

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

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1150 Buffalo Road
P.O. Box 24379
Rochester, NY 14624
716/328-4340
800/600-3628 outside Rochester
http://www.catholiccourier.com
e-mail: cathcour@frontiernet.net

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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.

Fight agency's 'lie' about church role

To the editors:

To my fellow Catholics, I ask you to reconsider the support you give to Planned Parenthood — either indirectly through the United Way or directly — in light of its recent attack against the person of the Pope and the teachings of Christ which he faithfully proclaims. In a June 23, 2000, letter to the Pope, Planned Parenthood accused Pope John Paul II personally, and the Catholic Church as an institution, of waging a psychological war of terror on women by teaching that abortion is the taking of an innocent human life, stating and I quote, "The opinion and actions of the Holy See in regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights are ... a war that contributes to the suffering and deaths of millions of innocent people, a war ... conducted with psychological terror. We send you an urgent plea to end this war and to contribute to peace and the well-being of women."

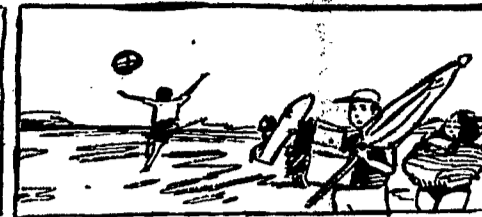
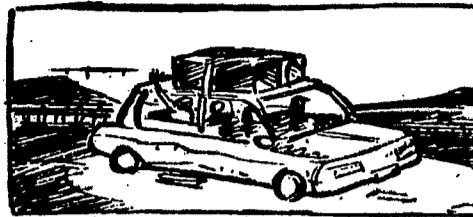
By what perverted logic does Planned Parenthood assert that proclaiming the teaching of God that innocent human life in the womb of a mother must be protected constitutes a "war that contributes to deaths of millions of people" or is "psychological terror?" Who is dying and who is in "psychological terror?" The only such persons are the millions of innocent babies being slaughtered through abortion and the despicable efforts of groups like Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood is long known for spreading lies about abortion and this is just another attempt to deceive and to hide the truth with a Nazi-like "Big Lie" strategy and slander of those who stand for the truth.

I wonder if the Catholics who find nothing wrong with supporting abortion, Planned Parenthood, and pro-abortion politicians really know what they are supporting? I think not. Ignorance of the facts is the most likely answer. As Catholics we all find an aversion to any group or person who maliciously attacks with lies and deception the very truths God has revealed to us through the Church.

What is going on here is that the Catholic Church and the Pope are the only institutional voices in the world who oppose the agenda of Planned Parenthood and other "feminist" and "liberal" groups for unrestricted abortions and coerced birth control. This particular time, Planned Parenthood was upset with the Pope's efforts in a recent United Nations review of proposals of the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference — whose proposals Hillary Clinton strongly supported by her personal presence there. The Vatican and various Muslim and Catholic representatives opposed these proposals which would force all countries to legalize abortion and contraception or else lose United Nations financial aid.

The only "war" being waged is by groups like Planned Parenthood and their friends who want to hide the horrible reality of what they are doing in killing innocent human life and in denying people — men and women alike — the basic human right to be free to choose to have a family, just as God intended that freedom to be exercised. As Catholics let us clearly take a stand with, and for, God and against this evil. Let us all proclaim, "Jesus Christ is Lord," and stand with Him, His Church and his representative on earth, the Pope.

James L. Gelormini
Exchange Boulevard
Rochester



Jesus' words provide answer

To the editors:

Mr. Bill McNeill's appeal to end "our exclusive country club mentality" by wiping excommunication from the canon law books (*Catholic Courier*, June 29) is an interesting example of the currently fashionable view that inclusion is an absolute value for Christians: anyone can belong regardless of what they believe or how they behave. Unfortunately his argument rests on shaky foundations.

