

OPINIONS

Dr. Death faces life

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.

Guilty.

That was the verdict a Michigan jury handed down March 26 in the murder trial of Dr. Jack Kevorkian.

Guilty of second-degree murder in connection with the death of 52-year-old Thomas Youk last Sept. 17. A videotape of Kevorkian administering the lethal injection to Youk, who had Lou Gehrig's disease, was shown on "60 Minutes" Nov. 22.

It's ironic that a judge likely will sentence "Dr. Death" — who, by his own count, has helped more than 130 people commit suicide in the last nine years — to life.

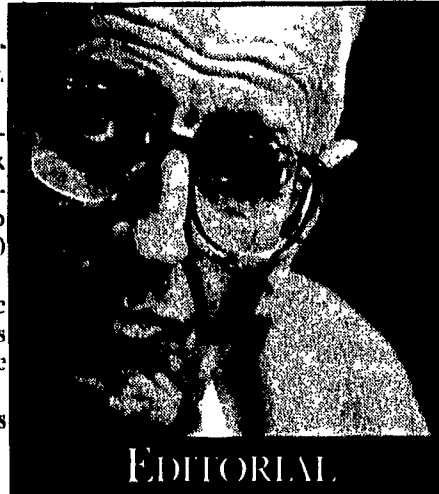
Kevorkian had managed to thwart previous attempts to halt his activities. Four previous trials for helping people commit suicide ended with three acquittals and one mistrial.

Legal experts predict that he will attempt to have this latest trial declared a mistrial, or to get the verdict overturned. But the circumstances are different this time. For the first time, Kevorkian directly killed a person. This time he did more than simply assist someone in ending his or her own life.

As the jury determined, it was murder.

That videotape evidence — which Kevorkian himself provided to the world — was hard to ignore.

Barring the unforeseen, Kevorkian will be jailed. There is little joy in that. Prison is not something one would wish on anyone. But this seems to be the only way to stop Kevorkian. We can only hope that he will not take part in further deaths while he is out on bail



awaiting sentencing, or during the inevitable appeal process.

We can feel sadness for Kevorkian the man. But the man also has become a symbol of the "culture of death," which Pope John Paul II has repeatedly decried. As such, we must oppose what Kevorkian does and preaches.

We can also feel sadness that as his activities appear to be ending, the culture of death continues to spread.

On the day the verdict against Kevorkian was announced, U.S. and NATO air strikes rained on the former Yugoslavia, taking lives and apparently spurring increased ethnic violence on the ground. In this country, thousands of unborn children died, and hundreds of people waited on death row. In Oregon, where assisted suicide is legal, debate simmered over

placing limits on government insurance coverage for the long-term care of terminal patients — but offering to pay for their suicides.

Ethnic violence, unwanted pregnancies, crime and physical suffering are complex issues that demand much thought and prayer. Unfortunately, our culture all too often opts for solutions that are, at least superficially, quick and easy — whether abortion or the assassination of a doctor who performs abortions.

As history has shown, however, such solutions often come back to haunt us.

If and when Kevorkian is jailed and his assisted-suicide activities cease, we will have achieved one small victory in the fight for life. But the culture of death persists.

Walk a mile in moccasins of addicted

To the editors:

One of your readers complained about the fact that our New York State bishops have asked for relaxation of the Rockefeller drug laws. He wrote, in part, "People who deal or use illegal drugs are supporting a business that produces 'crack babies,' dead-end hopeless youth ... expensive drug rehabs with high relapse rates ..." etc. His thinking is that such offenders should be prosecuted to the full limit of the law.

Does this man personally know anyone who has been caught up in addiction? Oh, how many stories I could tell him! He needs to get down on his knees to thank God he has not been thus afflicted. I suggest that he go to talk to and to help just one such person — perhaps someone in prison for a long time for a nonviolent drug offense — and that he give that individual unconditional love and encouragement, like Jesus. What an eye-opener that would be!

We don't need more jails and prisons for these poor souls. Our resources should be used on working with young people to keep them from trying drugs in the first place, and for more concentrated rehabilitation and adequate follow-up. Perhaps the person who wrote should be "sentenced" to spending some time in one of the new drug courts, listening to the judge, and learning about the remarkable results from this approach.

It is so easy to condemn. Remember the old saying, "Never judge another until you have walked a mile in his moccasins."

**Grace B. Carnes
Eagle Ridge Circle
Rochester**



Article encouraged reflection

To the editors:

Bravo!

The words and lessons given by Father Tim Keating in the wonderful front-page feature, "Let the Land Lie Fallow," can only help readers begin to define their lives with real substance and depth.

This is a *Catholic Courier* issue that I will save and refer to often! Trust me, as aware as I myself am of the need to slow down, to pray and to reflect — well, even I find myself falling into societal and cultural traps that entice me to join the "rush" to do and be more — precisely at a time when that may not be what is best for myself or for those around me. What guilt trips result from such worldly pursuits!

Just as Jesus took time to retreat to the desert — and encouraged his disciples to escape the throngs of people as well — to

pray and to refresh, perhaps that is what Pope John Paul and Father Keating are illustrating for us, for our spiritual, emotional and physical health.

Just think of the repercussions if such a rejuvenating principle carries over to the over-burdened environment and to our outlandish consumerism. If the entire world were to take a slow, deep, calming, cleansing breath and to meditate on where it is and to be thankful on how it is extraordinarily blessed — to be truly present to each other.

Thank you so much for the article. Also, the cover art was exceptionally pleasing to me. Congrats. I hope many, many people benefit from the story.

**Anna Decker
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Abortion may be legal, but so is pollution, alcohol

To the editors:

Abortion, which means to stop, to end or to terminate, is a law that allows killing! Now, what is being stopped, ended or terminated? An innocent, helpless life that is in its mother's womb.

Just because something is legal, does this make it right? Is there anything in our society that is legal but not necessarily right or without harm? Does our society have any laws that may not be in our best interest? Have any laws been rescinded be-

cause they are not right? Alcohol is definitely legal but can certainly be harmful. Smoking is legal but is definitely harmful. Pollution, to a certain level is lawful but can be harmful — that is why laws are being made to protect humans, animals and the environment. I am not suggesting that all our laws are harmful; I am just saying that a few may be.

Abortion, legal since 1973, is harmful as an innocent life is removed from its mother's womb. Let us pray for those af-

ected by abortion — the babies, their families, and for people arrested, hurt and killed at abortion sites. We just need to listen to God and to pray that the human law allowing abortions gets overturned and we need to follow the Divine law that says "Thou shalt not kill!" Let the babies live; if anything should be stopped, ended or terminated, it should be abortions!

**Steve DeLucia
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