

# 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.

# We all are a trace of God's glory

By Jann K. Armantrout

Throughout this issue of the *Catholic Courier*, you will find articles highlighting many pro-life ministries in the Diocese of Rochester. The diverse number and nature of life-affirming activities that occur in our diocese continually impress me. I am thankful to be among people who care for the sick and dying, advocate for the unborn, minister to those wounded by abortion, provide a voice for the poor, speak out against war and show compassion for the criminal. Those who perform these difficult and frequently unpopular tasks become Christ to those whom they touch; they are the loving antidotes to the sometimes violent, materialistic world in which we live. We are grateful for their presence and seek ways to bring their messages of love and peace to all.

The U.S. Catholic Conference prepares an annual Respect Life program for use during the month of October. The theme for this year's program is "Every human life is a sign of God's love, a trace of His glory." The program includes written and visual materials to inspire all Catholics and strengthen their will to protect human life. Each parish community in our diocese received these materials in late summer so that they would have the resources needed to develop homilies and intercessions, parish bulletin inserts and religious-education materials that proclaim our Catholic belief that human life is sacred. During October, you will hear and see reminders in your parish that the unborn baby threatened by abortion, the child in our central city who goes to bed hungry, and the elderly person hungry for human care are all "a sign of God's love, a trace of his glory."

Throughout the next year, my office will continue to coordinate life-issue activities. With the assistance of justice and peace staff from Livingston County Catholic Charities, Catholic Charities of the Southern Tier, Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes, Catholic Family Center and the director of Catholic Charities, we will respond to challenges and advocate for positive change.

## GUEST EDITORIAL

The challenges are many. In our diocese alone, nearly 5,200 abortions occur each year. Under the leadership of Bishop Matthew H. Clark, the pregnancy-support services that are available in our diocese will be inventoried, post-abortion counseling services better advertised and pro-life advocacy made more effective.

Capital punishment continues to be an issue in Monroe County. In November, another capital murder trial is being convened. As Bishop Clark's presence at the sentencing phase of a recent trial affirmed, our church does not condone capital punishment.

The Pain Relief Promotion Act is winding its way through the Senate. This bill is intended to allow physicians to prescribe pain-relief drugs even when the unintended consequence is a hastened death. We ask you to support passage of this bill, which specifically rules out physician-assisted suicide.

In a time of economic prosperity and a 4.9 percent unemployment rate in Monroe County, an astounding 38 percent of children in Rochester live at or below the federal poverty level. Comparable percentages of poverty exist in rural pockets throughout our diocese. Advocacy will be required to ensure that all workers receive a living wage. No family in which the adults are working should be confined to the hardships of poverty.

In the most recent federal budget, the Pentagon received billions of dollars of funding above what was requested for national defense. Bombing of Iraq continues regardless of the pain and suffering it causes non-combatants. We must work for peace.

While the challenges to the sanctity of human life are great, the rewards are also great. We know that through the works of the church, suffering is alleviated, reconciliation occurs, potential is unleashed and a caring community developed. Thank you for being a sign of God's love during Respect Life Month and throughout the year.

*EDITORS' NOTE: Armantrout is life-issues coordinator for the Diocese of Rochester.*

## Leave justice to God's will

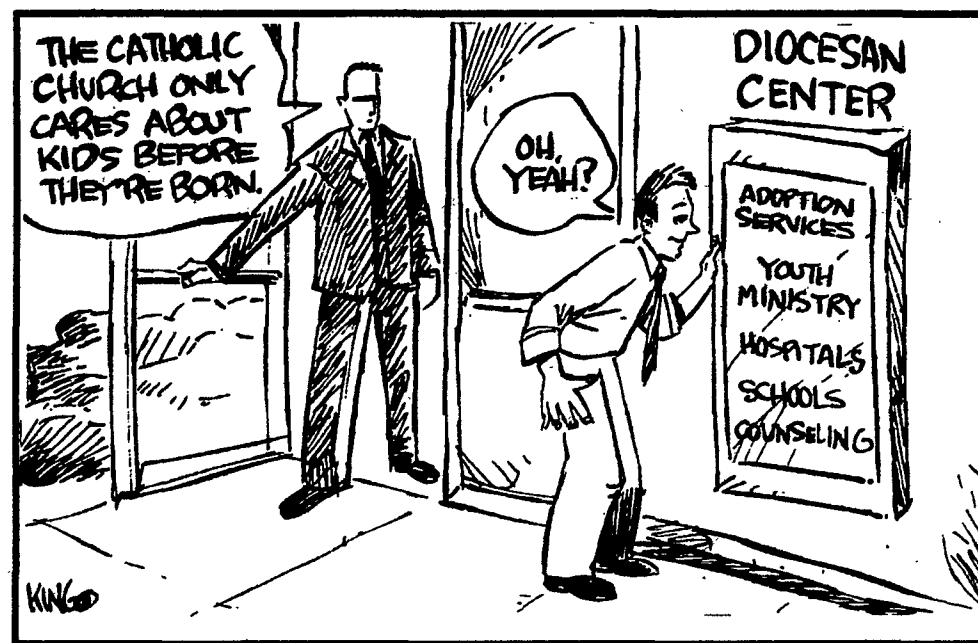
To the editors:

