

# 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.

## Church must speak clearly

### To the editors:

Thank you for focusing on the consistent life ethic, with articles on Carol Crossed (February 24) and on the death penalty (Sister Patricia Schoelles' column of March 2).

Our Church now urgently needs an increasingly clear, outspoken stance on the C.I.E. issues of economic injustice and warfare. To our shame, despite Church teachings, faithful Catholics are often left unaware of the contemporary requirements of economic justice. Scant are Church homilies and parish education programs devoted to this issue. As our "global economy" and individual economic choices leave a worldwide wake of hunger and destitution, Catholics are left prey to assuming that our capitalist/consumerist values are not a moral issue.

While rightly abhorring the deaths caused by abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment, are Catholics also publicly condemning the immorality of our military expenditures and of America's homicidal "interventions" and wars? Do we decry this misuse of resources and taking of life? The Ten Commandments which state unequivocally, "Thou shalt not kill," have never differentiated between the taking of "innocent" and "non-innocent" life. The Just War Theory, an aberration which is used by every nation to quell arguments against war, is a concept inconsistent with all that Jesus taught and the early Church lived. Following the example of Jesus, the Church was originally boldly pacifist and clear on the fact that Christians could never participate in military homicide.

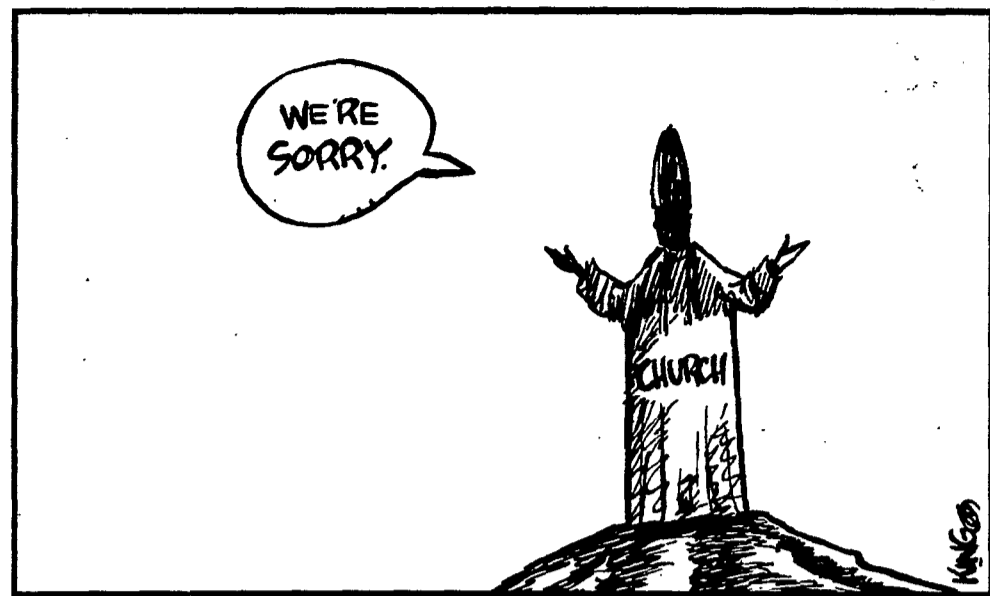
Father John McKenzie, SJ, premier Catholic biblical scholar, referring to the Church's mission to proclaim unequivocally the nonviolence of Jesus stated, "The simple see at once that the 'way' of Jesus is very hard to do but easy to understand. It takes real cleverness and sophisticated intelligence to find ways to evade and distort the clear meaning of what Jesus said and to find reasons why his words are not applicable to a more advanced and civilized culture. ...Complexity is the last refuge of scoundrels."

Father Bernard Haring, celebrated Catholic moral theologian warned, "At this juncture in history, to neglect the message and practice of nonviolence could easily make the Church and her teaching seem irrelevant. The real question is faithfulness to Christ(s) ...nonviolent, long suffering love..."

We, likewise, have the choice of making "the consistent life ethic" and "seamless garment" irrelevant or meaningful concepts. If we are "nonviolent...but," — that is, if our clergy and people are largely silent and apathetic regarding the increasing global and domestic economic injustice, and if we keep the sinfulness of U.S. war preparations and interventions a non-issue within our Churches and schools, surely our Church and our words will be deemed irrelevant. If, however, we preach clearly and boldly regarding these difficult pro-life issues, we will indeed be "consistent" people.

