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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.

## No doubt on dissent as sinful act

To the editors:

In a letter published in the Feb. 11 issue of the *Catholic Courier* ("Judgmentalism only deepens divisions among faithful") Mr. Ronald J. Tocci questioned certain points I raised in a letter published Jan. 13. I would like to ... clarify my position and to respond ...

In order to maintain a serious evaluation of the question of women in the Catholic priesthood, one must be cognizant of some very significant facts. ... The teaching of the Church excluding women from the priesthood is not a "current policy" as stated by Mr. Tocci. Rather, it forms part of the doctrinal teaching handed down to the Church by Jesus Christ in an unbroken Tradition. Pope John Paul I declared that the exclusion of women from the priesthood "is a practice that the Church has always found in the expressed will of Christ." The "will of Christ" is not subject to change by the vote of a majority. It is for this reason that Bishop Austin Vaughan recently said that this teaching is "reductively infallible," that is, it is an irreformable doctrine of the Church. No Catholic has the right to call this teaching into question. The Pope has stated repeatedly that this issue is not open for discussion. A faithful Catholic is one who gives assent and obedience to the directives of the Magisterium and the Pope "even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*" (*Lumen Gentium*, 25).

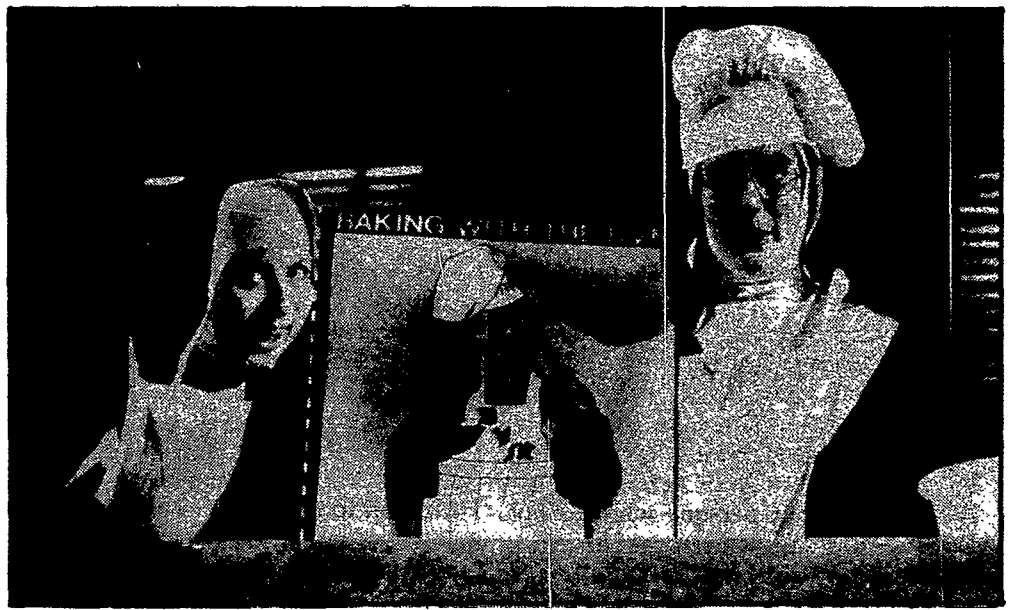
I am aware that there are a number of Catholics who find the teaching on women in the priesthood difficult to accept. Mr. Tocci seemed to express a sincere desire to bring his reason into accord with this teaching, and this is admirable. At the same time, one must be aware that the Catholic Faith involves matters that reach beyond the limits of human intelligence. Where reason fails to comprehend, faith must carry the believer. Each Catholic must trust and obey the legitimate authority of the Holy See to "bind or loosen" the members of the flock in matters of doctrine and discipline. ...

... I was surprised to find that Mr. Tocci felt I was committing an "act of judgmentalism," as I did not intend to cast a judgment on the state of anyone's soul, even if I had the power to do so, which I do not. When a person publicly dissents against the directives of the Pope, it is an action which can be perceived and verified as a fact. We are entitled to make objective decisions about this kind of public action. Pope John Paul II did this when he stated (Sept. 16, 1987) to the American bishops, that dissent is incompatible with being a "good Catholic" and is an "obstacle to the reception of the sacraments." To dissent against the Church is objectively a sin against the Faith.

