

Catholic Courier

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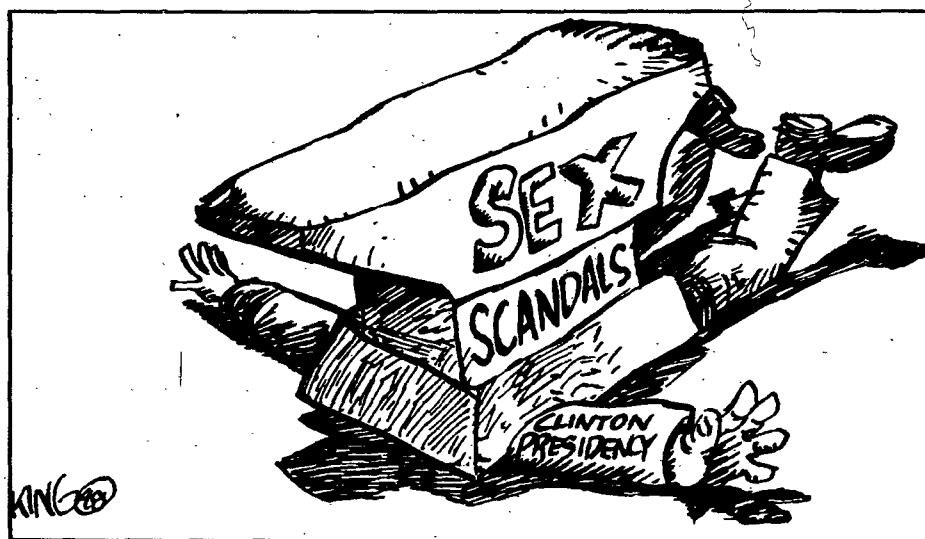
Letters Policy

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.



Violation of human rights at center of 'Monica' story

To the editors:

In one of his books, Bishop Sheen claimed that we were a declining civilization because we were trashing the patrimony of our ancestors, the prodigal sons wasting our moral heritage, the Faith. Amid the frenzy in Washington this past week (letter was written Jan. 27) I have not noted a single civilized voice saying that no one is required to make a public confession of private sins, either to the news media, or under oath to a court of law. Apparently no one has an informed conscience on this matter of civil ethics. Many of the commentators are well-educated, articulate Catholics.

The truthful answer to a barbaric question is denial. Without knowing any of the facts of the case, it is clear that President Clinton's denial to the news media, and Monica Lewinsky's denial under oath to the court, are the truth. A denial in answer to a barbaric question is the truth, if it means the acts in question did not occur. A denial is the truth if it means it is none of your business.

The big news out of Washington this

past week is the horrendous violation of our human rights under natural law. No court can compel a public confession of private sins. No officer of a court can accuse one of perjury or attempt to show evidence of perjury by comparing an answer to a barbaric question under oath with one's private conversations, let alone a tape of those conversations via an FBI wire designed to entrap the victim.

It is always a good time to pray for prisoners and victims of government crimes. Today, it is especially appropriate in view of the comments of Pope John Paul II in Cuba this past week and the words of Jesus at this past Sunday's Mass. We should pray for all prisoners, the entire spectrum of prisoners, from prisoners of conscience like Susan McDougal, to those deserving of death for capital crimes, like Jesus of Nazareth. Whose life, externally, is more like that of Jesus of Nazareth than those in prison, especially those condemned to death?

Robert E. Drury
Pre-Emption Road, Geneva

Letter made difference for priest

To the editors:

Last week was one of the craziest weeks in my Priestly Life. On Tuesday (Jan. 27) I shared a last meal with a condemned prisoner at Michigan City Prison where I have a part-time ministry. On Wednesday I had to witness the execution of the same man. It was a truly horrific experience and the third execution I have attended since I began at the prison. I returned home at 3 a.m. and was unable to sleep. At 7:30 I celebrated the morning Mass at the High School where I teach full time. After Mass I put in a full day of teaching. The next day after teaching a full day I put on my hat as chaplain of the school basketball team and prepared for the biggest game of the year. We won. On Saturday I drove an hour and a half to Purdue University to celebrate a Wedding for a young woman I taught several years ago. On the ride home, my mind was running a gamut of emotions. I began asking myself, what good does all this stuff I do accomplish? What is the point in doing so much?

