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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.

# 'Expert' decries silence on abuse

To the editors:

I am writing in reference to the article in the September 17 edition of the *Courier* ("Study: Trust in clergy on decline"). I am writing as somewhat of an expert on the issue of child sexual abuse.

I did not gain most of my expertise from a book; I learned it through my own personal experience of being sexually abused as a child. I was not abused by a priest, but just being a priest does not excuse the terrible ordeal any child is put through when he/she is abused.

If there has been a lack of trust in the clergy over the issue, I would dare to say that the reason behind this is the fact that the Church has done nothing to show they want to help the children of sexual abuse. Giving the child and his/her family money to keep quiet about the abuse is not helping the child in any way. It is, however, helping both the priest and the Church keep up the act that nothing wrong has been done.

As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, I can speak from experience on the issue. For many years I had repressed all memory of my abuse. I have discovered that this is very common in incest/sexual abuse victims.

Part of the reasoning for this is for our own sanity, and part of it comes from the many threats that are used in most cases of child abuse. I can't even imagine the kinds of threats a priest could use against an innocent child. After all, this is the person the child has been taught to always listen to, to respect, etc. Can you even possibly begin to understand the damage done to a child by suffering this most ultimate form of abuse from someone of such a high and respected standing, someone who the child knows will almost always be believed over him/her, even in many cases by the child's own family.

Now you have a child who not only has been violated in the most horrible manner by someone who certainly



knows better, someone who, by getting away with his/her sick behavior, knows he can continue with either this same child or other ones, but you also have a child who is now threatened either directly or indirectly, to keep his/her mouth shut, or something worse might just happen to him/her or to their loved ones. What do you think this child is going to do in most cases?

You've got it. He/she is going to be abused again in the form of living in constant fear that something he/she says might result in something else happening. What that might be, he/she doesn't even want to think about. It's easier, in the child's mind, to just forget

everything that has been done to him/her. Of course, he/she can't control the feeling that will persist as a result of the abuse, and the memories will be in hiding too.

This once innocent child will now grow up believing he/she must have been a pretty bad child to have something so bad have happened to them. He/she will most always have a low self-esteem, will constantly try to please people, will constantly strive to be the best at everything, will never feel worthy of any compliments, will never feel worth any one else's attention, and will almost always be willing to protect others from any perceived hurt or danger. Most of the prostitutes of the world were victims of incest/sexual abuse, and because they think so little of themselves, they let others do almost anything they want to them.

This is just a tiny picture of what a child who has suffered any form of sexual abuse goes through, and what does a priest who has abused any of them go through? NOT MUCH! In most cases he will simply be transferred to another parish, but of course, no word of his actions will be sent to the new parish. What does anyone care about all the new, once innocent, children just ripe for his picking?

Something has to be done to stop this rampant abuse of our children. This includes stopping all child molesters: parents, stepparents, boyfriends/girlfriends of a parent, siblings, grandparents, neighbors, aunts, uncles, cousins, teachers, doctors, and PRIESTS. When is the Church going to be willing to get its head out of the sand and start helping the victims of childhood sexual abuse instead of the perpetrators?

I am a member of the Corning/Painted Post Cluster of Churches, and I am also the facilitator of an Incest Survivors Support Group for Women in Corning. In Elmira recently, another group for women has begun, and there has now been a group formed for male victims of childhood sexual abuse/incest. Wouldn't it be a wonderful world if we didn't need these groups anymore? Until we all start doing something to end this terrible crime committed against the innocent children of our world, that day is going to be a long way off.

**Barbara J. Miller**  
Meads Creek Road, Painted Post

## Defending the faith doesn't imply attacking, negativism

To the editors:

I disagree with Jim Mulcahy's Sept. 17th letter suggesting Father Shamon's column "Devil can quote Scripture, too" results from a case of indigestion.

Why would a Catholic who embraces the True Catholic Church remain silent; to placate, fear of ruffling feathers by merely stating ours is the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church?

In Epic Mythology Vishnu was a minor deity developed into the Preserver God, one of the Hindu Triad with Brahma, the Creator, and Siva the destroyer. (T)his would be in conflict with our Holy Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Joseph Smith being a mere man is credited with establishing Mormon Religion — Jesus Christ, true God and true man credited as founder and head of the Catholic Church.

Catholics should take every opportunity to defend their faith — this doesn't mean they're necessarily attacking or being negative to others.

If this is considered being superior — then I plead guilty for sticking up for my Catholic faith. This also gives one an opportunity to do a little evangelizing — could bring more sheep back to the fold.

**Rena B. Camblin**  
Meadow Drive  
Palmyra

## We should speak out on dangers

To the editors:

Jim Mulcahy's letter of Sept. 17 ("Hopes intolerance arose from indigestion") missed the point. Father Albert Shamon's article: "Devil can quote Scripture, too," wasn't being negative and attacking other religions.

He was merely stating a fact that some Catholics leave the one true faith in favor of some lesser religion.

As Catholics, we should believe that our faith is the one and only true faith. Obviously if we believe this, other religions cannot share this distinction.

And as Father Shamon points out, there are religions that are hostile to Catholicism.

To ignore this hostility and religious error for some sentimental kind of ecumenicism is really not in the best interest of our Catholic faith.

We can and should respect the religious beliefs of others. However we should speak out, as Father Shamon did, regarding the dangers that other religions present to Catholics.

**Robert Bart**  
Ithaca