

Church 'shackles' the Lord with rigid rules

To the editors:

Your Oct. 25 lead article on Feminist Theology ("Feminist theology reflects cultural forces") demonstrates the great discrimination of women by our patriarchal church. What a terrible loss of human potential in ministering to people in physical and spiritual need. Just as Jesus gave new insight to the Ten Commandments through the introduction of the Beatitudes, your article points out how He

taught a direction of women participating in ministry. As our societies and understandings have evolved since, have we learned nothing? Why must the old rigid code be applied in a post-Vatican II contemporary Church?

Then comes the Synod's discussion of celibacy (*Courier*, Oct. 25: "Bishops preparing final proposals to pope"). As the father of seven, I certainly am not celibate. My purpose in life is to be married with

children. This does not mean I do not applaud the celibate, but I see no reason why celibacy must be a prerequisite to full ministry. The need for the intense focus on the virtues of celibacy in the hope of increasing vocations convinces me that something is wrong: I have been fortunate to live with a woman in a relationship both sexual and psychological in which the Lord has been present — we have grown in the Lord through each other. This process is no impediment to ministry.

A virtue that celibacy does not include is parenthood, that process by which we are given the privilege and honor of nurturing and enjoying the Lord's children and, eventually, growing with and learning from them. But this is a constant and binding commitment which takes each parent down life paths giving the Lord intense opportunity for interaction.

I, frankly, am tired of having the patriarchal church hold its celibate priests up on a pedestal when, in reality, they are no higher than that of any competent parent. Each person should be living out their life role to the best of his/her ability. So, I am sorrowed by the rigidity of the church excluding females and non-celibates from full ministry. Why do we shackle the Lord with rigid rules rather than letting the Love of the Spirit shine through?

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Newspaper deprives its readers of orthodox 'Catholic' teachings

To the editors:

Rosemary Radford Ruether, a champion of Feminist Theology and dissenter of the teaching authority of the Church, the Magisterium, rates a full front page in the *Catholic Courier* (Oct. 25: "Feminist theology reflects cultural forces"). Pope John Paul II, Vicar of Christ on earth, head of the Roman Catholic Church has no such privilege in this paper. Sometime back, I asked the *Courier* why we cannot get the Holy Father's weekly message in the *Courier*. The reply was that his messages are too lengthy. Apparently, the same criterion does not apply to dissenters and to feminist theologians. It's plain to see where the "Catholic" *Courier* stands.

It's amazing to me that in this time of

dissent in the Church there have been some very notable people entering the Church. Apparently, they don't take seriously the whacko element that gets such constant coverage. But, of course, converts do not join the Church of the dissenters. Converts, like Richard John Neuhaus, famous Lutheran Theologian, are drawn by the firm orthodoxy and brilliance of John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger.

It is sad that Rochester Catholics, who depend solely on the *Courier* for Catholic information, are deprived of reading about the real heroes of the Church.

Courier staff would benefit from trip to Medjugorje

To the editors:

As long as I can remember I have been receiving the *Catholic Courier* without subscribing to it. Every time I received it, I would file it in "File 13" without reading it because of the liberal format, and the liberal writers and contributors.

Then five years ago we were assigned a new pastor, who started including subscription to the *Courier* envelopes with the packet of church envelopes. When this happened I decided to cancel my subscrip-

Writer applauds story on seamless garment

To the editors:

What a great job the *Catholic Courier* did with the October 4 Respect Life issue! I was especially impressed with the cover article by Robert Cullivan on the "seamless garment," which contained a lot of insights on how to be consistently "for life."

The Respect Life Supplement itself was also outstanding, in that the cohesiveness of the consistent-life ethic was reflected in the form as well as the content of the articles — all of them began with a quote from the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World on respect for all human beings, from conception to natural death, and each addressed a separate aspect of consistent respect for life. And of course Bishop Clark's letter was a perfect "centerpiece" for the subjects the articles addressed. It was extremely well put together, and challenging to us Catholics as well as a pleasure to read. Keep up the great work!

Karen A. Webb
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Priest's pen is poison

To the editors:

In all fairness, I think that there is something missing in the logo above Father McBrien's column. The ink bottle should be labeled with a skull and crossbones in order to warn the unwary of the danger emanating from his poison pen and from his hatred for the Roman Catholic Church and our God-given Pope.

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tion, rather than pay for such liberal teachings.

Then came July, 1988, when I was blessed with opportunity to go to Medjugorje, Yugoslavia. My first two days there, I thought to myself, "What am I doing here in this God forsaken place?" On the third day, it happened like a bolt of lightning it hit me. For the first time in my life I was no longer just a *Sunday morning Catholic*. Now, I cannot find time enough to be in church, with my loving Christ; I cannot find time enough to read about my Catholic Faith; I cannot find time enough to pray and meditate with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary; I cannot find time enough to study the Holy Bible.

