

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.

Sisters deserve more than land sale

To the editors:

In a recent issue of the *Democrat and Chronicle* (July 21) Sister Sheila Stevenson of the Sisters of Mercy stated that due to shaky finances of the order they were trying to sell one-third of their land to a developer to finance their ministries and to insure future care of retired sisters.

This situation has been caused by the escalating cost of private Catholic schools and the fact that fewer women are joining congregations such as the Mercy Order over the last 40 or so years.

Back when I attended St. Ambrose School (1935-43) all the teachers there except two were religious. There was no tuition until 1940 when it was \$1 a week for each family. For each of the five children in my family, from 1933-48, it would average out to \$5.33 a year tuition.

The two lay teachers at St. Ambrose received \$10 a week or \$400 a year. The 14 sisters who taught there received even less. Of course, their order received the money since they had taken the vow of poverty.

At Mercy High School the tuition started at \$75 a year. If two went, it was \$100 total. We five girls were there from 1941-1952. One of us won a four-year scholarship. The tuition changed from \$75 to \$100 in 1948. So the total tuition for all of us five came to around \$1,200 total or an average of \$60 a year each, due to the scholarship.

It now costs over \$2,000 a year tuition to go to Catholic grammar school and middle school and at least that and more to go to Mercy now.

These good sisters are now elderly, many in their 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, many now working still, but the retired ones without pensions as in the private sector. Few are still teachers in Catholic schools, as many have closed, and some do work in health care and other jobs.

The amount of money they could get for the land in Brighton is \$750,000, but how long will that last in paying for their ministries and care of elderly sisters.

Don't you think they deserve better than this? After spending a lifetime devoted to God, their community, and the education of children, with no thought of worldly rewards, don't they deserve help from our diocese, from the parishes they once served, which are: St. James, St. Cecilia, Good Shepherd, Queen of Peace, St. Charles, St. Andrew, St. John, St. Thomas, St. Salome, Our Lady of Mercy, Annunciation, Mount Carmel, Holy Cross, St. Rita (Webster), St. Helen (Gates), St. Mary (Bath), St. Joseph (Penfield), St. Louis (Pittsford), St. Thomas, St. John of Rochester. Many of these parishes no longer have the expense of a school.

These sisters deserve the help of the community, the diocese, the parishes they so faithfully served. Tens of thousands of members of this community are in debt to them for the quality of education they have received.

Their "tough financial situation" leaves few options other than selling part of their land and thus causing enmity of their neighbors. Another option for the sisters would be for them to contact the Town of Brighton and offer to sell them the land for the purpose of turning it into a park for public use.

I am writing in hopes that some solution other than selling their land could be found to help these sisters.

Dorothy Willett
Thornclyff Road
Spencerport

EDITORS' NOTE: In a postscript, Ms. Willett said her sister has been a Sister of Mercy for 48 years.



Proportionate punishment demands executing McVeigh

To the editors:

In response to the most excellent letter from Michael Gallagher in the August 24 *Catholic Courier* I will briefly attempt to point out where we differ regarding the proper punishment for Mr. McVeigh.

I bring to your attention paragraph 2266 from our current catechism which states, "Legitimate public authority has the right and the duty to inflict punishment proportionate to the gravity of the offense." Please note the catechism uses both the word right and the word duty in the above quote. It is my contention that willfully murdering about 163 innocents is about as grave an offense one can imagine and I would further contend the only proportionate punishment can be none other than the death penalty.

He suggests I seem to advocate vindi-

cation and retribution but he is wrong in that assumption since what I am really interested in is true justice and punishment proportionate to the gravity of the crime. Mr. McVeigh has forcibly taken the lives of those innocents and there is no giving that back to them so it seems entirely logical to me that his punishment involve the same loss.

Mr. Gallagher suggests a more lenient sentence and states we can guarantee public safety. My reaction is that does not solve the need for true justice. To put it in the proper perspective perhaps the execution chamber for Mr. McVeigh could be more aptly thought of as "The Victims Hall of Justice."

Walter C. Ervin Jr.
West Water Street
Elmira

Abortion key issue in 2000

To the editors:

The title of your Aug. 24 article should have read: "Abortion Issue Does Count in 2000." We are the Catholic Church. We are Pro-Life from conception to natural death. Your article so downplayed the abortion issue as to negate that for which the Church stands. You said yourself that Bush was pro-life and would ban the heinous partial-birth abortion. We as Catholics should vote for the candidate who will save the lives of as many innocent babies as possible. We also should be concerned about who will appoint up to three Supreme Court Justices in his term as president. There is a one-vote differ-

ence in the Supreme Court on the pro-life issues. A Pro-Life president could break this deadlock and start our society moving away from the culture of death that is so evident.

Patricia Malach
DeSmith Road, Newark

EDITORS' NOTE: The article, written by Catholic News Service, assessed the likelihood of abortion playing a significant role in determining the outcome of the 2000 election — not whether it should play such a role. And, as Ms. Malach notes, the church defines its positions as encompassing life from conception to natural death. By that standard, neither candidate is pro-life.

Media employ double standard

To the editors:

Remember the controversy that was played out in the media when George W. Bush spoke at Bob Jones University? For days we heard how Bush was insensitive to Catholics because he spoke there.

Well, where were the media when Al Gore endorsed World Pride 2000 held in Rome July 1-9?

World Pride 2000 was designed partly to challenge and mock the Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality. Rome was chosen by organizers because this is a Jubilee year for Catholics. Months before the event, the Vatican had urged officials to postpone or move the event to another location.

Al Gore was the highest ranking Amer-

ican official to endorse the event. George Bush spoke in support of the Vatican.

Contrast the media's heavy coverage and criticism of Bush over the Bob Jones University speech with their silence over Gore's support of an event that was partly Catholic bashing. This is a clear example of the double standard the media employ when handling certain issues.

I was disappointed that the *Catholic Courier* ignored the story as well. The *Catholic Courier* did cover the George W. Bush and Bob Jones University story and did devote almost a half page July 20 to a photo of a local Gay Pride Parade.

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Send your views to letters@catholiccourier.com