

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.

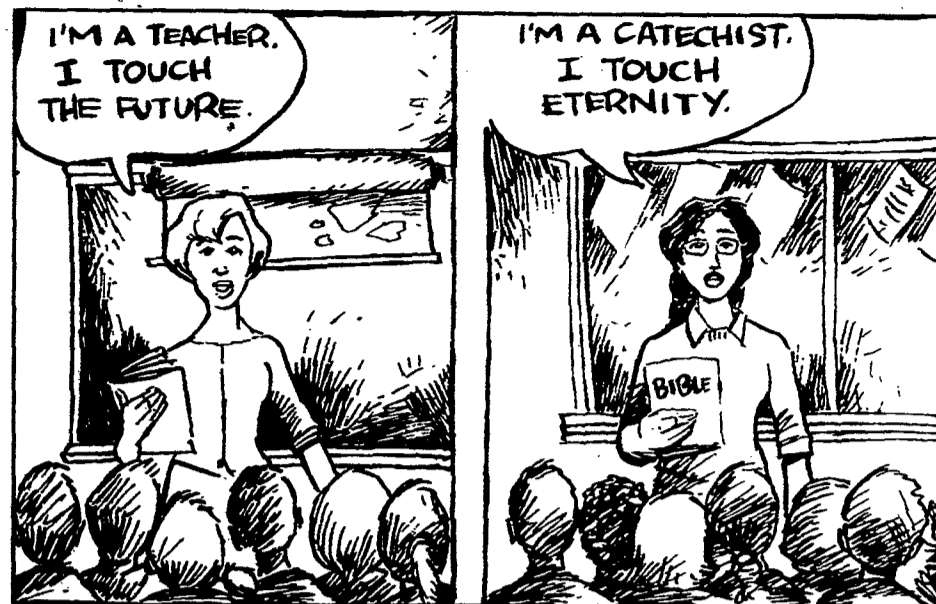
Mail letters to: *Catholic Courier*, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for purposes of verification.

Freedoms protected by military

To the editor:

Mark Scibilia-Carver (*Catholic Courier*, Aug. 8: "Sad" that teen holds "militaristic perspective") feels sad that a teen is considering a military vocation. What is really sad is his own myopic view of the real world. We pray that all people lay down their arms and resolve differences diplomatically, but just a cursory review of recent history proves that belligerent nations eager to take up the sword are always with us. Refusal to defend oneself leads to annihilation at worst and subservience at best. Defeated people are often forced to denounce their religion and accept that of the victor, as happened to Christians in the Middle East and North Africa in the Middle Ages. This due to lack of military might.

It was military might that freed the Jews and Catholics from Nazi concentration camps but only after the murders of over 10 million innocents. Should the Allies not have fought the Nazis and allowed them to murder even millions more? In 1967 it was military might that allowed Israel to repel superior forces determined to terminate the very existence of the Jewish state. Should they simply have laid down their arms and allowed a repeat of the Nazi experience? How long would the abomination of slavery have continued without the



Civil War?

I always believed the parable of the pulling of the weeds to be a reference to sinners, not soldiers. He accuses the military of killing the poorest of the poor. Does the attacking enemy have his income bracket stamped on his uniform? And when was it that the military targeted pre-born babies? Is he confusing the army with Planned Parenthood?

The Old Testament is filled with war in which killing of the enemy was actually aided by God himself. Was God wrong in helping the Israelites fight their enemies? Did David sin when he killed Goliath? Where in the New Testament does Jesus say that a defensive military action is sinful? Were the Popes wrong for 2000 years with the Catholic policy on war?

How does he construe Jesus' saying

"agape your enemies" to mean do not defend yourself? Agape is defined as "gasp in wonder" or possibly "a feast of charity." Did the Nazis stop as the Poles gasped in wonder at their attack? Would a feast of charity have stopped them?

Anyone who so totally abhors the military and is such a dedicated pacifist should have the honesty to proudly declare his acceptance of the likelihood of his living in total subjugation by a foreign military force. I didn't read that in his letter.

I say thank God for those young men in the military. I'm not sad! I am indeed proud of them. It is they who protect our freedoms, including the free press that allows Mr. Scibilia-Carver and me to write our letters to the editor.

