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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.

Parents respond to schools story

Time to do homework

To the editors:

I read with trepidation your cover story on school consolidation in the issue of August 13 ("Pioneers forged trail to security by consolidating").

As a parent with two children in the Catholic school system's Northwest quadrant (Sacred Heart), I am more than aware of the anger and pain generated by the closing of three schools in the Northeast. Could it also happen in my back yard?

Conversations with many of my peers covered both ends of the spectrum. Thoughts ranged from "a secret plan to eliminate catholic education" to "it can't happen here, we are too healthy."

I do not believe for a moment the former; I recognize the foolishness of the latter.

Your article expressed some of my fears: busing, scattering of members of a family within the school system, loss of students due to consolidation. But what about the closing of a school or the elimination of the neighborhood K thru 8 concept.

Some of us in the 'healthy' Northwest felt that we were somewhat immune. Many hours spent at fund-raising helped to keep tuition reasonable at Sacred Heart — even though it has risen 61 percent since the '87-88 school year. The number of students attending our school has risen each year for the last five.

With these facts in mind, I was stunned when, at one of our Board of Education meetings, our representative to the Quadrant Board informed us that the Quadrant has been charged with investigating locations within the Quadrant for a potential junior high and that our school would now be involved with some mandatory financial aspects by the diocese — estimated cost to each quadrant (is) \$75,000.

Sister Mary Ann Binsack, RSM, states, "Sometimes I'm amazed that people don't realize the situation in the Northeast...I don't know if all the people had the facts in front of them." Mark Greisberger is quoted, "In the past, people were not aware of the process that was evolving or decisions that were being made. The perception of the public is that all these decisions were being made in private. That is the perception that I'm trying to change."

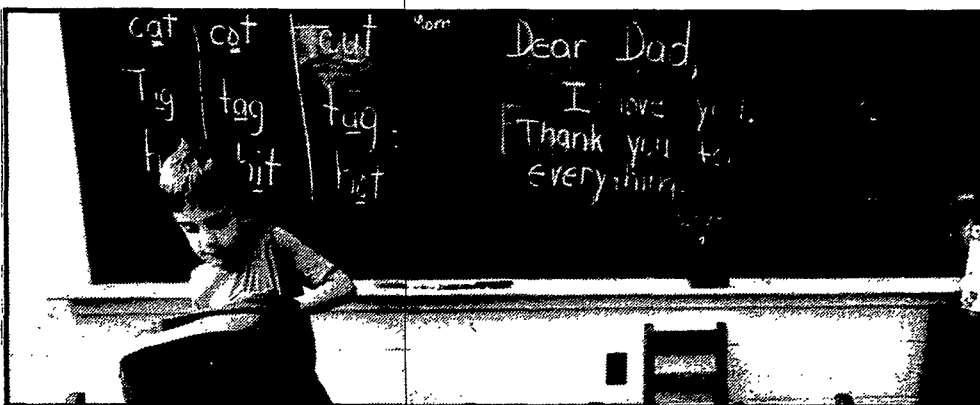
They are both correct. While Sister maintained that budgetary and enrollment figures dictated the changes, I feel that the benefits of a Catholic education should not be purely an economic decision.

It is critical that education itself be used to make reasonable decision regarding the future of catholic schools. People MUST get involved with these decisions by studying the data and making their opinions available to their quadrant representatives. At the same time, it is crucial that the workings of the quadrant boards are communicated back to those people.

The rude awakening felt by those in the Northwest, coupled with recent announcements by the Northwest Quadrant, spurred a group of concerned parents to organize within that quadrant. In five days over 300 concerned supporters of Catholic education joined C.P.R. Catholic Schools for the purpose of not fighting change, but to be better informed and involved in the decision making within the diocese regarding the future of their schools.

I agree with Sister Binsack, we've got to be more positive. But in order to be positive, we have to do our homework so that we can speak with reason; not emotion.

Jim Best
Gorsline Street, Rochester



Matthew Dana packs up his books on the last day of classes at the former St. James School in 1990.

