

Letters

Free EWTN air time depends on widespread Catholic support

To the Editor:

In response to Mrs. Schnacky's letter (C-J Letters, June 4: "Spreading the good word about Mother Angelica"), please permit me to provide some additional information concerning local Eternal Word Television Network programming featuring Mother Angelica.

Since January, three hours of Sunday evening EWTN programming have been sponsored on Greater

Rochester Cablevision leased access Channels 2 (suburbs) and 16 (city) by the local Knights of Columbus councils. This programming currently includes re-runs of "Mother Angelica Live," as well as the youth-oriented "That's the Spirit" and "Heart of the Nation," a weekly national Catholic TV newsmagazine, which frequently features such important guests as Archbishop Roger Mahony of Los Angeles.

Since we are using leased access channels, it is just not possible to arrange for regular TV program listings.

Our ultimate objective is to have EWTN carried regularly on a single Greater Rochester Cablevision channel at no cost. This dream can only be realized if the annual survey conducted by GRC reflects significant interest on the part of the 250,000 Catholics who live in the greater

Rochester area.

The 1987 survey will be getting underway again in early fall. In two previous surveys (1985 and 1986), EWTN did not do very well. The survey is obviously only sent to GRC cable subscribers, but even at that it is conservatively estimated that between 45,000 and 50,000 Catholics are currently subscribers.

If our efforts are to succeed, we truly need the maximum possible support of the entire Catholic community in the GRC viewing area. If a dedicated group of viewers can succeed in having the Nashville channel reinstated on local cable, surely, with God's help, we should be able to mobilize the support required from Rochester-area Catholics to bring the blessings of EWTN programming into our homes.

Until we are successful, we would very much like to continue to sponsor at least some EWTN programming. Although the rate charged by GRC is very reasonable, we may have to temporarily curtail or discontinue sponsorship, since we have exhausted current funds. Nonetheless, the decision to discontinue

sponsorship will be the last resort. We have recently met with GRC management and are working out some very hopeful alternatives based on new subscribership potential.

We are pleased that there are many diocesans who enjoy the excellent Catholic programming available on EWTN. However, in the short term, we would welcome support in either financial or moral form. In addition, the formation of a broad-based EWTN support group in the Rochester area is currently underway. All are cordially invited to join with us. A representative of EWTN will be in Rochester July 23 and 24 to lend assistance to our efforts. He will also be available to meet with EWTN support groups from other geographic areas of the diocese.

For further information, please write or feel free to call (716) 423-4456 or 544-7382. This work of evangelization is most important, and we need as many faith-filled hearts and hands as possible.

Deacon William F. Schmitz
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Rochester 14617

Paying the price for ignoring Jesus' judgment

To the Editor:

I am neither historian nor scripture scholar, but based on my very limited knowledge in each area, I would like to respond to Ann Bartholomew's letter (C-J letters, June 11: "Institutions don't teach us to be Christian") relating to sacred scripture, rules, and schools.

Where does Ms. Bartholomew think we received the New Testament scripture she so heavily relies upon? It was the Church that sifted through the writings of the apostles and their successors and, through a process of prayer, discussion and consensus, settled for the 27 books we now refer to as the New Testament.

Church teaching is based, either directly or indirectly, on the Old and New Testaments, as well as on tradition carried down from generation to generation from the very earliest days of the Church. This is all accomplished through the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Church creates rules so that it might have order, and sacred scripture gives the Church the right

to create rules (Matthew 16: 16-19). The discipline of celibacy is imposed by the authority that was given to the Church by Jesus! Those entering the priesthood know full well before they make their vows what will be required of them. The Church has not "paid a price" for its rules. Rather, people continually pay the price for ignoring Jesus' clear judgment that what the Church binds on earth will also be bound in heaven.

When we place ourselves above given authority, especially the authority given by God Himself, we place a very heavy burden on ourselves, indeed! The old refrain that has become a cliché — "I never promised you a rose garden" — is nonetheless to the point. Jesus asked us to pick up our crosses and follow Him. He suffered the heaviest burden with His passion and death. Our burdens pale by comparison. Remember, Jesus was God! He need not have gone through that humiliation at all. We could have suffered *automatic damnation*, which would be what we deserve. His passion and death provided us with the undeserved opportunity for salvation

through repentance.

