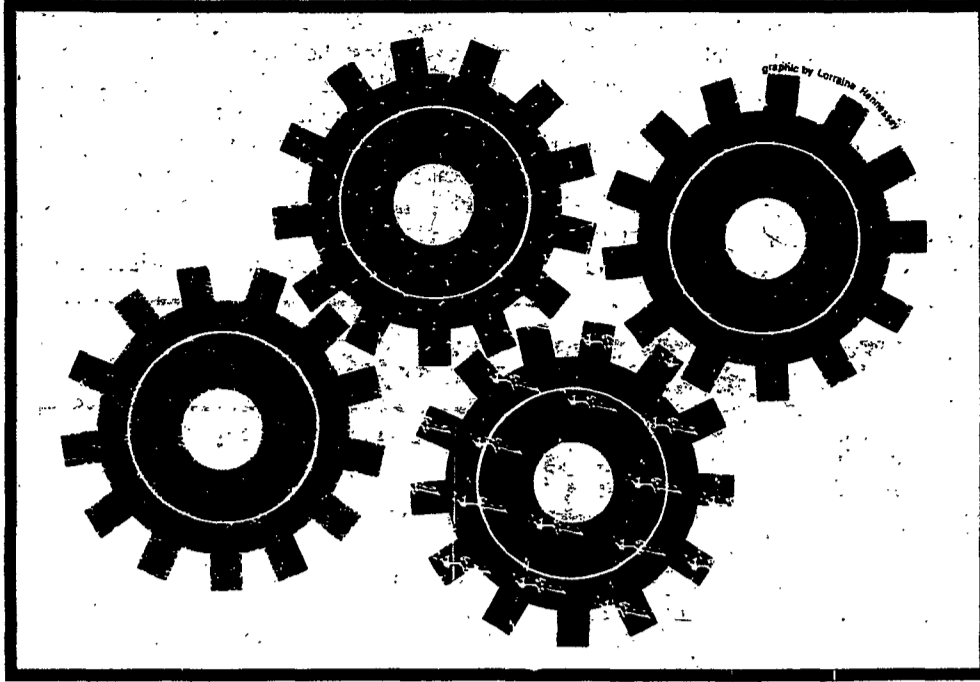


Christians need to seek out Christ in all people

To the editors:

I have just finished reading the January 17th issue of the *Catholic Courier*, in which the "Opinion" page was particularly distressing. Perhaps, because today (Jan. 23) is Ecumenical Unity Sunday, and I'm sure Michael A. Gallagher from Fairport, Kevin Brennan from Rochester, and Father Raymond Heisel from Rochester are all preparing to attend Mass. Perhaps we all ought to take a moment to reflect on why we go to Mass. The Mass is a celebration of the Kingdom of God which Jesus brought to us almost 2,000 years ago. As we celebrate the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Jesus and His Kingdom are present with us and in us. And, since Jesus is LOVE, and He is in us, then it follows that we, too, are love; or at least, that LOVE is in each of us. The problem is that we often recognize Jesus/Love in ourselves, but fail to see it in others or choose not to look for it in others.

During today's homily, the homilist spoke about prejudice; Nathaniel said of Jesus, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). How often we, too, put labels on people — in this case "traditional" and "non-traditional." Jesus came to invite ALL to the wedding banquet, not just "traditional" Catholics, but ALL: black, white, yellow, red; Jew, Hip-



du, Moslem, Protestant. I repeat; ALL! Whenever we put labels on others, we fail to recognize Christ in them.

Perhaps the three individuals mentioned above, should sit back and consider God's invitation to each of us to attend His wedding banquet. Just because Father Richard McBrien, Bishop Matthew Clark, Ar-

chbishop Rembert Weakland, and Father Charles Curran are willing to explore the vastness of God and His love for His people, and are "seriously concerned about their faith and are eager to explore its ecclesiastical and societal implications, does not mean they are disloyal, irreverent or heretical."

How often are we like the Pharisee praying in the Temple, "Oh, God, I thank you that I am not like one of these sinners; I don't believe in abortion, I'm not gay, I don't like Fr. Curran, Archbishop Weakland, Bishop Clark or Fr. McBrien, and I rejoice when they fail. I thank you that I am a 'Good Catholic.'"

I believe the Roman Catholic Church, indeed Christianity worldwide, should be like the rainbow, which is made up of many colors. Each of us believes in the basic tenets of the Catholic Church, but each of us brings a different viewpoint to our faith. The Love which Jesus Christ brought to each of us when he inaugurated the Kingdom of God on earth almost 2,000 years ago, invited us to Love one another — not to tear the rainbow apart, but to recognize Christ in each other with our various colored skins, our lives which each represent a different hue, as well as the diverse pastels of our faith.

I feel the "Opinion" page of the *Catholic Courier* should represent the rainbow I mentioned above. It is unfortunate that in this particular issue, there were so many negative letters. It seems the same people write in again and again almost like a campaign. This is no way to educate people or convince them to change their ideas. I suggest that reading and praying will help us deal with the current issues and changes that face the Catholic Church. We need to look at both sides of the issues, keep an open mind, and pray for spiritual guidance — not asking what we want, but asking God what He wants for His Church — because these issues must be dealt with if we are going to be a truly universal Church. If we truly believe in the Kingdom of God present in each of us, we are truly then one people, regardless of our opinions on moral questions.

