

Women enter ministry to serve, not because of vocation shortage

To the editor:

In the June 22nd issue, Mr. William Hammill has written a letter questioning statements from women religious. In his letter he also comments on the role of lay women working in the Church, making some very sweeping generalizations; "they do not regard themselves as 'professionals'" and that "most of them would be well contented to withdraw if qualified replacements could be found."

First of all, most, if not all of us, consider ourselves as professionals. Has Mr. Hammill looked at the training we have had? Many have Master's degrees in theology or religious studies, a few even have a Master of Divinity, the same educational training a priest receives. Obtaining such degrees requires years of study and is expensive with graduate courses costing well over \$600 a course. We do consider ourselves as professionals and rightly so.

Second, we would not be content to withdraw even if there was to be a sudden increase in religious vocations. Certainly

we are not employed in parishes because of the wonderful salaries offered, but rather because we too realize the call to serve God through serving others, just as any religious or priest has responded to a similar call. Because we have chosen marriage or the single life does not make us any less holy, or less qualified to work in the Church. To each of us God speaks the same words, "Follow Me." By our baptism, we all share in a common call and a common destiny, no matter what vocation we have chosen.

Finally, Mr. Hammill states that Bishop Clark "does not have his house in order." I suggest Mr. Hammill get his own house in order and get the facts straight before making such sweeping and condescending remarks about lay women. He owes an apology to all the lay women who labor out of love for Christ and the Church.

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RTL chairman amazed, disillusioned by lack of involvement in pro-life fight

To the editor:

It has, for 16 years since abortion (baby killing) became legal and fashionable, been a source of amazement and disillusionment to me that so many people refuse to become actively involved in fighting this incredible evil. I would like to quote a few people — some deceased and others alive — who have made very meaningful observations. Hopefully they will motivate more people to actively support the anti-abortion movement in general and "Operation Rescue" in particular: Edmund Burke once said: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."

Thomas Carlyle said: "Conviction is worthless unless it is converted into conduct." Howard Philips said: "Resistance to evil is not a moral option, it is a moral imperative." Pope John Paul II said: "It is not enough to know the truth, you must live it." Jesus Christ said: "What does it profit a man if he gains the world but suffers the loss of his soul."

When I read the last quote I can't help but think of the many people whose worldly ambitions leave them no time for the unborn — the most helpless, innocent and threatened of God's creations. I can't help either in thinking of the gospel story of the poor man who lived off the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. When the poor man died, he went straight to Heaven and the rich man, directly to Hell. Now, if God will punish someone so severely not because of what he did, but for what he did not do, how will he treat those who give only "lip service" to fighting abortion? How will God judge those who devote their energies and resources to gain the world, or as much of it as they can, while the greatest holocaust in the history of the world envelopes and consumes us.

John Arena
Chairman, Central New York
Right to Life Federation
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Let's put stop to nit-picking on semantics

To the editor:

I wish to speak to my fellow women. How does "fellow" grab you? Many think it means boy or man. Not so. Check your dictionary.

Sometimes I think we women are misunderstood by men in the Church. Yes, we are ardent feminists, but we are not radical feminists; nor are we out to diminish men. We love 'em! The heart of the matter is

that we seek only what is our due — respect for our dignity and rightful partnership with men. And, full acceptance of qualified women as fellows in ministry.

Too much emphasis is being placed upon semantics. Lately, I've heard reference to the Holy Spirit as being feminine and having womanly attributes, whatever that means. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the same for men as they are for women. And God as Mother? We all know full well that the Holy Spirit and God are neither male nor female. Jesus called God "Father" and used "He" and "Him" in speaking of God. What's good enough for Jesus is good enough for me.

Let's be sensible. We've always thought of the words man, brethren, mankind etc. as applying equally to men and women. If we are secure in our feminism, it should make little difference what terminology is used. Why not simply settle for the use of man or mankind interchangeably with human kind, brothers and sisters, and so on, whenever their usage sounds most appropriate. And, no need to apologize for referring to God or the Spirit as "He," as long as we know the difference. The men could get equally apoplectic if we called them "She"!

I once had a wise boss who said "Don't sweat the little things. Save your energy for what is most important; then speak up!" So, let's get to the heart of the matter, and stop nit-picking around the edges.

