

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.

Just war theory is 'seductive illusion'

To the editors:

There was a letter recently criticizing the *Catholic Courier* because its editorial on Iraq "failed to base its rationale on the Just War Theory."

The Just War Theory was never taught by Jesus who in fact taught a nonviolent love of one's enemies. Jesus could have called a legion of angels at the end of his life to defend himself from those making war on him; instead he asked the Father to forgive those attacking him. There is no appearance of the Just War Theory in all of the New Testament. In fact this theory does not appear in Christianity until over 300 years after Christ. Christians in that era, who were closest to Christ, did not participate in war because they saw it incompatible with Christ's life and His teaching. The Just War Theory is not a dogma of the church. No Catholic has to believe in it to be in full communion with the church.

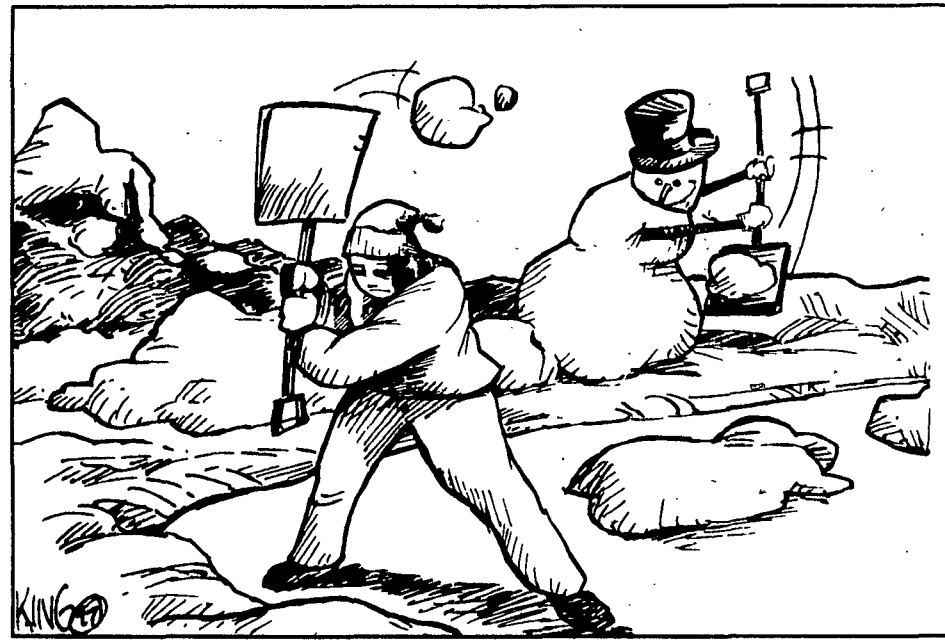
St. Augustine — after St. Ambrose — in developing the Just War tradition never said there could be a just war. Rather IF Christians were ever to participate in a war these standards would have to be strictly and completely followed. The strong moral presumption was always against war and in favor of peace. It is quite the opposite of what our sad history has shown.

If there ever were to be a just war, the seven conditions for the just war had to each be rigorously upheld. For example lives of innocent civilians were never to be taken directly REGARDLESS of the reason for doing so. If one targeted non-combatants for any reason the war was unjust. There were 52 million people killed during World War II; 48 percent of those killed were civilians. In fact in the last 30 years over 70 percent of those killed in wars and conflict have been non-combatants. More recently in 1993, the U.S. Bishops have stated it this way: "the targeting of civilian infrastructures which affects ordinary citizens long after the hostilities have ceased can amount to making war on non-combatants" — which is what we have done to the people of Iraq with the blockade. Yet no Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox hierarchy have ever declared one of the wars of its own nation unjust for this reason — or for any of the other conditions — while the war is going on. If the Just War Theory has ever been applied at all it has been selectively applied to justify one's own position. This is why no nation has ever prepared its military strategy on the basis of these rigorous standards — which would be seen as an unnecessary burden rather than a moral guide. They simply have ignored them. St. Augustine developed the THEORY to limit Christian participation in war, yet is continually used to justify the violence of war. If one was to follow these standards completely you would end up that a just war is impossible.

