

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.

Why focus on activity of 19 grads?

To the editors:

Concerning the many letters I have seen and read in the *Catholic Courier* and other newspapers about the U.S. Army School of the Americas, I have the following questions and thoughts.

Has anyone proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the students in the SOA are taught anything other than professionalism and respect for human rights?

Are these students taught to kill priests and religious and to violate human rights?

Are all of these students taught the same courses or do they have "special courses" for Salvadoran officers?

From some of the letters I have read, I get the impression that the writers want to "throw the baby out with the bath water."

If police officers graduate from a police academy and some are later accused of police brutality, we do not close the police academy. If some Aquinas Institute (my Alma Mater) graduates become criminals — hypothetically, of course — we do not advocate closing the Aquinas Institute.

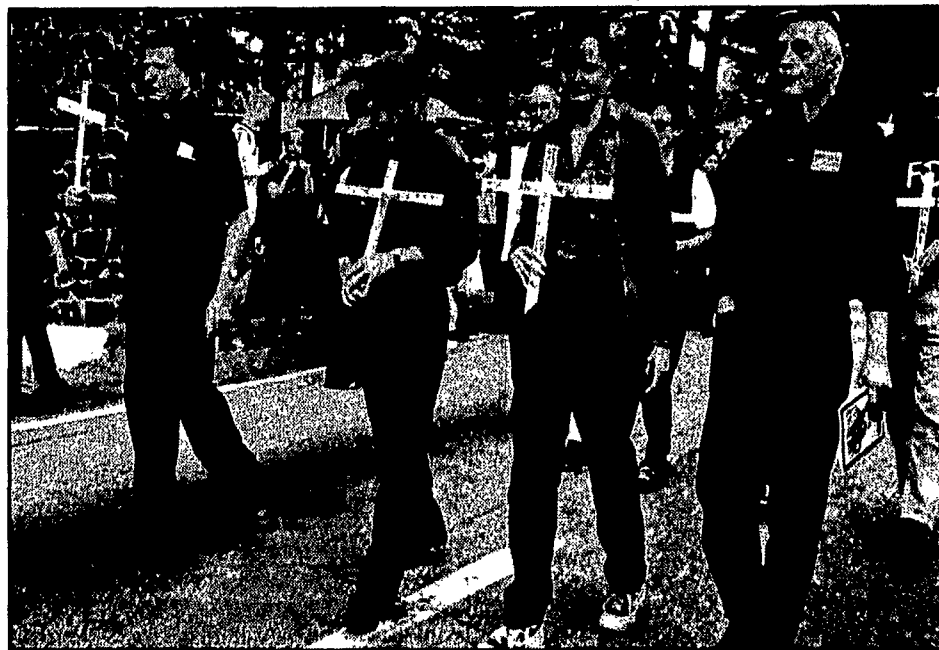
You cannot condemn an institution strictly on the behavior of some of its graduates. If that were the case, we would have to close our seminaries and other schools.

If the courses taught by an institution are morally good and proper, the fault lies with the graduates not the institution. If the people attending the institution are flawed by their environment, upbringing, culture or other pressures, no short courses in professionalism and respect for human rights or human life are going to change all of them. However, just because we cannot change all of them, we must not stop trying.

If 19 of 26 Salvadoran officers cited for human rights violations were graduates of the SOA, then where did the seven who were not SOA graduates learn to kill and violate human rights? Why are we not interested in these other seven but only the 19 we can pin a label on?

Respect for human rights and human life must be learned starting in infancy and on through adulthood. You cannot expect to change every person in adulthood if they have little or no precious teaching, training or indoctrination in respect for human life and human rights. But remember the old adage, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again!"

Ramon G. Becker
Rouge Road
Rochester



Liz Quirin/CNS

Jesuit Father Daniel Berrigan, right, and actor Martin Sheen, third from right, join the annual School of the Americas protest at Fort Benning, Ga., Nov. 21. About 12,000 people gathered to urge closing of the military school.

Close Unibomber's college?

