

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 others in submitted text, we will correct spelling only.

Mail letters to: *Catholic Courier*, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for purposes of verification.

Consider writing advance directive

By **Father Joseph Brodnick**
Guest contributor

Modern health care presents us with many dilemmas. One of these that has ended up in the court system is this: Can I remove artificial life support from my loved one? In other words, when can or should I allow a family member to die naturally?

Our faith reminds us that death is a natural part of living. It is part of God's plan for us, for it is only in dying that we gain eternal life with God — our ultimate goal. This faith allows us to develop guidelines to help us make decisions about health-care issues. Our bishops have formulated these guidelines in a recently updated edition of the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Health Care Service*.

The directives categorically forbid euthanasia, defined as "an action or omission which of itself or by intention causes death, in order that all suffering may in this way be eliminated." But they do not require that we use every technology or medication to keep a person alive, no matter the cost. The question to ask is this: Will these efforts "offer a reasonable hope of benefit or entail an excessive burden, or impose excessive expense on the family or the community?" If the answer is "Yes," then the efforts are considered "extraordinary or disproportionate means" and are not ethically required. This applies not only to initiating a course of treatment, but also to terminating a treatment, e.g., removing a person from a ventilator or removing a feeding tube.

The question of whether to insert or remove a feeding tube often causes families tremendous anxiety and guilt. Would I be starving him or her if I don't insert it? Or if I remove it? When a

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person is actively dying, he no longer needs nutrition or hydration. No longer supplying this does not cause a person to "starve to death." In fact, the bishops state that "hydration and nutrition are not morally obligatory either when they bring no comfort to a person who is imminently dying or when they cannot be assimilated by a person's body."

When a patient is terminal — that is, actively dying — withholding or withdrawing treatments including nutrition and hydration does not add a new cause of death, but merely allows the underlying condition to run its course. When the physician approaches you and your family with options, however, emotions are high and often it is difficult to think through the issues clearly. Neither is it uncommon for family members to differ in their judgment of what should or should not be done. Remember though that pastoral care can be consulted for guidance and support as you talk through difficult issues. You can also consult the hospital's ethics committee.

Clear ethical guidelines help us come to decisions and relieve us from some of the guilt that otherwise might haunt us. But even then, do you know what your loved one would want you to do for him or her? An "advanced directive" — a Living Will and/or Health Care Proxy — can offer guidance in answering this question. Having an advanced directive can relieve much of the stress and guilt for family members who have to make decisions for you when you can no longer do so for yourself. If you do not already have one, consider discussing this with your physician and family.

Father Brodnick is chaplain at St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira.

Love, prayers for peace are evil's antidote

To the editors:

God's creation, this world seems to be going from bad to worse. Not of HIS doing but of inconsiderate evil persons wanting to foist their personal will on people with total disregard how they achieve their goals!

Billions are spent all across the globe on arms. The poor and hungry seem to be getting poorer and hungrier. Just think if these billions were to be spent alleviating these problems. Can it happen? I truly believe it, yes, and without even spending a penny! Some at this point will think I have lost my mind. Read on.

"To love is to give. To give is to love. To love is to forgive. To forgive is to love."

Does it cost anyone to love his or her neighbor? Not one penny! The last words of Jesus to his apostles before ascending to his kingdom in heaven were "Love one another as I have loved thee." There it is right from love himself. "Love."

Some may say, how can I love someone who has done me deadly harm. If personal effort fails, the next God-given step to take is prayer for whomever one may have fault with. Prayer never fails! God will answer when he sees it is the right time to do us the most good. If some may disagree, when you meet him at judgment, argue with him, not me. I for one believe his words rather than those of a finite being.

Finally, dear friends, let us pray. All it takes is effort on the part of each one of us. It will be answered and pay unbelievable dividends. Not my words but his. You better believe it!

To put the frosting on the cake, I respectfully suggest in all your mailings to print the following on the back of each envelope: "Pray for Peace." Thank you, God bless, peace and love to everyone.

Francis J. Mastropietro
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Nation must defend citizens

To the editors:

I do not understand the relevance of the letters of Judith E. Kiehl and Susan Farley in your November 11, 2001, issue to the events of September 11. America did not make a conscious decision to go to war. This war has been thrust upon our people by those who would destroy our religion, our civilization and our country. Rocco, the window washer at the World Trade Center (WTC) went to work to do his daily job; Father Major, who went to the WTC to assist the dying; the Christians attending the Church of St. Dominic to worship God; and all the rest who were so brutally killed and murdered in the hour of darkness they were killed by the sword, but indeed they were killed by the sword. The slogan of their cold blooded murderers is to "Kill all Americans."

Chemical, biological, radiological war-

fare have been introduced to our land along with wholesale premeditated murder to destroy us as a people. The war waged against us is targeted against defenseless civilian Americans, men, women and children, at home and abroad. *Salus populi suprema lex*. The safety and health of the people is the supreme law of the land. A nation has an absolute duty, obligation and right to defend and protect the lives of its people. War indeed is "organized brutality" and that is what our enemies inflicted upon us on Sept. 11. We shall not forget.

As Catholics, are we not much too comfortable with the culture of death, which diminishes the value of life in the abortion clinic, at the WTC, and at St. Dominic's Church in Pakistan?

Ronald J. Buttarazzi
West Church Street, Fairport

Questions renovation of facility

To the editors:

I read the article in the *Irondequoit Post* regarding the improvements to St. Ann's Home. I have a couple of questions. On Oct. 19 I came to a memorial service in the chapel. I arrived about 10:45 a.m. and every single parking space was occupied. Luckily I followed someone going to his car and used that space. I found it difficult to believe that all those vehicles were for the memorial service or were cars belonging to visitors or employees. Then I

noticed the beautiful statue of St. Joseph which graced the entrance was gone. What happened to it? I would like to think that with the renovations some thought would be given to retaining the statue. Lastly, when I came into the entrance I had no clue to where the chapel was — luckily the priest was on his way in and I followed him.

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