I would like to ask Father Richard P. McBrien, Staff Writer Lee Strong and many of your other writers and contributors, if they have been to Medjugorje? If not, I would recommend that they go, provided, they go with open minds and humble hearts. I also recommend this trip to all priests who feel that they have to limit their homilies to seven minutes. I am sorry that I am not versed enough on the Holy Bible to quote chapter and verse, but did not Jesus say to His Apostles, "Go out and teach all nations, what I have taught to you." He did not say, "Go out and teach all nations, what they want to hear."

If a priest is only interested in mundane things, how can he be excited enough to

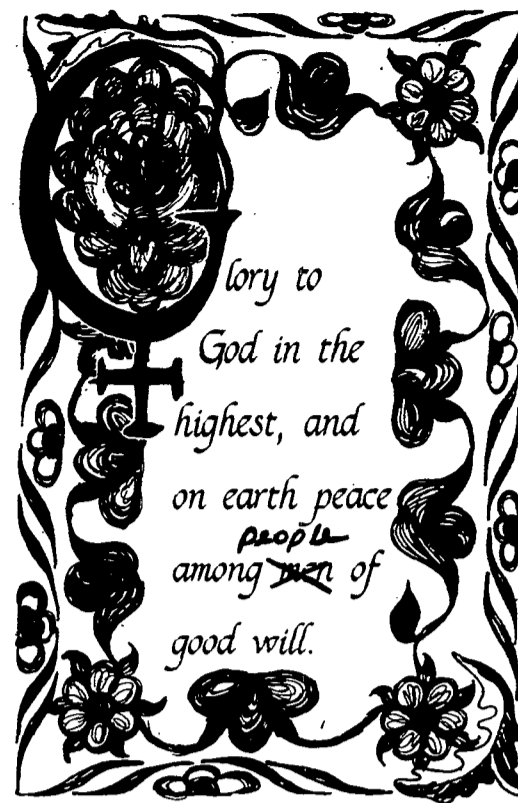
teach the Word of God? He must first excite himself, in the Word of God, and then he can teach his parishioners. If he has faith in God, if he loves God, as I have learned to love God, since my return from Medjugorje, believe me, a priest would not worry about limiting his homily to seven minutes, because even seventy times seven minutes would not be enough time for his homily.

If a priest would not be self-centered on his own mundane life, but teach the Word of God as Jesus told his first priests, he would not have time to worry about celibacy, altar girls, female priests, and how to disagree with the Magisterium.

Be that as it may be, upon my return from Medjugorje, I subscribed again to the *Catholic Courier*, and as usual, I'm still disappointed with some of its liberal articles, but now I don't file it in "File 13" until I read most of it first, and after reading it, I pray for the authors and priests who contribute articles to the paper. Our Bishop Matthew and Father McBrien as well as others are constantly in my prayers. My complete day is one of constant prayer, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

I love Jesus, do you? May God bless all of you, and give you the strength and wisdom to carry your crosses on your way to eternal life.

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God in the
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Homily article failed to cover preaching style

To the editors:

In our opinion your cover story titled "Good preaching stresses content over style" (Oct. 18) failed to tell it like it is. We agree that content of a homily is very important. We believe that most pastors/homilists are bright, talented and scholars of the written word, church doctrine and theology, the sources of their material. They also know their parishioners' needs and wishes. The real problem you failed to address is that most homilists and readers of the word are grossly untrained in the art of reading and preaching, verbal communication and delivery techniques. Ergo, "preaching style."

Homilists usually read most of their messages. They deliver their messages in a dry, dull monotone as they stand motionless 8 to 15 minutes at the lectern. They usually lack stage presence and eye contact with their audience. They fail to use proper diction, enunciation, elocution, voice projection and voice modulation. They fail to use appropriate head, hand, arm, body gestures and to interject much needed human levity. Above all they generally lack personal enthusiasm, genuine spirit and a sense of excitement. All of the above elements are vitally essential for good delivery — style — that can and must be taught and learned. These are the personal communication skills that separates the wheat from the chaff.

We submit that our own internationally famous Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, the Rev. Robert Schuller ... and all celebrated radio and TV preachers used the above mentioned, personally acquired elements that characterize the best preachers of the word.

The Catholic Church and many of our local parishes have lost and will continue to lose the cream of our younger generations, not because of the lack of homiletic content. Many of our most active parishioners leave to seek the spoken word from proven stylists. They leave, your research will show, and we believe, because the homilist lacks proven preaching skills and personality traits possessed and used by those who are acknowledged as superior homilists in our own Diocese.

We recommend, therefore, that those who teach, train and instruct parish homilists must redirect their emphasis toward "style," ergo, professionally acquired and personally learned communications skills rather than toward total emphasis on church dogma, theology and the word.

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