Ms. Bartholomew ought to read the life of Elizabeth Seton, who was a convert to the faith. She was the one who, through her faith and trust in God, founded the Catholic school system. Her story is impressive. Our schools have lost much of her faith and determination. Her spirit has faded and, as a result, many of us have lost His Spirit. So our schools are failing and our priesthood is faltering.

Much prayer will be needed to turn it around. But there is a significant remnant and so there is hope. I ask those who will trash the Church that Jesus gave us, using sacred scripture as their authority: please read the scriptures prayerfully, *not* to find ways to criticize others, but to better learn God's ways for their own personal inspiration. Pray for God's guidance to better understand the workings of His Holy Spirit within His Church, and for the salvation of sinners.

John G. Lentricchia
Bly Street
Rochester

Columnist's argument against women priests found fallacious

To the Editor:

It was with the utmost regret that I read the column of Father Albert Shamon, "Christ in the Role of Priest" (C-J, June 25). My heart sank at this rehash of so many oft-refuted arguments, and I felt compelled to write a rebuttal of his major themes: "Where are our priests?" and "No women priests!"

Father Shamon exhorts us to "welcome prophets." I would define a prophet as a human messenger from God who brings to the world a divinely inspired thought, idea or solution to an insurmountable problem.

In this case, I would welcome Dr. Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, whose scholarly reconstructions of Christian origins have returned to women their rightful places in the history of the Church. Her research into early Church writings reveals that women preached, baptized and

celebrated the Eucharist.

"Women were among the prophetic leaders of the Pauline communities. Luke characterizes Mary and Elizabeth as well as Anna as prophets. He mentions the four prophetic daughters of Phillip (in Acts 21:9)" she writes. Apparently, the early Christians did not demand a physical resemblance to Christ of their ministers. They ministered to each other — so great and profound were their charisms!

And I welcome, as well, Father Leonardo Boff, OFM, who raises questions we can no longer avoid about our Church's role — past, present and future — in proclaiming the message of Christ. Father Boff will not permit the glossing over of the pathologies of some Church structures that allow painful oppression and marginalization. In the Third World, among the poor, he sees the development of

"base ecclesial communities" reacting to the call of the Holy Spirit.

"People, especially the poor, are organizing themselves in order to live their faith in a communal way," says Father Boff. "They are not repeating the past nor are they reforming present structures. A new future is dawning, something unforeseen during past centuries of ecclesial rule. We are dealing with a true ecclesial genesis, that is, the genesis of a church that is born of the faith of the people."

So do not worry over the decline in the number of priests. The Church will survive because Jesus told us it will. Only those "of little faith" cry out to Him for help. Listen, instead, to the prophets — the Spirit moves among us; you just may not be looking in the right places.

Sandy Zecchino
Wildwood Drive
Rochester

Reader seeks 'reasonable explanation' for Fr. Kawiak censure

To the Editor:

I am writing regarding a recent article about our priest, Father Matthew Kawiak of St. John the Evangelist Church in Greece (C-J June 4: "Vatican letters revive issues involving diocesan priest"). He has been under attack recently regarding letting the children of the parish come up to the altar as part of

his homily.

As the parent of a five-year-old daughter, I think he is one of the best things to happen to the church in a long time. He explains the gospel in a story form for the kids. After he is done, he always leaves them with a token relating to the gospel so they remember what it was all about.

My daughter has looked at the forget-me-not flower she received one time and has asked me questions about the story. After all, if she remembers only one of the gospels, hasn't Father Kawiak accomplished what he set out to do? He did teach his little flock God's word. Why then should it make a difference if the flock is in the pews or on the altar? God wants us to hear His word and remember what He teaches. How can these children not help but remember when they are so close to God?

As Matthew states, "Let the children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (19:13-15). As far as I'm concerned, Father Kawiak does just that.

I would like for someone to explain to my daughter (and myself) why Father Kawiak is no longer "telling stories." I cannot give her a reasonable explanation.

Cindy Ennoci
Rochester

C-J Letters Policy

The Courier-Journal wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome all signed, original 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 opinions of the letter writers.

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