Paul Vitale
Hume Lane, Auburn

Wonders whether pacifists vote pro-life

To the editor:

In his recent letter, Mark Scibilia-Carver asked what militarism had to do with Jesus and the Gospel.

Pacifism, of course, is the other side of the coin and does little to protect human life from terrorism. While Jesus told us to turn the other cheek, He also advised those who had no sword to buy one (Luke 22:36-37).

Yet the crucifixion and death of Jesus was required to atone for the sins of mankind; the Lord allowed Himself to be the victim. Interpreting our Lord's sacrifice as a reason to comply with pacifism in all situations is an error of epic proportions.

In 1917 our Blessed Mother appeared to the children of Fatima and told them that war was the result of people living

sinful lives.

The late Mother Teresa said that abortion is responsible for much of the violence in the world. Pacifism in itself is an option that hardly addresses evil lifestyles.

It would be interesting to know how many pacifists voted for pro-abortion candidates for political office.

Robert Bart
Ithaca

Priest inspired their vocations, lifelong friendships

To the editor:

"We" were three young women at the end of our high school life, when a tall, burly priest waltzed into our lives to change us forever. Mary belonged to Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, and Kathy and (Patty) were students at St. Agnes High School, back in the early '70s. The three of us were to become life-long friends. "We" were introduced to a youth movement called "Teen Seminar" by this wonderful man. His laughter, his joy of life, his attitude of acceptance of us, as women in the church served to motivate us to become "involved." We became enamored by the experience of God's forgiving, never ending, and all-accepting love. We became friends on a faith jour-

ney that has taken many twists and turns, as all faith journeys do, but we are still walking step by step, 30 years later as a result of this one man's ability to call us forward and awaken our belief in God. His legacy is in each and every one of us, whose lives he touched.

"We" became wives and mothers our true vocations, but we also became a nurse, a wonderful, loving, selfless, and giving nurse, a true answer to her call; a lay minister with the Medical Missionaries of Mary, traveling twice to Africa to bring much needed ultrasound equipment and training to those areas; and a soup kitchen worker, providing meals for our poor here in Rochester. "We" were touched by God, through the efforts of

one priest who included us, encouraged us, and believed in us. "We" were just a fraction of the many youth in our Diocese that were blessed by this man's presence. We are sure there are hundreds of other stories of those influenced by him.

Father David Gramkee, we love you and we will never forget you. Thank you for your faith, your laughter, your joy, your ability to never be surprised by whatever we tried to do to make you laugh and especially for your bringing the three of us together. We will miss you always and we will always remember.

Mary Williams Mann, Kathy Beikirch
Velekkakan, and Patty DiLaura
Lorenzen

Let memory of Sept. 11 inspire protection for all life

To the editor:

What could we learn from the tragedy of September 11, 2001? 2,830 of our "best" and "brightest" perished! It broke our hearts, we grieved for the victims, their families and for our country, and rightfully so. We saw the heartbroken families searching for their loved ones, holding up pictures of them and telling stories or vignettes of what made each victim so special. We were filled with horror and rage as we realized the way each person may have died.

Our minds couldn't comprehend how someone could be so savage as to attack innocent people with the absolute intent "to destroy human life!" We saw how the actions of a few affected so many! On the

other hand, we saw true heroes, people risking their lives so others would be saved!

Despite the tragedy, it warmed my heart to see America come together as a nation. Political divisiveness disappeared as we prayed and reflected on the events. Many of us took an inventory of our own lives and our priorities. Many of us tried to recommit ourselves to helping to make the world a better place and tried to plan how we can best do this. Must it take such a huge event like this to unite us?

As I continued to reflect over the course of this past year, another lesson of life became vivid to me. Approximately the same number of innocent babies are aborted in our own country each

and every day of the year as were killed in that one day of September 11, 2001! Are we outraged? Could not these babies grow up to be our "best" and "brightest" also? I firmly believe if we could see a picture on TV or view a film depicting how a baby's life is terminated in the womb, we would see clearly the savagery of our own actions!

Let's work together to be a compassionate society and come to realize that we are bound, as rational humans, to protect all stages of precious life. Terrorism needs to be stopped in all its forms!

Jeanne Marie Bello
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Rochester