

Editorial & Opinion

Skeptic was 'misinformed'

To the editor:

On June 12, 1988, we were in the local church at Red Creek to talk about our experiences in Medjugorje. Someone gave us a copy of your paper containing a letter by Mr. Michael More of Rochester (C-J Letters, June 2: "People not aware of whole story on Medjugorje"). In his letter Mr. More condemned the visions. He stated that people do not know the whole story about Medjugorje.

We feel that Mr. More, however well-intentioned he meant to be, is the one who is misinformed. We would like to address the three points that he talked about in his letter.

First, that the alleged visions of Medjugorje are a "satanic subversion of Fatima." How far from the truth that is! If these visions are satanic in nature, why are they calling for people to return TO God, to make Christ the center of your life, and to ask Jesus to send you the Holy Spirit?

Mary is asking people to make God the center of your lives, to make time for daily prayer, make peace with God through monthly confession, make peace within the family through frequent Mass, family prayer, and Bible reading, and to make peace in the world through daily praying of the rosary — preferably all three sets of mysteries — and by fasting one or two days a week.

Now really, do these sound satanic? We highly doubt it. And as for perverting the messages of Fatima, just the opposite is true. Father Luigi Bianchi, a specialist on Fatima says, "The message of Medjugorje is a continuation and a complement of the message of Fatima. It is the same message of peace ... Why this new message at Medjugorje? Because those of the Cova de Iria had not been listened to and remain not understood."

Father Rene Laurentine, a noted Marian scholar states "The messages of Medjugorje and Fatima are identical ... The objective is the same: Peace in spite of all the things that divide us ... and the ways are the same: A return to God through Mary."

As to Mr. More's second point about a statement made by Helena, who is not a visionary but has interior locations, we have read and re-read the statement and did not understand what it said. Mr. More stated that it was heretical and that all Catholics will note the stupidity of it. Since it made no sense to us, we will suppose that there was an error made somewhere in the translation or the printing of it.

As to the third point raised by Mr. More, yes the local bishop has opposed these visions, but only in an unofficial way. While Bishop Zanic has taken every opportunity to voice his opposition to the events in Medjugorje, he has never made his opinions official as far as the

Letters

Church is concerned. The official investigation into these events are being conducted by the Bishop's Conference of Yugoslavia (BCY). The statement in which Bishop Zanic stated that these events "merit the depths of hell" has been stopped by Cardinal Kuharic, president of BCY, because it does not agree with the conference statements. Father Laurentine states, "Rome has forbidden the bishop of Mostar (Zanic) to make any judgment about the apparitions. One can only recommend respect for the bishop of Mostar and intensify our prayers for him as he suffers in a difficult diocese."

Mr. More states, "Fatima is the last authentic appearance of Our Lady," but this is not correct. Our Lady appeared at Beurang, Belgium, in 1932 and 1933 and in Banneux, Belgium, in 1933. Both of these apparitions have been approved as authentic, although most people have never heard of them. There is no reason that Mary could not appear again.

The Holy See of Rome has the last word about Medjugorje and as of this time NO judgment has been made. We are willing to submit to the official judgment of the Church, but must also note that the Church does not require, as a matter of dogma, any Catholic to believe in any Marian apparitions.

We feel that people need to be careful about any information that they may receive concerning Medjugorje. A good source of truths can be found if people write to the Riehle Foundation, P.O. Box 7, Milford, Ohio 45150.

We are sure that there will be many more misinformed people expressing their opinions about Medjugorje. People must search for the truth, and we encourage them to seek different origins of information. For those who refuse to believe, no explanation is possible. For those who do believe, no explanation is necessary. If any one would like information from us, please feel free to write to us. We are also available to talk to your parish.

John and Doreen McCarthy
Clifton Place
Syracuse

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Courier-Journal did accidentally omit a word in the publication of Mr. More's original letter. According to his signed text, the quotation from Helena should have been: "give me the grace to love all men as you loved Jesus Christ ... give me the grace to be merciful towards you ... if, by chance, I should lose your grace, I ask you to restore it to me." (Boldface added to emphasize omitted word.)

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.

We reserve the right to edit all letters. Mail them to: Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY, 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.

Traditionalists

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ter Bay Cove, Long Island, have traveled regularly to upstate New York and to cities in the Midwest to celebrate the Tridentine Mass.