The Just War Theory is an illusion that has seduced and lured Christians to try to appropriate a divine approval — God is on our side rather than God is God for all nations and people — that is clearly contrary to the life and teachings of Jesus. It has allowed Christianity to arguably be the single largest destroyer of life in war in the last 1,700 years. The increasing use of violence, like in Iraq, creates an insensitivity to the dignity of life and impairs the ability of even those who try to apply the Just War Theory the way St. Augustine intended it. Justified war is merely a way to perpetuate the cycle of violence that moves us further and further from the way Jesus lived and taught.

Father Jim Hewes
Newman Catholic Community
of Genesee
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Genesee

EDITOR'S NOTE: These are the final letters we will publish in response to our editorial on Iraq.



Editorial 'cut through fog'

To the editors:

It's not often that one encounters a courageous editorial that cuts through the fog of official propaganda and tells the truth. But that is the case with your Jan. 14 editorial about Iraq.

Simply by resort to official UN figures anyone can learn that 5,000 Iraqi children are dying monthly from the absence of both food and medicine. So it's perfectly clear that Iraq for the past eight years has been in the grip of a raging genocide.

Don't blame the dictator, Saddam Hussein, for this. The severe shortage of food, medicines and chemicals to decontaminate drinking water traces to one nation and its savage policies — the United States.

What should anyone suppose will be the

ultimate result of U.S. policies that allow some countries — read Israel — to manufacture nuclear and chemical weapons but bring missile strikes not only on Iraq but on Sudan and Afghanistan?

I'm afraid that such brutal and short-sighted policies will draw escalating violence for the American people in the future.

Finally, words of high gratitude must be extended to Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Pope Paul and Bishop Clark for their forthright and principled stands on the dying Iraqi children.

Mitchell Kaidy, chairman
Rochester Committee
for Middle East Peace
Crittenden Road, Rochester

Wishes church had Falwell's clarity

To the editors:

Regarding Sister Schoelles' column on remarks by Rev. Jerry Falwell in the Feb. 18 *Catholic Courier*: While I agree that Falwell's comments about Teletubbies may seem trite what is not trite is the pervasiveness of immorality that is growing throughout our society.

Contrary to Sister Schoelles as a Catholic I often find myself more in agreement with Rev. Falwell than not. Morality is slowly disintegrating before our very eyes and some in the name of their political ideology would choose to ignore it. Although I may not agree with everything Rev. Falwell has to say, I commend him for having the courage to speak out in clear and unambiguous terms. Rather than criticize Rev. Falwell maybe we should take note.

For instance, while I have no quarrel with what I believe was Bishop Clark's intent with respect to the liturgies for the gay community at Sacred Heart Cathedral, his comments regarding church teaching on homosexual lifestyles were equivocal at best. It's quite possible that this ambiguity

perpetuated the situation at Corpus Christi Church.

The Feb. 18 *Courier* provided another example of the church's ambiguity. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said recently, "that judging a Catholic politician's vote on abortion legislation as sinful must take into account circumstances, freedom, intention and informed conscience, and that ultimately the question lies between the person and his or her confessor."

I agree with Cardinal Ratzinger's last point, but what is he trying to tell us with the rest of the statement? Leave political correctness to the politicians. The church needs to teach the way Jesus did with love, compassion and clarity.

Timothy P. Andrews Sr.
Crosby Lane, Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: The quote in Mr. Andrews' letter does not represent the exact words of Cardinal Ratzinger. It is a paraphrased comment contained in the Catholic News Service story on the cardinal's Feb. 12 press conference.

God will reign long after Ted Turner's gone

To the editors:

This letter is in reference to your editorial ... "Ted Turner should get with it" (Feb. 25).

First of all, let me say that I am in agreement with the editorial. The remarks Mr. Turner made were uncalled for, especially since they came from a man who has such wealth and wields so much influence via his media empire...

Unquestionably, Mr. Turner has a singular talent for accumulating untold wealth. No one would deny that. Also, his huge contribution to the U.N. Population Fund leaves one in a quandary of speculation as to his underlying motivation for the donation. Of course, Mr. Turner could take perhaps a hefty tax writeoff on

his tax returns, and one may ponder whether or not there were any stipulations for the contribution's usage.

His remark about the Ten Commandments being out of date, especially the prohibition against adultery, approaches the height of asininity! Perhaps he would presumptuously like to attempt rewriting the Ten Commandments handed down by God Almighty to Moses, to suit himself and some others, thereby challenging the Word of God!

Most assuredly, God will reign eternally over creation after Mr. Turner is long gone and forgotten.

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