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Letters Policy

The *Catholic Courier* 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: *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.

Facts dispel clouds of speculation

To the editors:

The "spin" that Patti Federowicz gives in her letter (*Catholic Courier* July 18: "Women's identity more than child-bearing") typifies an approach used by an element in the Church who pride themselves on their techniques in discussing weaknesses and/or errors in tradition, Scriptures, liturgy, etc.

These techniques are overlain with ample doses of personal interpretation, miopia, and careless use of facts.

Let me illustrate by citing the scenario created by Ms. Federowicz in her treatment of Mary. The impression is given that Mary was somehow suppressed and never achieved the honor truly due her because she was not chosen as an Apostle and of course this was due to a male-dominated society.

If such was the situation how do we account for the beautiful words of the Magnificat uttered by Mary — "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid; for behold henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; because He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name" (Luke 1:46-49).

This portrays the profuseness of God's love and awareness of her role in His plan



File photo
A wax sculpture by D. Mastroianni depicts Mary proclaiming the Magnificat during her visit to Elizabeth.

of salvation and belies any notion of inferiority. The facts of course show that the Church has accorded a place of honor to Mary far in excess of the Apostles and all of the saints and that she represents the apex of not only womanhood but mankind. Facts will always dispel the clouds of disingenuous speculation.

Another point raised by Ms. Federowicz was the ordination of women. She doubts that Christ so willed that exclusion for women. I infer from her letter that the basis for that conclusion is that priestesses were common in all the pagan societies surrounding Israel.

If that is her support for heralding women priests, where does this leave her conception of Jesus, her recognition of the Old Testament, her acknowledgement of God the Father? Is this all to be subordinated to the mores and customs of pagan societies?

There is a strain of "Catholicism" all too prevalent today that attempts to establish a foundation of scientism in treating religious beliefs, doctrine, Scripture, and tradition. The results are often so distorted and fragmented as to merit no other name but pablum.

William T. Hammill
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Rochester

Jesus would care about current bickering

To the editors:

It seems as if Father Shamon has been under fire lately, the target of writers accusing him of abuse towards women and women not understanding his view of celibate male priests. Actually they should congratulate him upon all the good he's accomplished during his life as a priest; his years as a teacher, spreading the Good News, that of a columnist in the *Catholic Courier* and the many Pilgrimages he's headed to Medjugorje; bringing the message of the Blessed Mother — Pray, Penance and Sacrifice.

In connection with these subjects I'd like to comment on two July 18th letters in the *Catholic Courier*.

(Regarding "Church sexism causes im-

balance"): The Good News is that Jesus does care so much for each of us, therefore, he would care about the bickering and squabbling that causes disharmony in the Catholic Church. This is from a quote in the August *Ligurian* by Father Rich Bower, CSSR: "A life of celibacy goes deeper than 'not being allowed to marry.' The church asks its clergy to choose spirituality over the inclusive love found in marriage. Rather than a negative 'thou shall not' it is a positive 'thou shall.' It is a reminder that celibacy is a sacrifice made for the kingdom of heaven."

(Regarding "Women's identity more than childbearing"): Mary was a very special individual. You and I are special,

but not like Mary. She was conceived without original sin.

At the Wedding Banquet at Cana Christ reminded her His hour had not yet come. She told the waiters to do His bidding and fill the jars with water, which He turned into wine, His first Miracle.

I doubt we're considered lowly females just because we're not celibate priests.

When I die, I hope my seven children — four girls, three boys — will remember how I tried to live by God Commandments, The Sermon of the Mount, and observe the Precepts of the Catholic Church, thus imitating me.

Rena B. Camblin
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Palmyra

Council of Trent affirmed that Christ ordained priests

To the editors:

In the *Catholic Courier* of July 25, in a letter to the editor ("Don't put words in God's mouth"), a writer wrote "Christ never ordained anybody, male or female".

In the *Catholic Courier* of August 1st, in a letter to the editor ("Arguments against ordination lack basis"), a writer writes "Furthermore, we do not find in Scripture that Jesus ever ordained anybody to the priesthood".

Both of these statements are condemned by the twenty-second session of the Council of Trent in the year 1562 in chapter 1 which binds everybody in the Church. The

Fathers of the Council wrote: "He offered His body and blood under the species of bread and wine to God the Father, and, under the same signs gave them to partake of to the disciples whom he then established as priests of the new covenant, and ordered them and their successors in the priesthood to offer, saying: do this in memory of me etc., (Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24) as the Catholic Church has always understood and taught" (emphasis added).

The accompanying canon #2 very clearly says: "If anyone says that by the words 'Do this as a memorial of Me' (Luke

22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24) Christ did not establish the apostles as priests or that He did not order that they and other priests should offer His body and blood, let him be anathema."

It is difficult to understand how any student of theology can be unacquainted with the great Council of Trent, all of whose prescriptions were reaffirmed at the very beginning of another great Council, Vatican II.

Father James P. Collins
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Private penance existed from church's onset

To the editors:

Lee Strong's article on Penance (*Catholic Courier*, Aug. 1: "Penance provides cleansing") alleging that the "Sacrament of Penance simply did not exist in the early days of the church" is historically and doctrinally incorrect. It is true that severe public penances existed in the early Church, but so did auricular — or private — confession of sins. The Council of Trent specifically refuted the Protestant error that auricular private confession had not been practiced in the Church from its very beginning (Canon 6).

It is unfortunate that books and articles have been published in recent years claiming that confession of sins to a priest is a late innovation in the Catholic Church. Thus, an unlawful use of General Absolu-

tion has become habitual in certain dioceses and to the sad neglect of the practice of auricular confession extolled by Popes, Councils, Fathers, Doctors and Saints. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* clearly confirms that fact that secret private confession was practiced in the early Church, and was not the invention of 6th (century) Irish monks. Christ Himself prescribed confession via the Sacrament of Penance, and Bishops and priests always acted as judges in evaluating the culpability of those confessions.

It is true that the Sacrament of Penance is now popularly known as the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is certainly so with regards to the forgiveness of mortal sins. However, it would be well to distinguish between the proper name of the Sacrament



— Sacrament of Penance — and its liturgical expression as a rite of reconciliation. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the Holy Eucharist also serves — and is termed — a Sacrament of reconciliation where venial sins are invoked.

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