

# 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.

Effective Sept. 15, letters must not exceed 350 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.

## Conversion is solution to scandal

To the editor:

Once again this week the scandal of sexual misconduct has been highlighted in the news causing me to reflect again with great discomfort on the church's official response to this crisis. It has been difficult to put my finger on the most troubling aspect of this response because it is found not so much in what the media has reported as in the void of what is not being said.

Thus far the official responses might be summarized as follows:

We thought it was treatable back then... That happened under the last Bishop... We're listening... we feel your pain... We'll gladly cover your counseling... Can we settle out of court? We will punish the evil doers severely... If we ordained married men or women, this wouldn't have happened...

What's missing you might ask? Aren't we doing everything we can to make this problem go away? That is exactly the problem. We are treating this not as a moral crisis, but as a corporate setback. What makes me so uncomfortable is the absence of God in the church's response. We have been raised to believe that He is by our side in the face of evil and yet our leaders have barely called upon God in their responses through the media.

If I could gather all the leaders of our church together at one time, I would have only one question for them: Why are we letting lawyers, finance committees, psychologists, polls and personal fear of false accusation dictate our response to the evil in our very midst instead of turning first to Jesus Christ and discerning what His response might be? Aren't we in this mess because some turned away from doing His will and harmed the most innocent among us? The official response has too often seemed self-serving and has come dangerously close to repeating that sin on an institutional level.

Clearly there are no easy answers and we must use all of the tools God has given us if we are to heal this evil, but the foundation of our response needs to be first and always built on Jesus. I suspect that He wouldn't have sent out a communications director to mouth hollow clichés about our hope for healing whenever someone scarred by the sins of others came forward. Nor would He advise the 12 to turn to the courts when falsely accused. Rather, Jesus faced evil with love and compassion and sought to bring about healing and forgiveness by giving of Himself completely even to death. Because we are all called to be images of Christ, this is not a task for our leaders alone, but we do have the right to demand that they lead.

The world — including many of those sharing our pews — awaits our witness in the face of this evil. Will they judge us morally bankrupt because we take a conventional course or will they be moved to ongoing conversion by witnessing our own?

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## Police major disputes story

To the editor:

As a New York State Trooper for almost 20 years, I have had a front row seat to the destruction that drug use has caused to individuals, their families and our communities. I take great exception to the statement in the Aug. 22 *Courier* article "Fighting for drug-law reform" that "thousands of inmates in New York's prison system are serving mandatory prison terms after being convicted of low-level, non-violent drug offenses under the Rockefeller Drug Laws." As evidence of this, you cite the case of an individual arrested for possessing 4.5 ounces of cocaine "roughly the size of a can of tuna fish," implying this a small amount. A drug dealer knows better. He will turn that 4.5 ounces into 504 individual doses selling for \$25 apiece — the normal amount to get the desired "high." The street value is approximately \$12,600 — and that value and dose size will normally be at least doubled or tripled when the dealer "cuts" the cocaine with baking soda or a like chemical to increase the amount for sale. Your "low level" dealer just became exactly the type of individual who is poisoning our society. If you think obtaining and selling that amount of cocaine is a non-violent crime, I suggest you give it a try in one of our inner cities.

Anyone who thinks that our prisons are full of inmates that possessed or sold small amounts of narcotics are either mistaken or dangerously naive. Almost without exception they are criminals who either sold

or possessed quantities of drugs for sale, or have lengthy criminal records. In short, individuals who by their own personal choice have chosen to engage in behavior that ruins their life and the communities in which they live. To describe these people as "people who have been wronged" is an insult to the police officers who risk their lives daily to clean up our streets, and to the prosecutors and judges who recognize that some members of our society earn their time in jail.

Should treatment be used for those that are truly low level users who are simply addicted to drugs and not involved in selling them to our children? Of course. We have places like Willard treatment facility and we can probably use more. Can we re-examine the Rockefeller Drug Laws without diluting society's ability to incarcerate dangerous criminals? Perhaps. I believe Governor Pataki is currently supporting a review of the laws. I have no doubt he will take an intelligent approach balancing the needs of the individual against the need to protect our society. I do not think, however, it serves the cause of the individuals and organizations mentioned in the *Courier* article to portray narcotics dealers as sympathetic characters. Drug dealing is a scourge on our society and our cities, and we must continue to loudly declare, through our laws and our actions, that it is morally wrong and destructive.

Major Mark T. Fischer  
 New York State Police

## State expands effort to protect some babies, spends tax money to abort lives of others

To the editor:

I was riding in my car not long ago and a billboard on route 14 near Geneva stated: "All it can take to harm an unborn baby is one stick." There was then a picture of a match and at the bottom was Gov. Pataki's name. I commend this ad because it is warning pregnant women of the danger that smoking can do to unborn children. It is similar to the Surgeon General's warning that smoking "may result in fetal injury, premature birth, and low birth weight." Likewise, I picked up a pamphlet from New York State's Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services with Gov. Pataki's name on it entitled "Fetal Alcohol Syndrome" which warns pregnant women that "alcohol harms unborn babies." There is also a pamphlet from the New York State's Department of Health entitled "100 Questions and Answers about AIDS/HIV" that states that "women with HIV can also pass the virus to their babies during pregnancy" and cause serious harm to their unborn child.

I commend these offices for this important work. But can you explain to me

why on the one hand New York state and Gov. Pataki warn some pregnant women that these substances can cause great harm to their unborn children, while on the other hand New York state allows other pregnant women to use substances like RU486 or saline solution or prostaglandin to abort that same unborn life? In fact, New York state and Gov. Pataki will even support abortions by using our tax money to pay for them through Medicaid. Mayor Bloomberg, the mayor of New York, now wants to mandate that all medical interns must learn the abortion procedures.

Many New Yorkers, including politicians from both political parties, are so caught up in the culture of death that they are blind to these absurd contradictions. If New York state continues down this path, more innocent and helpless unborn lives will be lost. There will also be more women left wounded and devastated, as they come to realize fully the inconsistencies of our state's policies of protection, and which lives are really valued.

Father Jim Hewes  
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