

Editorial & Opinion

Finds irony in Carmelite conundrum

To the editor:

There's trouble brewing in Morris Township, N.J. Five cloistered nuns have barricaded themselves — the irony! — in the infirmary of the Monastery of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, in a protest over the lessening of their once-beloved austere lifestyle by their newest Mother Superior, who has introduced television, music and "excessive sweets" to convent regime. Twenty-eight-year-old Sister John of the Cross is the group's apparent ringleader and spokesperson — more irony.

When one considers that none of the above-mentioned frivolities have been imposed upon the nuns, but rather made available, and that those in disagreement with the new Superior's leadership were given every helpful opportunity to relocate to a community of Carmelites more suited to their personal vision of de-secularized religious life, one questions both the origins and the motives of their present unrest.

Sister John was quoted by the press as stating, "I love rock 'n' roll. I love the Yankees. I'm a normal person. But I've sacrificed these things to obtain something better." If Sister John is as threatened by secular amusements as her radical actions suggest, and finds a life without the Yankees sacrificial, perhaps she'd be wise to reconsider her vocation. Is it love that brought her to God or the promise of heaven's acquisition on the installment plan? Austere living can be managed anywhere — even encouraged by Reaganomics — in or out of a monastery. A life of total commitment to God is not so easily managed on the "outside."

We rush headlong into marriage only when love is longer immature or bound up by persistent doubt; whatever sacrifices occur there are matters of consequence and pale in the

company of love's bliss. One must ask: did Sister John run from "things" or to God? Her actions provide the likely answer: in the extreme and humorously redundant "barricading within cloister walls," she has redefined the premarital jitters. She appears fearful, filled with self-doubt and in a panicky flight — still running from rock 'n' roll.

Generally speaking, one place is no better than another; one's spiritual attainment needn't rest in localities or sacrifice for its own sake. Our tomorrow will reflect our today, though.

Set your sights and determine, wherever and whatever your particular circumstances, to live with God now. Live and be happy, just, open, compassionate and peace-filled — be a flesh-and-blood conductor of divine love — and whether you've logged more hours in a monastery or Yankee Stadium will matter very little. You won't "go" to heaven, you'll die there.

I've been told by a fellow — and older — Catholic, that I am too "vital" to enter a monastery. That word, vital, and the feeling behind it, best explain anybody's reason for joining a monastic community. My vitality is pure grace and it leads me back, and back again, to the God who gives it. When I open myself enough, I can most fully enjoy the give-and-take indwelling: God revelling in his Spirit's own divine presence. I happily and willingly provide the acreage for God's playground.

Today's paper announced that the Carmelites of Morris Township have agreed to temporarily discontinue speaking to the press and the public with the situation at its present impasse. It sounds like this might be a good opportunity for everyone to reevaluate their "vital" interests.

Martha A. Kelch
Westway Court
Rochester

Strength will enable us to feed the hungry

To the editor:

In our recent parish bulletin, a pamphlet entitled "World Food Day" appeared. Part of the agenda contained in the World Food Day literature was a call for a protest at the Seneca Army Depot. Apparently the solution for feeding the hungry of the world is to abandon our weapons and use the money we save to feed the poor.

What the World Food Day proponents fail to consider is the reason we have armaments at all. In Ethiopia, for example, a Marxist government has systematically starved to death opponents of the regime. While food shipments have been sent to Ethiopia, it has been uncertain if the people targeted for food have

received it. Meanwhile millions have starved.

Similarly, in our own hemisphere, the Marxist regime in Nicaragua has impoverished the people and robbed them of basic freedoms. This has been accomplished with the help of the Soviet Union and her allies.

That the Soviet Union has a military presence second to none should make us aware that protests against the U.S. military is counter-productive.

Caving in to communist aggression will only increase the problem of hunger. A strong America will be in a much better position to feed the hungry of the world.

Robert Bart
Ithaca

Why no recognition for volleyball players?

To the editor:

As a concerned Catholic interested in seeing the Catholic schools promoted, especially since attendance at the high-school level is dropping yearly, I find it hard to understand why our own Catholic paper gives such little attention to outstanding teams in the diocese.

Of specific concern to me is Cardinal Mooney's girls' volleyball team. This team, though small, has yet to lose a game, but has received no recognition of this achievement from the Catholic paper. I can understand the *Democrat and Chronicle* ignoring a Catholic team, but not our own paper. Teams with much poorer records have been mentioned, if not given a story.

Is there a reason for not recognizing this achievement? Soccer hasn't done nearly as well, but received a big write-up. Isn't it time we give recognition where it is due, especially in our own Catholic paper?

The girls and their coaches deserve this recognition, because they have put a lot of personal time and effort into practicing and playing almost daily, to keep on winning. Couldn't we please give them a little notice?