Objectively, a person who sins against the Faith has forfeited his or her right to be considered a Faithful Catholic. There are, of course, mitigating circumstances involved in each particular sin, ignorance of Church teaching, for example. Because of this, I have no right to judge whether or not Mr. Tocci, or any other person, is in the state of grace. However, I am permitted to state whether a certain action is compatible with fidelity to the Church or not, and this is what I have attempted to do.

**Brian Sullivan**  
Bedford Street, Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with space limitations



File photo

## Habit humor was horrid

To the editors:

Two articles in the Feb. 25 issue of the *Catholic Courier* made me wonder what kind of message our youth are getting about their religious heritage. In (a calendar-page photo concerning) the production of "Nunsense" at Nazareth Academy, two teens are dressed in traditional nuns' habits.

Also dressed in like manner is a deacon, a panel-discussion moderator for the Finger Lakes Youth Day, who calls himself "Sister Mary Synod" (see "Synod discussions get head start at youth day," page 13).

The play and the deacon may be innocently attempting to poke fun at and the idiosyncrasies of "the nuns of old," but what they are actually doing is profaning holy things. Nuns' traditional habits had been blessed by the bishop who heard the sisters profess their solemn vows.

Even more horrifying is the picture of

Our Blessed Mother held by "Sister Amnesia" and the "Reverend Mother" (in the calendar photo). Topped by the caption "Baking with the BVM," the picture shows God's Mother adorned with monogrammed apron and a chef's hat.

Lexicon Webster's Dictionary defines the verb to profane as "to treat, as something sacred, with irreverence, impiety, or sacrilege."

Profanity is a sin against the First Commandment. What an example to set before our youth — that it is OK to profane God's Mother, traditional nuns, and their holy habits! In other words, it's OK to sin against God and make fun of His mother and His religious. No wonder many of our youth have no respect for God, His Mother, His Church, or holy things. What a terrible message they are getting!

**Jean M. Lloyd**  
Glendale Park  
Rochester

## Equate donation with benefits

To the editors:

In February we celebrate George Washington's birthday. I don't mean to sound facetious but our First President seems to have been very popular, judging by the number of one dollar bills that appear in our collection plates each Sunday!

Yes, there are some who can scarcely afford one dollar, and I don't address them. But, what about the rest of us? What can you buy for one dollar today? Not a whole lot. How far will that one dollar go, say, just for the fuel bill to heat the church, to say nothing of upkeep, insurance, salaries etc. etc.? Yet, we will think nothing of spending money for movies, sports activities, dining out — I guess you can get a hamburger for a dollar! — theater and the like.

Did you ever stop to think what benefits you get from going to Mass? I tell people it's like going to visit my psychiatrist, and God is the Divine Physician. We even have that advantage of "group therapy" in the loving way in which we greet each other. In my parish, we have hospitality ministers. Then, listen carefully to the prayers of the Mass. How very beautiful! We pray for those who are dear to us and for our own well-being and redemption, and for our departed, and that we may be "filled with every grace and blessing." Our prescription is in the Scriptures and the homily.

And, then, the Eucharist: Christ's very own body and blood, nourishment for our bodies as well as for our Spirits, and we are renewed.

I don't know what the going rate is for the services of a psychiatrist, but I understand it is pretty steep. I couldn't

afford to visit one each week but in judging how much I should put in the collection basket, I try to generously equate it with the benefits I receive and the amount of my income.

Please give it careful thought. Other denominations tithe. That's at least a tenth of one's income. We should do likewise.

**Grace B. Carnes**  
Eagle Ridge Circle, Rochester

## Distressed by article on diocesan TV effort

To the editors:

On Ash Wednesday I heard a truly inspiring homily on the need for penance, fasting and almsgiving.

For my penance I resolved to thoroughly read the *Catholic Courier* which often distresses and disturbs me. It was certainly a good choice. The article in the Feb. 25 issue about the diocese's failure to back efforts to add EWTN to Greater Rochester Cablevision is both disturbing and distressing ("Diocese joins effort to add religious network to cable").

EWTN consistently presents top notch programming that uplifts the human spirit and presents Catholic teaching in an interesting and understandable manner.

By the way the inspiring homily I refer to was given by Father Ray Bourque on EWTN during its broadcast of morning Mass.

**Don Ninestine**  
East North Street  
Geneva