

# 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.

## Ted Turner should 'get with it'

A few weeks ago, the Rev. Jerry Falwell's *National Liberty Journal* implied that one of the Teletubbies — genderless, childlike creatures on a popular PBS children's program — is gay. The comments drew extensive media coverage and immediate ridicule.

Now we have questionable comments by media mogul Ted Turner to consider.

At the annual meeting of the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association in Washington, D.C., Turner said Feb. 16 that the Ten Commandments were "a little out of date" — especially the prohibition against adultery — and that Pope John Paul II should "get with it" on population issues. He accompanied this and other comments about the pope with a Polish joke.

A spokesman for Turner later issued a one-sentence apology. But it's troubling that the founder of the Cable News Network — and now a vice chairman of Time-Warner Inc. — said such things in the first place.

This is a man whose media "children" — CNN, TNT, TBS, Turner Classic Movies — play such a prominent role in helping to entertain and inform television viewers.

Public ethnic and religious insensitivity by such an influential individual is startling — but, in the case of Turner, perhaps not surprising.

After all, Turner also owns the Atlanta Braves, whose fans — including Turner — regularly engage in pseudo "Indian" war



chants and the "tomahawk chop." Their antics offend many Native Americans.

And, like fans at a Braves' game, Turner's Feb. 16 audience joined in his recent demonstration of insensitivity.

According to news accounts of the gathering — at which Turner received an award for his \$1 billion contribution to the U.N. Population Fund — the comments denigrating Poles, the pope and the Ten Commandments drew laughter and applause from his listeners. William Donohue of the Catholic League for Civil and Religious Liberty later went so far as to suggest that the audience response was a sign of "anti-Catholic bigotry" that taints the population-control movement.

"Bigotry" might be a tad strong. But the movement certainly has shown a tendency to criticize and belittle Catholic teachings.

It is also interesting that while media ran a number of reaction stories to Rev. Falwell's Teletubby faux pas, Turner's comments and subsequent apology generally drew only passing notice. Why do ludicrous comments from the so-called "religious right" get so much more attention than do offensive remarks from the "secular left?"

Instead of telling the pope to "get with it," Turner — and others in media who share his views — should realize that the days of making jokes at the expense of other people's ethnicity and religion are over.

## Homilists should learn from black preachers

### To the editors:

I hope that the priests of the diocese read in the Feb. 7 *Democrat and Chronicle* of the impressive growth the black Churches in Rochester are witnessing. Not coincidentally, practical preaching on virtue accompanies their practice of the corporal works of mercy. The dwindling number of Catholics in the pew are salt-starved and suffering from an almost totally sugar diet from the pulpit. Not infrequently my friends and I bemoan the bland generalities about loving one another which pass for homilies in most of our parishes. The only souls satisfied with such unspecific fare are those who have scant intention of living an authentic love actualized by its works.

Never the do's and do not's. Never a word to our children. It particularly irks me when my homilist insists that despite my total pleasure in the Mass experience, I must share the wealth with others. As is, I can think of many more humanly pleasurable experiences than Sunday Mass. It may surprise our venerable priests to learn that when our intellects and wills are left cold by bad preaching, Mass is made a drudgery for most. Never a word to all those children with whom we live, about forbearance with each other, or overcoming themselves or Christian maturity. God only knows why more folks don't drag themselves out of bed, and their quarrelsome children to Church.

Did it ever occur to priests that they might help us in this age particularly by their words? Do:

- Arouse our intellects without being heterodox. Inform us of our long and rich tradition.

- Inspire our wills. Teach us specific virtues. Give us again a fear of offending God — that gift of the Holy Spirit which is considered the source of all wisdom in Scripture.

- Give us heroes to emulate and heroic stories to imitate.