On Ecumenical Unity Sunday, how can we expect to unite as Christians when Catholics tear each other asunder over non-doctrinal points? If we would just look through the eyes of love, we would indeed see the separate colors of the rainbow, but we would not see them as separate entities, but as blending together to form a whole.

Florence Osekoski
Religious Education Administrator
St. Mary Our Mother Parish
Horseheads

EDITORS' NOTE: We, too, would like to present more positive letters on this page. But we can't publish what we don't receive.

Ecumenical service merited more publicity

To the editors:

Greater advance publicity should have been given for the Ecumenical Prayer Service that took place at Sacred Heart Cathedral Sunday afternoon, January 20. It was planned in connection with the week of prayer for Christian Unity, but was expanded to include Jews and Muslims.

I prayed that the church would be filled. There was a good attendance but it should have been full to overflowing, especially in view of the conflict in the Middle East. We need to draw closer to those of every religious persuasion in our search for a lasting peace. After all, we do worship the same God!

For the edification of those who sometimes disagree with Bishop Clark, and for the rest of us, too. I would appreciate your printing here, or elsewhere in the *Courier*, the twelve points the Bishop made in his excellent address. They are food for thought, prayer and action.

Grace B. Carnes
Eagle Ridge Circle
Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: Bishop Clark's "Along the Way" column in the edition of Jan. 24 contained the text of his talk at the ecumenical prayer service.

Jesus set example of pacifism for followers

To the editors:

In dusting off the "just war theory" for the Persian Gulf, the U.S. bishops and Bishop Clark in his Nov. 22 column make no mention of Jesus of the Gospel as if these were somehow irrelevant in the present situation. Let us pray that, when the U.S. Church does "... undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude," the attitude will be much more in tune with the spirit of Jesus.

Jesus lived all his life in a worst case scenario; his country occupied by the enemy Romans. If there ever was a just war it was the one Jesus could easily have led shortly after his triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple at Passover time with its renewed expectations of deliverance. The disciples "... had been hoping that he was the man to liberate Israel" (Luke 24:21). Instead, Jesus inaugurated his kingdom by giving his life on the cross. Forgiveness and love of enemies were more important than victory in worldly terms. The political relevance of Jesus' way of peace and justice through non-violent, self-sacrificing love is attested to by the comfortable leaders of the Jewish scene and the Roman, Pilate, who joined together to have him killed and by the suppression of Jesus' followers after the resurrection. Jesus was not a passive-ist spiritualizer so that we must look elsewhere — i.e., just war theory — for ethics to apply to the situation in the Persian Gulf. Jesus is a pacifist.

For 300 years, Christians consistently imitated their Lord's pacifism as a normative part of the faith. The early Church's saints and martyrs present an almost unanimous opposition to killing in war or even serving in the army. Some were martyred at draft age for refusing to be inducted and take the oath to Caesar. Their words would make fine homilies for the instruction of young people today.

In January 313, the emperor Constantine issued an edict making Christianity a legal religion in the Roman Empire:

Let this be so in order that the divine grace which we have experienced in such manifold ways, may always remain loyal to us, and continue to bless us in all that we undertake for the welfare of the empire.

With God on its side, the wars of the empire continued, bloodier than ever. One hundred years later, the just war theory helped legitimize the subversion of Christianity that began with Constantine.

This "theory" and the present U.S. bishops "continued acceptance of deterrence" have done little to dissuade President Bush from his belief that God will bless the American Empire and the war he is now pursuing for its "welfare."

I believe that trying to influence governments concerning the justice of this or that war is generally a misplaced effort for Christians and something that would not have occurred to Jesus. Jesus knew that a primary loyalty to the Kingdom of God would make his followers "... hated by all

nations on my account." The bishops would do better by adopting a new attitude: the earlier pacifism of the Church, and by addressing themselves to Catholics first. When the "emperor" knows that Christians will not kill for the state, peace will have a chance.

Vincit agnus noster, eum sequamur. Our Lamb has conquered, him let us follow.

Mark Scibilia-Carver
Cold Springs Road
Trumansburg

Delegations falter unless backed

To the editors:

Your correspondent, Mr. Roger M. Ribert ... (*Catholic Courier*, Jan. 10: "Theory obscures issue") makes an interesting point. But, he seems to be a little confused on history. He states, "Civilians were killed during the American Revolution, so we probably shouldn't have fought that. Maybe we should have sent a delegation of Bishops to King George V instead."

At the time of the American Revolution, Not-So-Great Britain was only up to its Third George. He was affectionately known to his family and friends as "Mad George."

Anyone who takes the time to read The Declaration of Independence will learn that many petitions and delegations were sent to him, all of which he ignored. When was the last time you read The Declaration of

Independence? I read it aloud to my family on every July 4th.

We did send a delegation to George V in 1917, to help him out of a family squabble with his cousin Willie — a.k.a. Kaiser Bill.

This delegation was known as the AEF, American Expeditionary Force.

Fifty Years ago next December the (Japanese) sent a delegation to talk peace with our country, even while their bombers were enroute to bomb Pearl Harbor. Our prompt response was to send most of our troops over to Europe to fight England's war.

Delegations are very useful tools to maintain peace as long as a nation has the power and willingness to back them up.

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