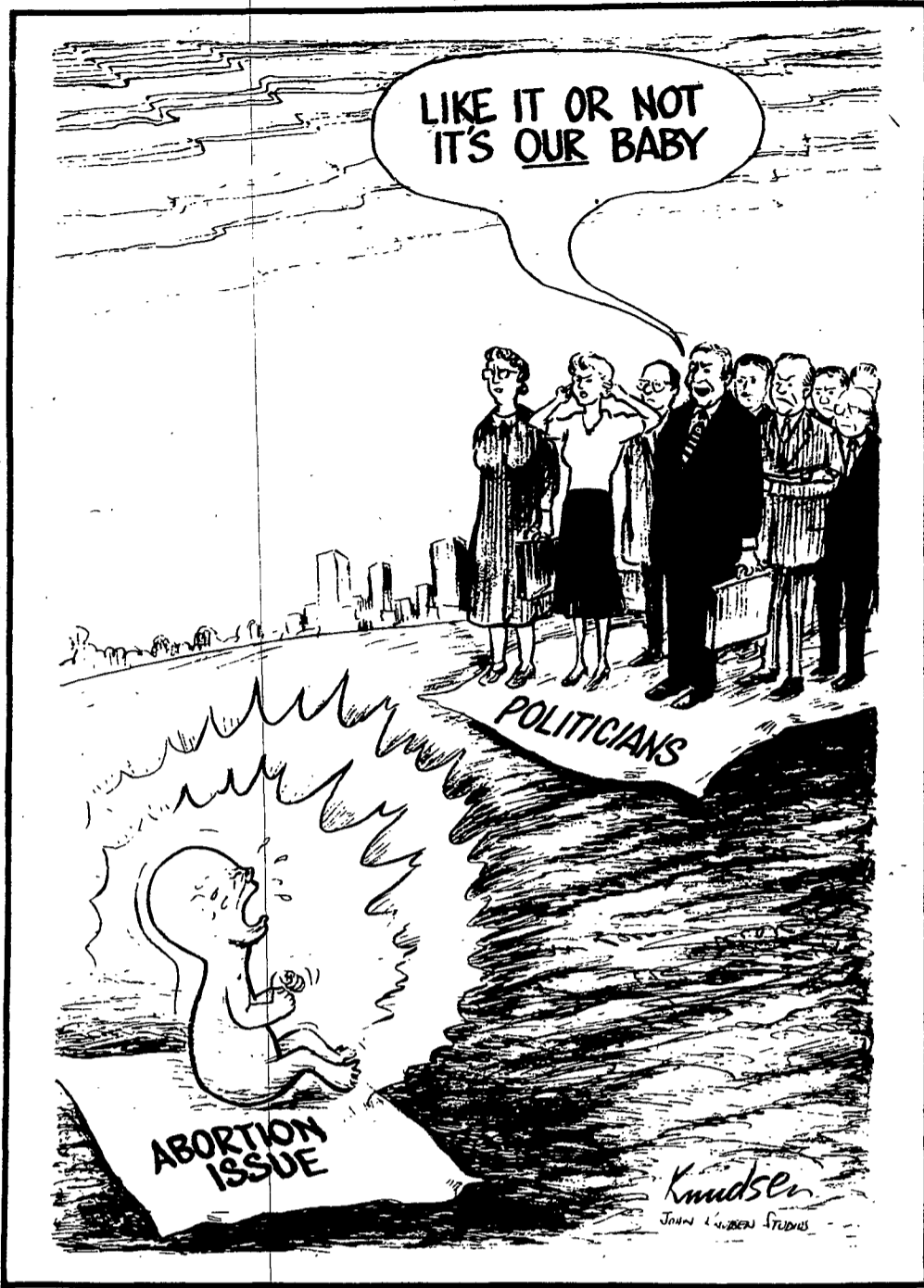
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Letters Policy

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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: **Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, New York 14624.** Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.



Generalizations disturb master's candidate

To the editor:

As a lay woman active in parish ministry as well as a student at St. Bernard's Institute in the Master's of Divinity degree program, I am compelled to respond to William Hammill's misleading remarks about women in ministry (*Courier*, June 22: "Questions statements from women religious").

Mr. Hammill's sweeping generalizations are troubling because I find his statements to be assumptions rather than facts. He certainly does not convey an accurate picture of contemporary woman called to ministry in the Catholic Church. He implies that women are presently serving the church out of a sense of obligation rather than call and desire. This assumption is simply not the truth. Rather, he is presenting the stereotypical picture of women who "jump in" whenever they are needed. The truth of the matter is that today's women are in ministry because they have experienced God's call. They desire to respond to God's loving initiative and they long to live out the fullness of their ministerial call. Whether in the preparation process or actively engaged in ministry, these women have experienced the liberating breath of

the Spirit which has led them to journey on a yet uncharted path.

It is the denial of woman's experience which perpetuates the sin of sexism. Sadly, Mr. Hammill has not considered the experience of women called to ministry. His remarks reveal a male bias which discounts the validity of women's experience of God and their response to God's call. Furthermore, to suggest that Bishop Clark needs to get his house in order is upsetting. Bishop Clark is to be commended for his attentiveness to the local church and its needs. He is to be admired for the strong support he has shown for women in ministry. It is Mr. Hammill's house which needs re-ordering — so that it reflects both the experience of women and the transforming Spirit at work through so many courageous people in the contemporary Church. The Spirit is thwarted enough already. Let us pledge to liberate her voice of wisdom, here, in the Diocese of Rochester. Then God's ongoing creative process will be more fully realized.

Sandra Clark Arrington
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Dignity is the basis for all human rights

To the editor:

At the basis of all human rights is the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). A recognition of this human dignity is also a part of our civil traditions in the United States and is expressed in the declaration of our nation's independence. All people are created equal in their human dignity and endowed by their creator with inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

This also applies to the handicapped, the elderly, the retarded and the preborn babies.

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