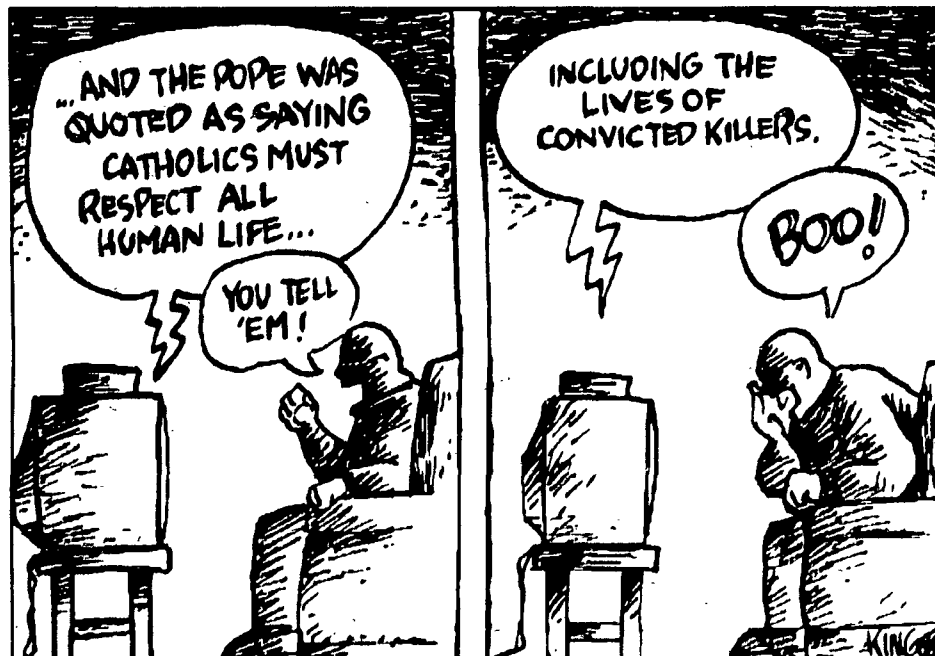
- Teach us Catholic social teaching. Now only John Paul II preaches on this.

- Speak at every Mass to our children. We have to live with them after all.

Do Not: Repeat the same homily each week. The only excuse for that is not knowing our faith. And there's no excuse for that.

The half empty churches speak also of half empty intellects, and nearly vacant souls. They speak too of calloused priests who can't hear the cry of their poor. Fill us.

**Helen Ann Wagner**  
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Rochester



## Can't layman know more than priest?

### To the editors:

Read with interest your article on the controversial booklet being distributed in the Southern Tier on the windshield of cars at various Catholic churches.

The priests of the various parishes do have a point that they were not consulted prior to the distribution of the books. I can see where pastors can be upset over this but to attack the book is another matter.

I have read the book and find it to be a very interesting litany on the "end times," which most parish priests or priests in general don't want to talk about even though it does appear that Mr. Mazzaresse seems to know the subject in detail and everything he details in his book is found in Scripture and he is able to document it for the reader.

I also found it interesting that Father Thomas Burr, pastor of St. Mary Our Mother Church seems to imply that just because he is a priest he is more knowledgeable about the Bible than a "lay person." I believe Father Burr said "His education is better than mine, is what he is saying." Maybe it is Father Burr. Does the fact that a person is a priest automatically mean that he knows more about the Bible than a lay person?

What may be an interesting scenario would be to have a debate between Father Burr and Mr. Mazzaresse on the Scripture regarding the end times to see who knows what about the Bible? Sure would get me in attendance.

**Gary R. Savard**  
Plumosa Drive, Ft. Myers, Florida

## Why do Catholics need so many annulments?

### To the editors:

Annulments have been derided by Protestants as the "Catholic Divorce" indicating the hypocrisy of a church that opposes divorce in doctrine but practices it with annulment and remarriage.

The Jan. 21 *Courier* article on marriage ("New program aids those previously married") seems to imply that the Catholic Church has followed the Protestants in accepting divorce and remarriage. If a person has received a valid annulment, it means a previous "marriage" was not valid, therefore the person was not "previously married" as the article

states.

The couple named in the first paragraph of the article had been through "two marriages each." Does this mean they both were widowed twice? If not, then they are not eligible to marry unless they had NO previous valid marriages.

Considering the scandalous number of annulments granted to American Catholics, one wonders what it is about Catholics that they have so much difficulty contracting valid marriages.

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