Some followers have also chalked up impressive mileage, traveling from as far as Canada, Syracuse and Utica to attend services.

"We regard the new Mass as positive dan-

ger to one's Catholic faith ... particularly the modern era's interpretation that one has to be singing or participating out loud," said Father Cekada, who is the superior at Holy Name of Mary. "The important thing is that we lift up our hearts and our minds to the almighty God!"

The church, however, is not recognized as part of the Diocese of Rochester. "The church is not recognized because they have never asked to be," said Father Thomas P. Mull, diocesan Director of Liturgy. The priest added that the Rochester congregation could not be official-

Schism

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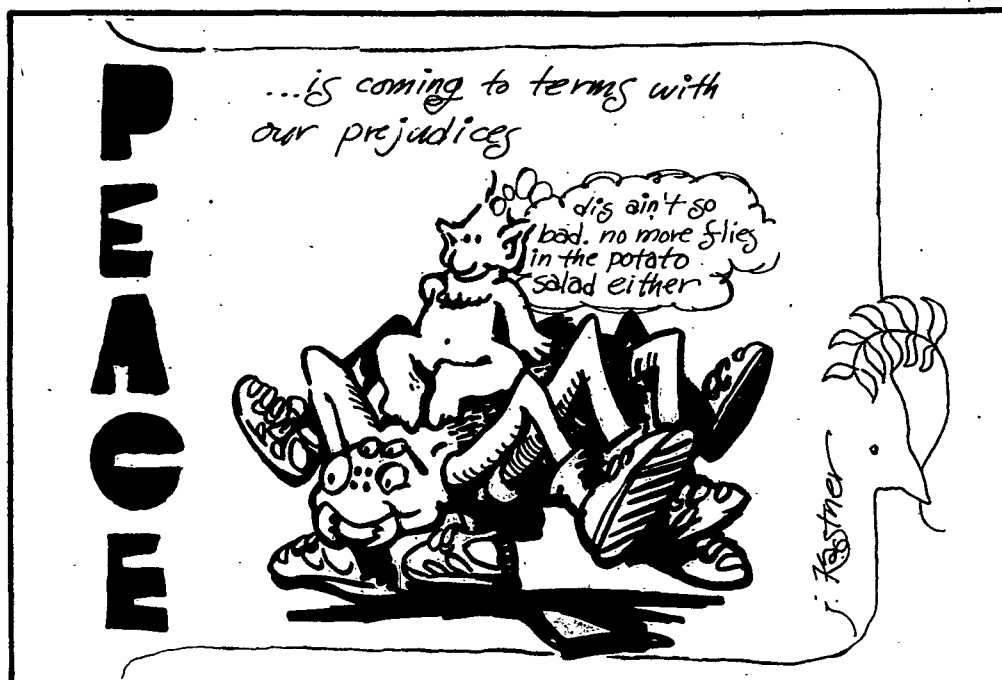
The extent to which the Vatican was willing to compromise with Archbishop Lefebvre had its most recent parallel in incidents following the suspension of the First Vatican Council in 1870. Pope Pius IX called upon all bishops to immediately publish the council's decrees — chief among them the doctrine of papal primacy and infallibility — as a display of unity and submission.

But the bishops were deeply divided over the issue of infallibility, and some — including

Rochester Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid — abstained from the final vote and left Rome to avoid embarrassing the Holy Father, according to Father Robert F. McNamara, diocesan archivist.

Once Bishop McQuaid returned to Rochester, he did comply with the pope's request, Father McNamara said.

Other bishops, however, delayed publishing the council decrees in protest. Vatican observers fully expected — and some reportedly even hoped — that the pope would take a hard line in enforcing his directive. But faced with the real likelihood of a schism, the pontiff opted to accept almost anything short of direct con-



In debating deterrence, we forget 'peace plan' proposed by Our Lady

To the editor:

Throughout the past several weeks, there has been a continuing debate over whether peace comes through disarmament or as to whether it comes through deterrence. We have forgotten, apparently, that God has proposed His own "peace plan" — that of Our Lady of Fatima.

