates these reports. The APLO's Juan Carlos Céspedes described a Communist party militant who "having seen this, it has entered his heart, feeling as we do and has even shed tears of emotion, singing the national anthem and embracing us during the sign of peace. It is the reconciliation between those who yesterday persecuted us and now shake our hands..."

The message of Hope was centered in the "Good News" of the Gospel and the concept that Cubans can change their situation. The pope told youths that "there can be no commitment to faith without an active and bold presence in all the social groups in which Christ and the Church are incarnated." Likewise he asked intellectuals to engage in dialogue and to find "a synthesis with which all Cubans can be identified."

The Holy Father was explicit when he told the faithful in Camagüey: "Happiness is reached through sacrifice... Do not wait for others to be and do what you yourself have the capacity and calling to be and do. Do not leave for tomorrow the building of a new society, where the most noble dreams are not frustrated and where you can be protagonists of your history."

## Columnist replies to fellow author's critique

**To the editors:**

Ordinarily I would not respond when an opinion of mine is attacked in print. For with Oliver Wendell Holmes I believe in the Hydrostatic Paradox of Controversy.

The Paradox is this. If you had a bent tube, one arm of which is the size of a pipe stem and the other big enough to hold the ocean, water would stand at the same level in both stems. In the same way, controversy equalizes fools and wise men — and the fools know it.

Monsignor Shannon is no fool, but a friend. I preached at his first Mass. Both of us got our Masters in History at Canisius College together. So I shall respond briefly to his allegation that these words were too absolute: "College ethic courses are teaching little about private decency, honesty, personal responsibility or honor."

Incidentally, that statement was lifted almost verbatim from Christine Hoff Sommers' article "Ethics without Virtue" (*Christianity Today*, Dec. 13, 1993).

Like Monsignor Shannon, I too taught Ethics, but way back in the '50s and '60s. One need only read William Bennett's latest book *Our Sacred Honor* to see how morality has declined in our nation in the last few decades.

The decline can be attributed in part to the banishing of God from public education. God's mind and will, His plan and purpose, is the norm of all morality. Deny the uncreated God, then man has no other alternative but to create his own gods. His norm of morality becomes subjective. Either it will be Himself — his own conscience, whether informed or not; or Pleasure — Hedonism, Playboy Philosophy — What's wrong with this, it's fun, isn't it?; or the Consequences of an action — It's profitable or practical or useful — Pragmatism, Utilitarianism, Proportion-alism; Or Society — Everybody's doing it —Gallup Poll Morality.

The Holy Father wrote his great encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* ("The Splendor of Truth," Aug. 6, 1993) precisely to correct these errors about the norm of

morality. That norm is objective, is rooted in the Mind and will of God. Deny Him, then what have you got? A defense of artificial contraception, of homosexual acts, of premarital sex, of abortion, of

euthanasia, and so on. For detailed explanation, see my book *Reflections on the Encyclical (The Splendor of Truth)*.

**Father Albert J.M. Shamon**  
South Marvine Avenue, Auburn

## Appreciated challenge, example

**To the editors:**

What a joy and challenge it was to read this week's *Catholic Courier* (issue of Jan. 8). Bishop Clark has called us to "pray about the reality of abortion in our lives today." He encourages us to create "environments that support life." These are not only physical environments, but emotional, social and spiritual ones as well.

Then, turning to "Senior Lifestyles," I was delighted to read about Marguerite Riley. To learn of her tireless work defending the unborn was heartening. Through her deeds of love, prayer, and peaceful demonstration, I'm sure many lives were saved and healed. To know that her life ethic was consistent in her work confronting poverty and violence, the death penalty, and physician assisted suicide is a great witness to us all.

It is possible that persons opposing abortion may be reticent to speak out for several reasons. One of the foremost for many

people I know, is a fear of being associated with those choosing violent means. To bomb a clinic or spout hate harms the cause of life. It is my fear that these violent methods have caused many to choose a guarded silence on this issue. The second might be sounding judgmental about others' choices. We would certainly express negative judgment about one considering robbing a grocery store to "solve the problem" of poverty. We should be absolutely loving, but no less unwavering, in expressing the need to choose life.

Let us consider the Bishop's call to "think how our church can more effectively encourage all to recognize and defend the sanctity of life in the womb." Let us learn from the Geneva senior citizen who continues to live a life committed to love, faith and life.

**Margaret Smerbeck**  
Kirklees Road, Pittsford  
via e-mail

## Encourages participation in 'Turn off TV Day' campaign

**To the editors:**

Almost three quarters of participants in a recent TV Guide poll "believe that in the past five years, Prime Time TV has increasingly become a less moral, spiritual and religious universe." Eighty-one percent of Americans "think TV contributes to the decline of family values" (U.S. News & World Report).

Once again this year, Central New York Citizens for Community Values is participating in the National Turn off TV Day Campaign, sponsored by Morality in Media of New York City. The Campaign this year will be held on February 14, 1998. If you would like more info about this Cam-

aign, or would like me to send you the addresses of all the top TV Networks, please contact me at the address below.

We hope this year families and schools will join us in Turning our TV Sets off for one day to protest the violence, sex and profanity that has taken over the airwaves. TV Viewers must be committed to turning off morally bankrupt programming, and making complaints known to TV producers, advertisers, and the FCC. Together we can make a difference!

**Joyce Cavanaugh, Director**  
CNY Citizens for Community Values  
PO Box 1291  
Auburn, NY 13021

Gospel choir's tape raises funds, spirits

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Wednesday means work in Lyons

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