Marilyn Furey
Rochester

Family thanks well-wishers

To the editor:

We would like to thank you for the lovely article you printed about Father (Dominic J.) Grasso upon his death.

We would also like to thank all the priests and sisters who participated in the funeral Masses honoring Father. Because of the great number of those attending, we were unable to thank them personally. We hope this message will reach them through your publication.

Don Scalia and
the family of Father Grasso



Apprentice program for part-time priests ...

To the editor:

Much has been said in recent weeks about the projected shortage of priests in the Rochester Catholic diocese.

It is indeed sad that while the number of Catholics is growing at a steady rate, those called to the priesthood are in short supply. The Rochester diocese has taken a positive step by initiating dialogue among individual parishes that will hopefully inspire creative ideas toward solving our pastoral needs.

I have taken a great deal of time in reflecting on the challenges of bringing more candidates for the priesthood into our midst. While issues such as ordination of women and ending the celibacy requirement have been addressed, it is highly unlikely that the Vatican will make changes in these areas in the foreseeable future. Therefore, we must explore other options. I have an idea that I think is worthy of debate and reflection.

I would assume that there are many men of middle or advanced age who are single and would consider the priesthood if it could be available to them on a part-time basis. What I have in mind is an apprentice program that would allow a prospective part-time priest to train under the direct supervision of a parish pastor. Naturally, courses in theology would be required as well.

The main role of a part-time priest, as I see it, would be for him to celebrate Mass in the absence of a full-time ordained priest. This would allow a parish pastor freedom to travel to other parishes to deliver homilies or administer the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, marriage or anointing of the sick.

I am anxious to see constructive ideas by other members of the Catholic community as well. Unless creative solutions are put into place by the turn of the century, we will have the unhappy prospect of closing parishes. As more and more Catholics come into our fold, I hope my idea of an apprenticeship program for part-time priests is given serious consideration.

Raymond A. Grosswirth
Alexander Street
Rochester

... or apostate reformation?

To the editor:

To avoid the mass closing of churches as proposed in the Archdiocese of Detroit, may I suggest for the Diocese of Rochester a Counter-Reformation solution when there were over 10,000 apostate priests in Europe with empty churches, rectories and monasteries resulting.

Let the people of each parish in the diocese nominate one or two men, single or widowed, between the ages of 50 and 65, depending on the size of the nominating parish. Then give these candidates a full three-year course — not weekends — and ordain them as Mass-priests.

This would leave all of our parishes open and we would have a sufficient number until the normal supply of young men will have appeared. It worked after the Reformation and it will work now.

Father James P. Collins, pastor
St. Anthony's Church
Elmira

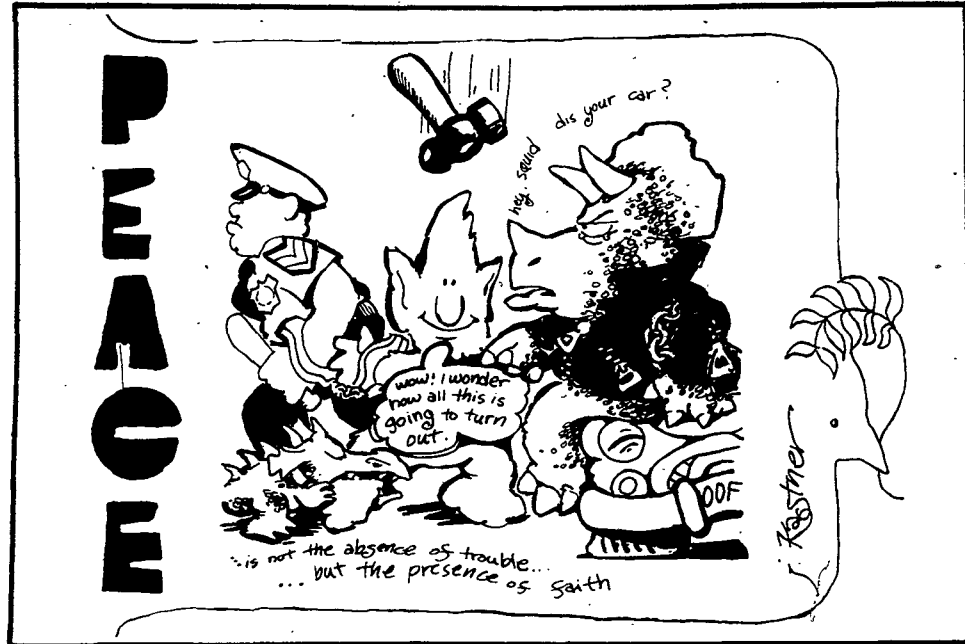
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The Courier-Journal wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome all signed, original letters about current issues affecting Church life.

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.



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