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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.

Photographs draw praise from reader

To the editors:

I was elated when I saw you had returned pictures of the *Catholic Courier's* columnists. It is almost like being face-to-face in communication with them. I wrote a length when I was urging you to restore them so I won't repeat myself. I just want to give you a heartfelt "Thank you."

I should have written you right away — as Father Cuddy has exhorted so many times, "Do it now," but the pressure of a filled calendar including a four-week trip caused me to fall behind in non-scheduled action plans. So better late than never. Thanks.

Rhea M. Garland
27th Ave. N.
St. Petersburg, Fla.



Father Albert Shamon

Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

'Joshua' provides step toward goal of unity

To the editors:

I am responding to the articles critiquing *Joshua* in the book by Father Joseph Girzone, in both Father Cuddy's column and in the letters to the editor in this week's edition of the *Catholic Courier*.

I have read three novels by Father Girzone, *Joshua*, *Joshua and the Children*, and *The Shepherd*, and I found them full of fresh, creative and positive thinking, which could be very threatening to closed minds.

In Father Girzone's character of Joshua, I see depicted the types of things that Jesus is saying directly to people in their hearts today. Joshua is Jesus in disguise in these books, and he worships in all of the denominational churches in turn each weekend, joining none. And I rejoiced when I read that.

The Holy Spirit is still active today, speaking to people in their hearts, who are open and willing to listen; and the Spirit is leading people to grow and change, and to make decisions and to take action on their beliefs. And this includes both Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Having experienced this among people of all faiths for many years now, I did not find these books to be sentimental, fantasy, or anti-clerical. If anything, they challenge people and clergy alike to grow and change. Perhaps that's the rub, I don't know.

If one is not facing the reality of the changing scene among the people and the churches, then I can understand how one might be offended. The signs of the times are all around us; even *Newsweek* magazine's cover which was excellent. Webster's dictionary defines



sentiment as "a tendency to be moved by feeling rather than idea," and sentimental as "abounding with sentiment; romantic; emotional; foolishly tender." I cannot imagine anyone reading the Book of Isaiah and not discovering the tenderness of our Loving God!

God speaks to people on all levels, not just on the heady theological one. I personally, thank God for Father Girzone and his gifts, and I wish there were more like him. Having grown up in the institutional church I could well relate to the different stereotypes of characters in these books all too well; today I can laugh at them and let them be, thank God. But back then I was confused, so often perceiving that it must be a sin to be human!

Book reveals flawed image of God

To the editors:

Having suffered under the illusion that I was the only person in the world who hated the book *Joshua*, I have read the *Courier* discussion started by Father Cuddy with great interest. Unfortunately, no one yet has mentioned the point that bothers me the most about this book and its sequels.

When Jesus left us, He sent the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us until the end of time. What, then, does it mean that Joshua/Jesus comes back to earth to challenge the Church? That the Holy Spirit couldn't handle the job? Does God need to come clean up the failures of God?

And what kind of body does this Joshua have? Is it the resurrected, glo-

rified body we read about in the Scriptures that can appear at will in locked rooms? In *Joshua*, this body has to walk from one town to another to get to a meeting and gets hot, sweaty, and blistered feet in the process. In *Joshua and the Children*, this body dies all over again!

It is a wonderful thing to meditate about what Jesus would do if He were here today. To meditate on this question and to live out the answer is the work of all the saints. But let's do it without re-Incarnating Jesus as if His sacrifice was not enough "once for all."

Christine Bravo-Cullen
Lee Road
Dryden

Given the growing priest shortage and what the Lord is doing among ordinary people today, calling them to more responsibility for owning their faith, I'd venture to say that the form of the institutional church may very well change at some point in time. But is that all bad?

The challenge today is to become more fully human; and that is not to be confused with the ideology of "humanism." To care is both human and very Christian. "But God so composed the body, that the members may have the same care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:24-25, RSV). The word used to describe this reality is the Greek *merimnao* meaning to care for. It also means to be anxious for, and it is often found in the Christian Scriptures to warn against having the kind of preoccupying anxiety that prevents freedom in Christ, as when Jesus cautioned Martha about worrying and fretting about so many things.

Jesus condemns care that causes unnecessary anxiety, while Paul's use of *merimnao* suggests the intense care Christians should have for one another is a source of legitimate anxiety: "If one part hurts, all parts are hurt with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). The word implies strong feeling, a vigorous response. In its deepest sense, Christian caring demands involvement and commitment. It is for the other. To care is to feel. And caring does not always feel good: it evokes a whole range of emotions, some pleasant, some unpleasant and even agonizing.

In the agony in the garden and the cross, Jesus experienced a whole range of unpleasant feelings — yet how often do we hear about that? Several years ago I was present at a National Charismatic Conference when the prophetic word of the Lord was uttered through a pre-selected Word Group of people on the stage, and it was: "The body of My Son is broken," and it penetrated every fiber of my being. The Lord was calling for unity among the denominations. How is that unity brought about?

I see Father Girzone's books as one small step toward that goal. I see them also as a prophetic voice for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. They appeal to the "little ones" of the Lord; and woe to those who scandalize them! But don't take my word for it, read the books and decide for yourself.

Patti Federowicz
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