The Fatima Peace Plan is less costly than deterrence and more realistic than disarmament. Each of us is called upon to pray the most holy rosary daily, to wear the brown scapular faithfully, and to turn away from sin and do penance. The pope and the Catholic bishops have been commanded to consecrate Russia to Mary's Immaculate Heart, to expel from that nation the satanic, anti-God, anti-Catholic heresy of communism.

St. Dominic said that Our Lady would one day bring peace to the world through the rosary and scapular. If we pray the rosary and wear the scapular faithfully, at the same time being faithful in carrying out our daily duty, then God, through Mary, will withhold the just chastisement of the world due to our sins. If we do as she asks, Mary will work for us. If we ignore her, she will allow God to scourge mankind in His justice.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Balaam was asked by God's enemies to help them destroy the then chosen people, the Jews. Balaam refused, as God was protecting His people. Balaam told God's enemies that, if they wanted to destroy the Hebrews, then they would have to get them to sin. For, if the Hebrews sinned, then God would withdraw His protection from His people. Weakened by sin and bereft of God's divine help, the Hebrews could then be defeated. And, as we all know, God later allowed His people to be chastised and oppressed for many years in the tragic Babylonian exile.

Regardless of how much we prepare in material weapons for defense, God will still allow us to be chastised and scourged. That is, unless we seek God's help by turning to God through Our Lady and by sincere penance. Let us remember Psalm 127, "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does the guard keep vigil." And let us remember that Our Lady's Peace Plan is the only true means for a true peace, As Our Lady said at Fatima, "only I can help you."

Ted Crosby
Griffith Road
Phelps

Columnist's essay on 'health' put 'fear of God' in visitor to diocese

To the editor:

Not being from your diocese, I only recently found a copy of the Courier-Journal with an "Essays in Theology" by Father Richard P. McBrien, "Learning from Jimmy Swaggart" (April 21).

However, it did put the fear of God in me. In Father McBrien's column, he compared Jimmy Swaggart's sermons against sins of the flesh with non-apostate Catholics' thundering constantly about orthodoxy. He noted that in the long run, Jimmy Swaggart was caught in the company of a prostitute.

Father McBrien, did I read you correctly?

Are you suggesting that people like myself might one day be caught in the company of a dissident theologian? Oh, please, good Father, pray that I may be saved from them along with the innovative bishops.

I know that I did understand what you said about healthy Christians: they have faith, but they keep their mouths shut. It's obvious that we've been far too healthy, thus allowing the dissident and the innovative to get the upper hand — for now. Keeping you in my prayers, I remain,

Lorie John
Elbridge, N.Y.

"We're home"

Like the rest of the parishioners at Holy Name of Mary, Hassar doesn't accept any of the reforms set forth by Vatican II. "They haven't produced any good fruits," he said, citing dissension and the declining number of priests as examples. "I feel linked with ancestors of the past.

"We will remain faithful to the sacraments, because God will restore order when He wants to," Hassar added. "He will stand up and say, 'Peace, be still' and there will be order. And when God does move to restore order, enough Catholics will know what the true faith is so there will be something to start with. We need to maintain some semblance of pure Catholic religion."

Although his religious group has no bishop at its helm to ordain new priests, Hassar is optimistic that parishes like Holy Name of Mary will continue to exist because "there are still some good, faithful bishops left out there who will return to the faith.

"It's all in God's hands; this is His church," Hassar said. "There are many in heaven who are rejoicing in the Mass with us"

ly in union with the diocese because — among other things — "they don't honor our bishop!"

Still, members of Holy Name of Mary convey a strong allegiance to the traditionalist ways. Dick Hassar said he had been "parish hopping" around Rochester before a friend told him about Holy Name of Mary. He has been attending services there for the past six and a half years.

"It was in tune with what I knew Catholicism was," Hassar said. "I looked at my wife when we came out of the church, and I said,

frontation as evidence of submission. "He didn't push them into any sort of capitulation," Father McNamara said.

A longtime student of schismatic splinter groups, Father McNamara speculated that by provoking a schism to perpetuate his society, Archbishop Lefebvre may actually hasten its dissolution. "I think that some of his followers will think it over very seriously when it becomes a schismatic thing, and there may be some who return to the Church," he said. "Also, when (Archbishop Lefebvre) disagrees with the Holy See, others may see the opening and disagree with him."

— Teresa A. Parsons