When I got home I read the *Catholic Courier* to see how things were going in my

home diocese. I came across Arlene O'Connor's eight-line letter tucked into the far corner of the Opinion Page. It mentioned, "the amount of good for the world that a good Catholic Priest can do." It answered my question about why I keep so busy. I try hard to be a good Priest. I love being a Priest. Every night before going to bed I thank God for calling me to the Priesthood and I can't wait until the next day when I could function as a Priest again. There is no better life if one is called to it.

Ms. O'Connor, thank you for a bit of affirmation when I needed it most. I cut out your letter, enlarged it on a Xerox machine, and hung it in my office. *Catholic Courier*, thank you for printing Ms. O'Connor's letter. Please pray for me and for more vocations to the Priesthood. And, if you will, please say a prayer for the repose of the soul of Robert Smith, the man I ministered to on the night of his execution. He was, in a sense, my Parishioner, and I loved him.

Father Joe Lanzalaco, CSB
Andrean High School
Merrillville, Indiana

Unfamiliar priest represented love of God

To the editors:

On December 6 a few hours before my father Frank Mobilio's death I knew that we "needed" a priest. The parish on call for Park Ridge Hospital was Most Precious Blood, and Father Fusare arrived within a half-hour after my call. Though Father Fusare was not "our family" priest or "our Parish" priest, his presence represented and gave me the real sense of our unity as a Church.

Father Fusare's gentleness as he held my dad's strapped-down hand and prayed will

stay with me always. Dad could not speak with the respirator tube, but he shed one precious tear that I wiped from his face.

I am grateful for the presence of Father Fusare, one person who represented the profound, infinite love of God and peace that I am sure my father is enjoying. Thank you to Father Fusare, and may we realize that through our common Baptism we are members of the One Body and each of us are called to be "ambassadors for Christ."

Elizabeth M. Leone
Hinchey Road, Rochester

Article had ambiguous perspective

To the editors:

Readers who took note of the January 15 lead article, "Vietnam: 25 years after" might be moved to reflect on the parallels between that anniversary and the 25th-year commemoration of the Supreme Court's legalizing abortion on demand. Certainly this would be a rich reflection, in the light of the many and longstanding Church teachings on life's sanctity and inviolability, and in respect to the fact that the two anniversaries are not unrelated.

Yet the moral perspective of the Vietnam article seems, to this reader, ambiguous. Is there a tacit assumption that, in our empathy with the returned warriors and in our compassion for their sufferings, we are to suppress what we know to be true of the Gospel's emphasis on love of enemies, and the Magisterial teachings on war, particularly modern warfare?

If the article had chronicled the effects of legalized abortion on women and men in their families, we would be inspired — commendably — to stand even more strongly against that practice, not only in the name of unborn life but in concern for those who have themselves been victims of pervasive acceptance of publicly sanctioned life taking, and would, admirably, have enhanced our pastoral outreach even as we do in the case of Project Rachel, among many others. However, the same unborn life we defend in the womb seems to lose our support when our government mounts yet another offensive, whether it be a Desert Storm, sanctions against Iraq, the discussion of "taking out" Saddam Hussein, or funding yet another "peacekeeping" effort.

When Pope John Paul II states so clearly that, "Today the scale and horror of modern war — whether nuclear or not — make it totally unacceptable as a means for settling differences," and when he condemns the arms race as a massive drain on resources and as one of the greatest offenses to the poor (cf. "The Challenge of Peace," #271) one wonders why our churches are so often silent on the issue of war. If we Christians really care about the fact that war-making and our continuing, military aggression have deeply hurt citizens like Gary Beikirch, then we must move beyond ministering to their wounds and embrace the entire Consistent Ethic of Life in its true power and fullness; and, we must speak out — even as we do against abortion — in courageous opposition to the violence of militarism in all its forms.

Judith Kiehl
Pastoral Associate
Holy Trinity Church, Webster

Inspired by priests' presence at service

To the editors:

Last Thursday evening on the Anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade*, a group of people met outside of Planned Parenthood of Rochester and in the bitter cold prayed 15 decades of the Rosary, making reparation in a small way for the crime of abortion of millions of unborn babies.

It was most inspiring to see that among the crowd, there were at least 22 priests. It was difficult to tell the exact number as everyone was so bundled up. We praise our Almighty God for the Holy Priests in the Diocese. You can be assured that they will be remembered in the prayers of the laity on Thanksgiving for the beautiful example they are to us.

Dorothea H. Lada
East Street, Pittsford