To the editors:

In another defense of the School of the Americas, a special assistant to the Secretary of the Army had an article in *The New York Times* entitled: "Policy changes to help further democracy." (Aug. 31).

This article challenged the letter (Nov. 11) of John Honeck that criticized the *National Review* magazine for its "support of a war-making state."

The only war I'm aware of that has U.S. support is the war being waged against

the unborn via taxpayer money sent to the U.N. and Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood should be the focus of our wrath rather than an organization that has served our needs over the years.

Closing the School of Americas because of unproven allegations would be somewhat like closing Harvard because the Unibomber went there.

Robert Bart
Ithaca

Leaders have held Corpus Christi together with quiet grace, dignity

To the editors:

Throughout all of our ups and downs, Corpus Christi has come through like a beacon in the night. Unfortunately, there has been so much sadness and animosity — for both sides — that it sometimes felt, at least to me, that our focus was not of God, and on reconstructing what was thought right, and what was thought wrong.

In spite of the past and present, however, I feel that credit should be given to our pastor, Father Daniel McMullin, our pastoral associate Sister Sue Hoffman, and our business manager, Rosalee Magee. Among the three, they have brought a sense of spiritual love and family to Corpus Christi, as well as never letting the focus of our faith fall to the wayside; our love of God the Father; and the Holy Eucharist.

Even through weeks with no time off in sight, 10-hour plus days, parishioners in different and constant states of need and comfort, and struggling financial worries constantly, flooding their minds from first thing in the morning until last thought at night, Father Dan, Sister Sue, and Rosalee have held our parish — and each other — together with quiet grace and dignity. As a parishioner and volunteer, I have myself seen firsthand what our staff deal with daily.

It certainly gives me new insight to how people in our community, and work places, can connect so well. It also gives me new respect for what our wonderful staff have done, and continue to do. They are a true blessing to all of us.

Lillian J. Strobeck
Lake Avenue
Rochester

Low school salaries, not pension, cause of grievance

To the editors:

This is in response to the letter written by Angela Savino in the *Catholic Courier* of November 11, concerning the diocesan pension "frozen in time."

The Diocesan pension — along with many pension plans — does not give a cost of living increase. It does, indeed, remain

frozen at the amount granted at the time of retirement. The Diocese pays a certain percentage of the employee's salary into the pension pool after the first year of employment of over 1000 hours. The employee pays nothing into this pension fund. After five years the teacher is totally vested.

This would be a wonderful benefit if Catholic School employees' salaries were higher. I believe the writer's feeling of "what's fair in the workplace" should apply to the salary earned by teachers and other staff in the Catholic Schools and not to the pension plan. Catholic School Teachers' salaries cannot begin to compete with their public school counterparts. Teachers' salaries are dependent on tuition. If tuition goes higher, parents remove their children and there are less classrooms needed and less teachers. Our dedicated, wonderful teachers and staff deserve higher salaries — that is a given. All of us support that. The question is where the funding will come from. Bob and Peggy Wegman are most generous in funding the WIN Schools but cannot do it all. We need alternative funding in order to address Angela's sincere concerns.

Virginia Steinwachs, SSJ
Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Catholic Schools
Diocese of Rochester

Saddened parish must resort to gambling

To the editors:

As a member of Holy Cross Parish, I must admit to being somewhat saddened by the quarter-page advertisement in the Nov. 11 edition of the *Catholic Courier* soliciting players to their (Holy Cross') 2000 lucky daily number calendar drawing. Saddened, because of the reality, that in order to offset the cost of our parish budget, along with helping to educate our young men and women, we must resort to a disease that robs men, women and children of their moral character.

The other reality is this. These types of fund-raising as abhorrent as they are, won't disappear from the same grounds we worship our Lord, until all of us who call ourselves God's children, begin to take responsibility for the manner in which we apply the principle of giving back to God, an honorable portion of what God allows us to accumulate. Don't look around, we know who we are!

Frank G. Kirchgessner
Florida Avenue
Greece