Jan Bezila

Highland Avenue, Rochester



## Liturgy recalls slain prelate

### To the editors:

In 1980 in El Salvador the oligarchy would not tolerate any change in society or religious outlook that challenged their privilege. Thus, Archbishop Oscar Romero had to be killed for the same reasons Jesus did. Thousands of Romero's people preceded and followed him in suffering a violent death. Romero was one who very closely "reproduced the pattern of Jesus' death" as in the Scripture passages Philipians 3:10-12 and Luke 23:2,5. The fact that he was a bishop is one sign that the Spirit hasn't abandoned the hierarchy of the Church.

Pope John Paul II wrote of a bishop's role in his message to the U.S. bishops at the end of their ad limina visits: "A bishop's task is none other than this: to be a convincing witness to and a courageous teacher of the truth."

Romero's views complimented the Pope's: "A church that doesn't provoke any crises, a Gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin, a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of a society in which it is being proclaimed — what Gospel is that? Very nice, pious considerations that don't bother anyone, that's the way many would like preaching to be. Those preachers who avoid every thorny matter so as not to be harassed, so as not to have conflicts and difficulties, do not light up the world they

live in. They don't have Peter's courage, who told that crowd where the blood-stained hands still were that had killed Christ: 'You killed him!' Even though the charge could have cost him his life as well, he made it. The Gospel is courageous; it's the good news of him who came to take away the world's sins."

To Romero, the Gospel was good news for the poor and its truth was nonviolent. He refused to change this message. In his passion he came to accept his own death and he prayed for and forgave his killers.

The Diocese of Rochester will mark the 20th anniversary of Romero's death with a special liturgy at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Friday, March 24. Mass will begin at 6 p.m., the time Romero began celebrating what was to be his last Mass. I have heard he was the only bishop to be killed at the altar in the 20th century. We will be thinking about what it means to be in solidarity with those observing the same occasion in San Salvador's cathedral, with Romero and with Jesus, El Salvador.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, it took the Holy Spirit to produce such solidarity, a faithful and fearless following of the nonviolent way of Jesus. I'm praying that a powerful presence of the Spirit will be evident in our celebration of a true martyr.

Mark Scibilia-Carver  
Cold Springs Road, Trumansburg

## Activist also makes family proud

### To the editors:

Thank you for writing the article on my mother, Carol Crossed, in the *Catholic Courier* of Feb. 24, 2000.

As the oldest daughter, I can testify to mom's remarkable abundance of energy and enthusiasm and to her dedication to justice and peace. Despite her arrests and protest, her most remarkable quality, however, is that she is a very normal person. She walks every day for exercise, baby-sits her six grandchildren and cannot figure out the Internet. We even go clothes shopping together and she loves to antique.

Mom is certainly a consistent life ethic person all the way around. When dad makes a political contribution to a candidate who is not, she chides him.

It was not mentioned in the article that most of mom's current activism is with the New York Chapter of Feminists for Life, a group she co-founded in 1989. One

and a half million aborted babies per year and so many women emotionally scarred puts this highest among her priorities.

It was never mentioned that mom has a deep Catholic faith. I don't think that this drives her to do what she does though. But it is an important part of who she is.

The article focused so much on mom's arrests. I realize the article wasn't supposed to be on how normal she is or what a great mom she has been, but this is important. If more people know these things about her, more people will be able to relate to her — or even aspire to be like her.

Mom said we never made her feel guilty about her commitment and dedication to the consistent life ethic. She has made us proud.

Jessica Crossed Shanahan  
Chelmsford Road, Rochester

## Speaker's group does not further bipartisan agenda

### To the editors:

On April 1 Rochester Catholic Charities will bring in Michael Culliton for "Your Faith Can Change the World" dialogue on political responsibility.

The Dialogue brochure boasts that Culliton served as an associate and consultant for Network, a "national social justice Catholic lobby." According to a February 2000 membership letter, it deals with "health care, housing, anti-poverty, and military spending." Other important issues

are minimum wage and day care.

What's wrong with this laundry list? Network leaves out social justice issues usually perceived to be on the "right," particularly abortion. This reeks of partisan politics which consistent life ethic, synod goal #2, calls us beyond.

There would be a justifiable outcry if Catholic Charities invited National Right to Life which focuses only on issues perceived to be "conservative," to discuss strategies for lobbying. They, like Network,

are also extremely skillful in developing strategies for communication and lobbying.

But social ministries need the combination of skill and the wisdom of independent left/right bipartisanship that is critical in the political process and at the parish level. Rochester Catholics have grown beyond narrow agendas like Network that divide rather than unite. Network is how not to do social justice. We are not April fools.

Carol Crossed  
Pickwick Drive, Rochester

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