In response to Mr. Ervin's letter citing the catechism's proposal of proportional punishment as justification of the death penalty for Mr. McVeigh, there are two concerns: First, where are the Gospel values of mercy and forgiveness? In fact, where is the Gospel mentioned at all in the abstract application and interpretation of the old adage, "An eye for an eye...?" The catechism is not the final authoritative word on such matters. Christ's life and respect for the dignity of each person he — and we — encounters, regardless of who they are or what they have done, are some of the values I think are needed in trying to live a Christian life and grapple with such concerns as Mr. Ervin has.

Second, another look at what may be understood as legitimate public authority could show the catechism's thought as one with an intuitive sense of grace or insight. Who are legitimate public authorities in our time? Elected public officials who are dealing with scandals, lies, hypocrisy, election year "promises," name calling and spin doctoring the truth? Are these really legitimate public authorities? Or, perhaps, authors of the latest studies telling us how to lose weight, live longer, healthier lives, etc.? Or advertisers who propose the Web as the greatest invention since God?

Perhaps, or at least in my thoughts, legitimate public authority comes down to people trying to live Christ-like lives, albeit public leaders like the Pope who has spoken out against the death penalty, other civic and religious leaders and others. Everyday folk who personify or try to personify Christ's values found in the Gospel, which include compassion, mercy and forgiveness. Those speak more powerfully yet are much harder to live because it means to look inside ourselves and wrestle with our own shortcomings, rather than continually pointing out the faults and errors of another. And then realize that God is and has been merciful and forgiving to us all along, despite our own misdeeds. As for true justice, I leave that up to God, where it belongs.

Tom Agness  
Reddick Lane, Rochester



## Consider impact of abortion

To the editors:

Consider the impact of a single conception to future generations — a future musician, priest, President, murderer, rapist, policeman, congressman, assassin, dictator! Picture the awesome wonder of a single conception. A single sperm of an ejaculation of hundreds of millions reaches and penetrates a single female egg of hundreds of millions, fully developed at woman's own birth, awaiting a possible turn! Who can believe the hand of God does not direct the movement of one successful sperm to one waiting egg?

The film "It's a Wonderful Life" accentuates the awesome impact of a single existing life by showing the devastating effect on a single community if one of its members were never conceived and born.

This is the wonder of Life. This is what the abortion debate is really all about! Think of the impact on society of the loss of more than a million innocent children, each a unique individual, each conceived through the hand of God, every year — 4400 each day!

Judith Kiehl's letter (*Catholic Courier*, Sept. 21) was an insult to God Himself. Abortion stands out among all other issues in America because all truly civilized societies have recognized the evil in it. When the Court gave us *Roe vs. Wade*, no living American could remember a time when abortion was legal. In the 27 years since,

America has seen a moral decline never before imagined. Although this decline began in earnest during the sexual explosion of the Sixties, it accelerated beyond imagination after *Roe*. Those of you who experienced the changes from the beginning can testify: Who among you could ever in your wildest dream have imagined in 1973, that by 1992 the debate would lead to infanticide for money, called Partial-Birth Abortion!

We can't see the future as Ms. Kiehl apparently can, but we are told the world will end. If we could have foreseen the future, maybe we would have cried out much louder in 1973. The longer we allow this evil to continue, the more difficult it will be to stop its growth.

If we think we can ever elect a political representative at any stage of the political spectrum who will think exactly as we do, or even mostly as we do, we are in for a let-down every time — unless we are either naïve, or as corrupt as the one we vote for. We should vote for the ones who seem most likely to act through a proper conscience. A Pro-abortion candidate is never a legitimate Christian option! We all need — voter and candidate — prayerfully formed hearts!

Above all — Prayer!

John G. Lentricchia  
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