He seems to see excommunication simply as a legal penalty for nonconformity. True, excommunication is sometimes a penalty imposed for some grave fault, and there have been times when it has been imposed unjustly. But more often it is incurred automatically when one has separated oneself from the community of the Church by refusing to accept some part of the common faith, by blatant immorality, or by rejecting the legitimate authority of the church's pastors. Someone who is excommunicated or is not a Catholic is excluded from the sacraments because "Celebration of the sacraments is an action of the celebrating community, carried out within the community, signifying oneness of faith, worship and the life of the community" (Second Vatican Council, Decree

on Ecumenism, IV C, #38). Put simply, one has to belong to the community to join in the community action.

The idea that we got the notion of heresy and excommunication from our Jewish roots is simply incredible. Both are alien to Judaism then and now.

Finally, the idea that excommunication was first incurred for apostasy rather than heresy is wide of the mark. While the word "excommunicate" may not be found in the New Testament, the reality for which it stands — exclusion from the community — is clearly there. Paul and John both refer to excluding someone who errs in faith or morals (1 Corinthians 5:2-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; 2 John 10-11). True the purpose of such exclusion was to bring the erring one back to the fold, but that is the purpose of canonical excommunication, too.

Mr. McNeill closed by asking, "What Would Jesus Do?" Well we know what Jesus would do. St. Matthew tells us, "If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a gentile or a tax collector" (18:15-17).

John J. Dealy
Creekside Drive
Rochester

Death penalty not part of dogma

To the editors:

This is in response to Dorothy Siegel's letter in the June 29 issue of the *Catholic Courier* who apparently feels those Catholics who favor the death penalty are "picking and choosing in the Catholic cafeteria." May I point out she has made some basic assumptions which are just not correct.

To be considered Catholic, when I went to school, meant simply that you embraced all the dogmas of the Catholic church. Please be advised that being "anti death penalty" is not a dogma of the Catholic church in spite of her trying to make it so. The number of dogmas in the church is a very small list.

Church history indicates that previous Popes favored the death penalty and there has been no infallible pronouncement, by any pope, one way or another on the death penalty. So how does she decide which Pope is correct in their feelings related to the death penalty?

The most recent official catechism of the Catholic church indicates that the death penalty is not outside the realm of consideration in grievous crimes. Over the history of our church many very reputable theologians have held that the death pen-

ty is acceptable and many present day theologians agree.

I once consulted with my friend Rev. Joseph Egan, now deceased, who had a doctorate in moral theology and in fact taught moral theology for many years at St. Bernard's Seminary. I asked if my being in favor of the death penalty put me in opposition to Catholic teaching. He assured me that the answer was absolutely not. He pointed out the differences of opinion within the church and then indicated that he also personally believed in the death penalty for grievous crimes.

My own personal opinion is that some crimes against humanity are so depraved that there is only one appropriate punishment. As an example I ask Dorothy to consider Timothy McVeigh who wantonly murdered about 186 totally innocent men, women and little children in a nursery school. Please tell me why he deserves anything better than the death penalty.

So, Dorothy, before you point a finger at us again and indicate we are "cafeteria Catholics," please know whereof you speak and do not make your personal feelings church dogma.

Walter C. Ervin Jr.
West Water Street, Elmira

Community of Blessed Trinity 'reluctantly' sends pastor to new post

To the editors:

We in the parish of Catholic Community of the Blessed Trinity (St. Mary Magdalene, Wolcott; St. Thomas, Red Creek; St. Jude Chapel, Fair Haven) have reluctantly sent the parishioners of St. John the Evangelist, Greece one of our greatest treasures, Rev. John Forni. He spent a short seven

years with us, and we say farewell with deepest regret.

During that time Father Forni performed his priestly duties with dignity and grace. He ministered well to four generations of my own family, from baptisms to funerals, sharing committees and hundreds of excellent homilies. He became an

integral part of our parish family and will be truly missed.

We ask you therefore to welcome him and honor him as the valuable asset he will become to your parish community as well. God bless you, Father Forni!

Betty Dowd
Hawley Road, Red Creek