

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.

Who's the criminal here?

At a press conference in Washington Dec. 30, Detroit Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton had strong words for recent U.S.-led actions toward Iraq. (See "Military archbishop questions actions against Iraq," *Catholic Courier*, Jan. 7, 1999.)

"I think the leaders of our country could be put on trial for war crimes," he declared. "These are war crimes."

He has history on his side.

On Feb. 29, 1992, the International War Crimes Tribunal — judges from such nations as Japan, Canada, France, Britain, Germany and the United States — found then-President George Bush, Vice President Dan Quayle, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Colin Powell and Desert Storm Commander Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf guilty of 19 "separate crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity" in connection with the 1991 Gulf War.

Among the tribunal's recommendations was "the immediate revocation of all embargoes, sanctions and penalties against Iraq because they constitute a continuing crime against humanity."

The findings of that tribunal have been largely ignored by the United States. The embargo and sanctions continue, as does U.S. military action: Massive bombings took place the week before Christmas and skirmishes over Iraq are ongoing.



Reuters/CNS

An Iraqi nurse cries beside a seriously wounded man early Dec. 17 at Baghdad's Yarmouk Hospital. Iraqi authorities said the man was a civilian caught in an explosion during a U.S./British attack on Iraq.

EDITORIAL

Humanitarian groups estimate that eight years of U.S.-led actions against Iraq have cost more than a million civil-

ian lives. Most of the dead are children.

There's only one word for that: Genocide.

Church leaders — including Pope John Paul II — have questioned and criticized U.S. actions. Of the most recent mass bombings, Rochester Bishop Matthew H. Clark declared in a Dec. 23 statement, "As the spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester and as a private person, I must condemn this bombing by our country."

Saddam Hussein is no saint. His actions have helped the tensions to continue. He has attacked neighboring nations. He has shown a willingness to use chemical weapons, and may possess biological ones. He is by all accounts a cruel dictator whose actions have cost thousands of Iraqi lives.

But there are other cruel regimes that have oppressed and killed their people and threatened their neighbors, sometimes on far greater scales than Hussein. China comes readily to mind. Yet they attract trade agreements, not air attacks.

The time has come for the United States to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict with Iraq and to abide by international law.

The first step should be relaxing the embargo to allow humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people immediately.

If not, perhaps another U.S. president will face war crimes charges.

St. Mary's maternity ward will be missed

To the editors:

We want to extend a warm thank you to all of the St. Mary's Hospital staff for a beautiful birth experience of our new daughter. Vivianne Rose Kelly was born on December 17, 1998 at 7:51 a.m. Unfortunately we can't send this letter of thanks to the floor at the hospital since the wonderful people who helped us aren't together on the 3300 floor any longer. You see, St. Mary's closed the maternity wing, and with it 150 years of bringing new life into our community. Our new daughter Vivianne Rose Kelly, in fact, was the last baby to be born in that wonderful place. We've had 3 of our 4 children born at St. Mary's, and felt particularly blessed by this experience. Every one of the staff gave more than just ex-

cellent health care. They gave something much deeper, they shared their lives, and God worked effortlessly through them.

We also want to thank our midwife Mary Maher, whose selfless care of Margie and Vivianne gave us hope and peace. This was our first experience with a midwife. Mary was noticeably present in the whole birth experience. Mary stayed all night and helped Margie through her labor with confidence and love. This is obviously one of Mary's missions in life, who views her work as God's gift to her. Her support and selflessness made our birth experience one we will cherish always.

People keep asking us what it was like having the last baby born at St. Mary's Hospital. Amid our joy at having a new

daughter in the Christmas season of hope, we felt a sense of sadness and loss. The nails awkwardly sticking out of the bare walls, and the hushed tones of the staff packing up things and saying their last good-byes, brought the reality closer.

There was no place we would rather have been than this place where the light of Christ shone through all the staff and where we know life is valued in all of its stages. So as the snow lightly fell from the sky and the Christmas music softly played in the background, we thanked God for His perfect timing.

Thank you again for your tender care of our baby and family. God Bless You!

Sean and Margie Kelly and Family
Muriel Drive, Rochester

Questions description of Mary's pregnancy

To the editors:

A recent parish bulletin from within the Diocese of Rochester contained a Consistent Life Ethic Calendar. In it the following topic was presented for consideration: "Mary was an unwed pregnant teen. How could you have helped her? How could you help other pregnant teens?" To compare the condition of the Blessed Mother's divine maternity to that of an unwed pregnant teen is to say the least, a manifestation of gross ignorance.

The circumstantiality of unwed pregnant teens typifies man's fallen nature, not in the form of the existence of new life, but in the form of intrinsically disordered acts performed by the participants, sex outside of marriage without the intent of bringing forth children — "It (fornication) is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered to the good of spouses and the generation and education of children." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2353). If these teens have reached the age of reason, knew that the act was wrong and freely chose to do it, then a sin was committed. Regardless of whether a sin was imputed to them (by God) or not, they did the wrong thing.

On the other hand, Mary's pregnancy was a unique occurrence whose participants, Mary and the Holy Spirit performed in an all good, all perfect, and all holy manner.

Mary was an unwed pregnant teen? "The divine response to her question, 'How can this be, since I know not man?' was given by the power of the Spirit: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you.'" "The Holy Spirit, 'the Lord, the giver of Life,' is sent to sanctify the womb of the Virgin Mary and divinely fecundate it, causing her to conceive the eternal Son of the Fa-

ther in a humanity drawn from her own." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 484, 485). There can be no analogy drawn, example made or lesson learned by comparing the condition of unwed pregnant teens to Mary's pregnancy, there is not an iota of similarity between the two.

Yes, we should help unwed pregnant teens, but let's do it as Catholics in accord with Catholic teachings and not as whimsical social workers ad-libbing our strategies and methods.

Robert A. Martino, Sr.
West Church Street, Elmira

EWTN is available on shortwave

To the editors:

Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Television Network is popular among many Catholics. For those who do not have cable, but would love to benefit from good Catholic programs, there is an inexpensive alternative. It's shortwave radio.

I recently purchased one and am very impressed by the content and quality of the radio programs. My favorite program is "Catholic Answers" which airs Monday through Friday from 6 to 7 p.m. I usually

record it on cassette and listen to it in the car. Catholic Answers is a national call-in program. They often have notable guests on the program.

If you would like more information on Mother Angelica's 24 hour Worldwide Catholic Radio call EWTN at (205) 271-2900. If you would like, you can call me at 621-3906 and I can tell you how to get started.

Ray Buonemani
Holcroft Road, Rochester