

# 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.

## Iraq editorial draws reader response

### To the editors:

A respect for truth and fairness requires me to take strong exception to your Jan. 14 editorial ("Who's the criminal here?") accusing the U.S. Government of committing "war crimes" by taking military action against Iraq this past December.

Although I personally question the wisdom and efficacy of the recent air strikes, it does not necessarily follow that the military operation is illegal or immoral. Alas, you have chosen to do just that and, worst of all, for reasons that are both factually specious and morally suspect.

For example, your argument that Bishop Gumbleton "has history on his side" when he declared that "the leaders of our country could be put on trial for war crimes," has no basis whatsoever in fact or law. To cite the 1992 decision of the so-called "International War Crimes Tribunal" ... is nonsensical since, as any effort to ascertain the facts would have shown, this self-constituted body had absolutely no legal standing... No international legal institution has ever recognized its competence. In short, its alleged "findings" were without merit or substance.

More troubling ... is your assertion that the U.S. is guilty of "genocide" because it backs the sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations in 1991. Again, one can argue about the efficacy, even morality, of such an embargo but to equate it with genocide is absurd and outrageous. Since its inception the sanctions' regime has made allowance for the importation of such humanitarian assistance as food and medicine; the Iraqi regime has consistently refused to take advantage of this option, however, demanding instead a complete and unconditional lifting of the embargo. It is the intransigent Iraqi regime, not the U.S. or the U.N., that should be condemned for callously allowing the deaths of its own citizens for cynical propaganda purposes.

Finally, it is to be regretted that your editorial failed to base its rationale on the just war theory that has guided Catholic moral thinking for centuries. Reliance on this tradition, whose relevance becomes even more pertinent in a modern context, could have provided a more balanced and persuasive framework for discussing current military operations against Iraq. Your failure to do so, unfortunately, has undermined your credibility as a responsible voice in the ongoing debate about what should be the Catholic response regarding the morality of modern warfare.

**Richard J. Daly**  
Myers Road, Lansing



## Editorial's insight added to parish's efforts on peace

### To the editors:

The editorial of Jan. 14, regarding the increasing aggression of our government toward Iraq, is strongly to be commended. Thank you for the clear and courageous message it gives our parishes and people, who continue to speak of being a "pro life Church," yet who often are kept unaware of the great moral issues of the time. Your reflections in the editorial have contributed immensely to our discussions and commitment.

In a recent article by Howard Zinn, author of "A People's History of the United States," he writes, "whatever danger Sad-

dam Hussein may pose in the future, he is not a clear and present danger to the peace of the world. We are."

As Christians following the Prince of Peace and believing that the "grief and anguish of the people of our time ... are the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1.1), we are grateful for your editorial insight that gives us encouragement and support in our personal and parish efforts to address the sufferings of Iraq, and to declare our life-supporting solidarity with its people.

**Judith E. Kiehl, Pastoral Associate**  
Holy Trinity Church, Webster

## Don't commit war crimes for me

### To the editors:

As a member of the Rochester Friends Meeting (Quakers), I am writing in support of the editorial entitled, "Who's the criminal here?" which appeared in the *Courier* on Jan. 14.

I feel that the continued use of sanctions, as well as the bombing, do qualify as war crimes, because so many innocent civilians are suffering for the actions of their leaders, whom they did not elect. The civilians did not invade Kuwait -

their leaders ordered it - but they are the ones who must bear the brunt of our revenge.

The United States SHOULD seek a peaceful resolution of its conflicts with Saddam.

I feel the same way about this issue as I did when I opposed the U.S. war in Vietnam. I do not want these crimes committed in MY name.

**Talva Chapin**  
Merwin Avenue, Rochester

## Story didn't stress consequences of sexual activity

### To the editors:

I am writing in reference to Mike Latona's recent article "Teen pregnancy: Life-changing choices" (Jan. 7).

I am so thankful that Eileen Meyers chose life! I commend her and how beautiful a mother she is. How difficult the decisions must have been for her, but she has upheld the sanctity of life and is trying her best to face the responsibilities of motherhood. All at such a young age, too.

My daughter found herself pregnant at age 17 and her story is very similar to Eileen's. I feel I can comment based on this experience which has affected our family so much.

I found the article seemed to portray teenage pregnancy in a "rosy" tone. There was not enough emphasis placed on the problems that have occurred. It seems that although her life plans have changed somewhat, Eileen fortunately seems to be enjoying her life with her son, she is engaged, and looks forward to the future when she can marry the baby's father. It is encouraging to know that things are working out for her, but for many it does not. I know that a new life - a baby - can brighten up anyone's day, but the reality is that parenthood is difficult work. Eileen

has missed out on a wonderful part of her own childhood. Also, she may not like raising her son in her parents' home, but she is so fortunate to have their help and support. It would be so much more difficult for her to be on her own - even if she married the father at such a young age. As a counselor for Birthright I talked with many young teenage mothers who had no family support, had relationship problems, and were experiencing financial insecurities.

There are many emotional and psychological aspects to deal with and they will be there for a long time. I know the disappointment and hurt I experienced when I found out my 17 year old was pregnant. Although she is maturing very quickly, she was much too young at age 17 to become a parent. She also experienced pre-term labor, was hospitalized several times - her own health was at risk - and risked giving birth to a premature infant. Feeling very much of my own motherhood, I anguished through these difficult days of risk, torn by decision-making, full of hurt, worry and doubts.

This article, in my opinion, did not leave the reader with a strong enough message about the serious consequences of pre-

marital sex, especially for teenagers. Not only is pre-marital sex morally wrong but the possible consequences, either those that can be life-threatening - i.e. AIDS, abortions - or life-changing - i.e. teenage pregnancy - are SERIOUS consequences. Teenagers should not be faced with the decisions that these involve. Although there is strong pressure today to be sexually active, I think sexual activity takes so much more away from the teenager than what it can give them. Respecting the sanctity of life and the creation of life, I can only pray that more teenagers accept the challenge to not become sexually active - that they will accept this beautiful gift as God intended within the Sacrament of Matrimony.

**Judie Worhacz**  
Bailey Road, Bloomfield

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Unfortunately, a single article cannot address all aspects of such a complex issue as teenage sexuality AND pregnancy. The intent of this story was only to discuss a teenager's decision to bear and raise the baby she already had conceived - and to list resources for other teens in the same predicament. We have published numerous articles about teenagers abstaining from sexual activity, and will continue to do so in the future.