

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.

Violence does not justify violence

To the editors:

The recent killing of Dr. Barnett Slepian was a real tragedy, especially for his family that has lost a husband and a father. This unfortunately has been justified by some as a legitimate means of self-defense for the unborn child as one would protect any child about to be killed. Any reasoning that justifies violence must be challenged.

First, to defend another's life is different than intending, premeditatedly to kill someone. Those who have killed doctors or other clinic workers have not done this as these abortion providers were in the act of beginning or during the abortion. Many abortion providers like Dr. Bernard Nathanson have walked into their abortion clinic one day for the last time in order to clear out their belongings, to quit, never to return. No one can know for certain what is in the mind and heart of abortion providers on any given day. Those that have left their practice of abortion have sometimes become the greatest advocates for the pro-life cause. I believe Dr. Slepian was quoted as saying that he didn't enjoy this aspect of his work. Who knows if one day Dr. Slepian might not have changed like Dr. Nathanson did. The chance for God to change this person's heart was taken away by this sniper.

Secondly, the experience of women coming to Project Rachel (a healing program by the Catholic Diocese of Rochester for women who have had an abortion) is that they often feel very pressured and alone before their abortion. This act of violence does nothing to help alleviate their pressures or the feeling of facing this hardship alone. This is why parishes in the Diocese of Rochester began the Pledge for Life — to reach out to pregnant women in these difficult situations. It also does nothing to enable women to seek out healing for the deep emotional and spiritual wounds that they have experienced from previous abortions.

Thirdly, unfortunately, the Supreme



File photo

Dr. Barnett Slepian, left, and unidentified anti-abortion demonstrator.

Court in 1973 established a private right to use violence as a way to solve complex social situations by allowing abortion, and thus contributed to a climate where violence prospers. This recent killing of Dr. Slepian perpetuates the violence that diminishes all of us. Gandhi once said, "an eye for an eye" leaves everyone blind. There is in our world a raging furnace of evil and death. Acts of violence no matter who they are done to, (whether to innocent children

in Iraq or convicted killers on death row) continue to fuel this raging inferno. The only hope for us to stop the spread of the fires of violence is that we all choose to live the way of Jesus non-violent love, that treats EVERYONE with respect and compassion, whether friend or enemy, in utero or post utero.

Fr. Jim Hewes

Newman Community of Genesee
Interfaith Center, Genesee

Movement should lead way to life

To the editors:

With the recent murder of abortionist Dr. Barnett Slepian, the pro-life movement needs to reorganize its efforts and move into a different direction.

When protests are held outside abortion facilities we should hold signs that say, "Abortion is not the answer — we can help you," "Choose Life," or "Abortion — a baby can live without it," for the women who are entering the abortion facilities,

and for abortion providers, "It's never too late to repent."

The sole purpose of the pro-life movement is to help a woman contemplating abortion to choose life for her unborn baby, and at the same time show the abortion providers that we truly do care for them and hope they will have a change of heart.

Dianna Richmond Ives
Simpson Road, Rochester

Privilege of SOA protest reinforces sisters

To the editors:

Protesting at the gates of the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia, on November 21 and 22, was truly eventful. Several thousand participants came together in peace to protest the existence of this school and to say, "It must be closed." All of us stood in solidarity with our Central and South American sisters and brothers who have experienced untold atrocities at the hands of many SOA graduates.

Despite the serious purpose of this protest weekend, the spirit was so evidently hopeful and joyous. We were among many college students, clergy, women religious and people of all ages. There was much representation among the Sisters of St. Joseph. We easily spotted their banners and spoke to many of them. How nice to have seen "Rochester" in the persons of

Harry Murray, and two of his students from Nazareth College and George McVay with several staff from St. Joseph House of Hospitality.

... Sunday was the big day in many ways. The size of the crowd appeared to have doubled. The most solemn moments in the weekend began with a memorial service led by the SOA Watch leaders, (Father) Roy Bourgeois, MM, and Carol Richardson along with Martin Sheen, actor/activist. Those honored and remembered were: Native Americans whose tears made holy the ground on which we stood, the prisoners of conscience in our federal prisons, suffering peoples of Nicaragua, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and throughout Latin America. As their presence was called forth to be among us, everyone responded, "Presente! Presente!"

It was then that those entering the base were called forth in groups of four to silently carry white crosses bearing the names and ages of the victims of brutality. It was poignantly brought home to us that many of the slain were children. We expected to witness 1,000 risking arrest and imprisonment by committing civil disobedience by entering the base. This number was more than doubled when some 2,341 old, middle-aged and young entered the base to lay their crosses on the steps where SOA training takes place. Nine of the persons of this group were women in wheelchairs. Those of us who supported and kept vigil sang, waited and prayed. At one point we were asked to observe a moment of silence for the Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico, who at that very time were risking their lives to meet with government authorities in hopes of brokering something for their people.

Midway into the afternoon we were told the startling news that all who crossed the line were being released without arrest. The army personnel was overwhelmed by the numbers. You can imagine the response — so much elation and gratitude. When the "offenders" rejoined the supporting crowd they were applauded and embraced.

As we started our three-hour trip home we thought of the many witnesses to the ongoing struggle for a more just world. We exchanged best moments and what spoke loudest to us during the weekend. ... All of these elements together strengthened the hope and resolve to continue the struggle until the School of the Americas is closed.

We felt privileged to have represented our Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester at this inspiring weekend.

Sister Mary Maloy, Sister Marie Albert Alderman, Sister Kathleen Navarra, Sister Lorraine Julien

Seek help for hungry in New York

To the editors:

This Thanksgiving, as you sit down to share a meal with your family, we hope you will remember the 2 million New Yorkers for whom obtaining a meal is often a struggle.

Earlier this week, a number of anti-hunger, religious and community groups joined together to organize a statewide Fast Against Hunger. Fast participants went without food for a day to experience the pains of hunger that are all too real for many New Yorkers.

The groups are asking Governor Pataki to include \$25 million in funding for food pantries and soup kitchens in the upcoming state budget. While the demand for emergency food has more than doubled in the last decade, the state's nearly 3,000 food pantries and soup kitchens

have not seen an increase in funding for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program since 1990.

The groups also hope that the Governor will support the Empire State Jobs Bill to provide 4,000 temporary transitional jobs for individuals looking to leave welfare.

While the entire community comes together to ensure that no one goes hungry on Thanksgiving, hunger unfortunately is a 365 day a year problem. Please ask our government officials to do more to end hunger.

Dennis Hanratty and Pat Obrecht
Co-Chairs, Hunger Action Network
Albany

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EDITORS' NOTE: This letter was received after our Thanksgiving issue deadline.