'Facts' won't fool parents all the time

To the editors:

We are writing to strongly disagree with Sister Binsack's "facts" about the future of the Diocesan School System (see *Catholic Courier*, Aug. 14: "Pioneers forged trail to security by consolidating").

The most recent published enrollment figures for what's left of the Northeast Quadrant as of NEQ meeting August 5th shows that grades K-8 registration has declined from 1842 students last year to 1555 for this coming year. Clearly a loss of 287 student in our quadrant does not reveal stability.

We are proud to be parents of 10 children that will be attending St. Josaphat's

School this fall; a non-quadrant Catholic School that has seen its enrollment almost double from the previous year. The reality is that there are attractive Catholic alternatives to the Diocesan Elementary School System that prove parents want quality Catholic Education for their children. What they don't want is the instability caused by further Diocesan reconfiguration.

In conclusion, Sister Binsack should stop her "no problems here" campaign of misinformation and face the truth that you cannot fool all of the parents all of the time. Otherwise they will continue to vote with their feet and closed pocketbooks!

Barry Sullivan, Edgewater Lane
Dr. Helen Owens, Pincrest Drive
John Mendel, Lake Lea Road
All of Rochester

Former columnist keeping tabs on Courier from above?

To the editors:

Catholic Courier readers are still heard to say that they miss Father Paul Cuddy's "On the Right (Side)" column.

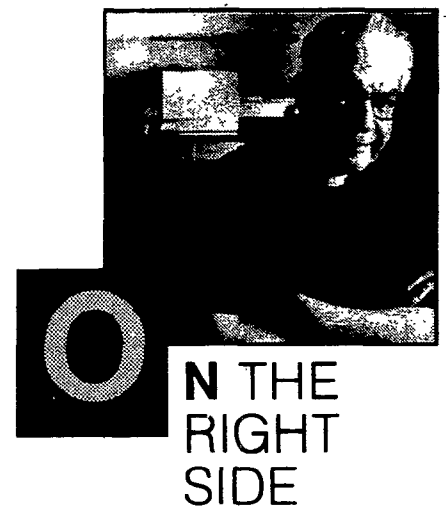
I was wondering what his response would be to the letter on behalf of the Topless-7 accompanied by Botticelli's painting, *The Birth of Venus* (Aug. 8).

Just as I was looking in vain for a letter from him in the dead letter office I had a vision! Paul was wearing a big grin saying that he still reads the *Courier* receiving it air mail, of course.

He admitted that he could not find Botticelli but that did not mean that he was not in heaven. He said that the artist was probably in a higher choir painting real angels.

Then he added what seemed to make sense: "Art is one thing," he said. "In some European countries there are male statues standing in fountains openly engaged in a function usually reserved to our bath rooms. Those statues are art, too."

"I guess I got out of earth just in time. I shudder to think that the *Courier* layout person could have run that



picture of the *Birth of Venus* next to my column to make the point that I always made a clean (right) breast of it in expressing the conservative side of issues".

As the vision was fading he was saying something about looking for some holy womyn (sic) to bake him a big angel food cake.

Father Raymond G. Heisel
Mother of Sorrows Church
Rochester

Polls don't sway church doctrine

To the editors:

In Father McBrien's column "Poll results speak loud and clear" (*Catholic Courier*, July 23), he says, "Polls are not definitive; they sometimes yield ambiguous results. And they are never determinate of truth or morality."

He should have stopped right there, but he didn't. After that, he lost me drowning in a sea of percentages. The percent key on his typewriter must have been shuddering in delight at being so used! When I came up for air, I decided the only point made was that an alarming number of Catholics are

only giving lip service to Catholic Doctrine. The morality of the Catholic Church should not change to conform to the immorality of the World, no matter how popular that immorality may be.

Fortunately, Gallup polls don't sway the Pope, or change Church Doctrine. After all, someone has to be the Boss.

And we might ponder the fact that all that money spent on an ineffectual poll, could have been better used to feed the poor.

Marion Seelman
Sharon Drive, Rochester