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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.

Youth-day article missed key points

To the editors:

I quote your feature on the Finger Lakes Youth Day from the *Courier*, Feb. 25 issue: "Many female participants wondered why the church, historically, has offered women fewer opportunities for involvement than men." Actually, the designation "female participants" is inaccurate since it was also a question raised by some young men. Two other concerns surfaced of which you mention the one: the need for more respect for and involvement of the youth in the faith community. But the other: the concern about racism, you do not report at all as having surfaced from the teens. Too bad, because we cannot afford not to hear this heart wrenching concern and I, for one, admired our young people for raising it as crucial for our church.

Appreciating the involvement of Father Dave Gramkee, Deacon John Tomandl and Michael Theisen, I find it significantly missing that a number of women, who were initiators and fully committed to the success of this event from the idea to its fulfillment find no mention of any leadership by women reported. So it could look like our partic-



File photo
Panellist Katie Dillon (left) was featured in the Feb. 25 youth article.

ipation in church leadership is less than it actually is. We were planners, we gathered young musicians and rehearsed with them, we went shopping for the groceries, we helped publicize, we were on the panel. We were there too! In fact, the one person who contributed the most by hosting the event, by her unflagging enthusiasm and by

her support of and help for all the many facets, and the one even thanked by the teens as a welcomer to youth in her parish was Mrs. Bobbie Kukiela, affectionately "Mrs. K." What a loss not to recognize the leadership of women, when that was the very issue raised by the young men and women and one of the two that you reported.

Sister Christine Lloyd
Pastoral Associate
St. Mary's, Auburn

EDITORS' NOTE: Staff writer Mike Latona replies that the only notice he received of this event came from Michael Theisen, diocesan youth coordinator. Neither Sister Lloyd nor Mrs. Kukiela contacted him, either to request coverage or to point out their roles in planning the event.

He further noted that numerous issues and topics were covered during the session, and that it would have been impossible to discuss all of them in the space available for the story.

Latona added: "The letter does not acknowledge that two of the three panelists I interviewed were females; one of those two was featured in a photograph. Do they not also count as leaders?"

School production draws more comment

Actresses gained greater respect

To the editors:

We felt we must respond to the letter titled "Habit humor was horrid" which appeared in the *Catholic Courier* on March 11. The letter expressed concern that today's young people are getting a "terrible message" about their religious heritage.

We, the five young women who "starred" in Nazareth Academy's production of *Nonsense*, are concerned that Mrs. Lloyd based her opinion of the play on this photo only. When casting this musical, the producer, Sister Mary Clouser, SSJ, and our principal, Sister Ann Collins, SSJ, made it very clear to the students participating in the show that the intention was never to make fun of nuns.

Our costumes were indeed those of "the nuns of old," but each time we

dressed in them, our respect for the Sisters grew. Webster's New World Dictionary defines respect as "to feel or show honor or esteem for; to hold in high regard." These are exactly the feelings we have for nuns, for God, and for our religious heritage.

For example, in the scene with the cookbook, "Reverend Mother" looks at the cover of the cookbook and then adjusts her own chef's hat so that it is positioned exactly like the Blessed Mother's. In that small gesture, she shows her desire to be like the Blessed Mother, she shows her reverence and respect.

In another scene of the show, "Sister Robert Anne" tells the story of her own joining of the Order of the Little Sisters of Hoboken. She's saddened by the way things have changed in the Church. She wishes for the way the Church used to be, and sings "At St. Clare's School, religion class began with Mass each day. It was said in Latin then — that's how I

learned to pray. The nuns appeared in black in white and so did every rule. Things were either wrong or right at St. Clare's Catholic School." In the show, this same Sister wears fruit on her head, imitates the Wicked Witch of the West and many other "funny" things. Sister Robert Anne is a reverent Sister, truly one who deserves respect, yet she is also a human who enjoys laughter. Anyone who saw *Nonsense* would have seen the solemn moments actually quite different from the photo in the *Courier*.

We encourage Mrs. Lloyd to someday see *Nonsense*. Perhaps she, like we all did, will come to understand the people inside of the habits. *Nonsense* is much more than can be expressed in a single photo. By wearing the traditional habit and performing in this show, we actually gained a greater respect for the Sisters.

Kristen Ticher, Tenley Ostrowski,
Erin Senator, Jennifer Dwyer
and Traci Carter

Humor differs from profanity

To the editors:

I am writing in response to a letter by Jean M. Lloyd in the March 11 edition of the *Catholic Courier*. First up, I do not intend to start up a ping pong correspondence of letter-answer-letter-answer as so often happens in letters to the editor columns. I am simply writing to, hopefully, state clearly the what and why of the situation referred to by (Mrs.) Lloyd.

I have seen a production of *Nonsense* and in the same vein we — the catechetical and youth leaders of the Finger Lakes area — decided to use "Sister Mary Synod" at the recent youth day in Auburn. I simply can not believe that anyone would be offended by either. I am truly sorry if offense has been taken, but since a sister of St. Joseph helped with the youth day program, and since *Nonsense* is being produced at Nazareth Academy, I really don't think that the sisters have taken offense. Perhaps it would help to know that God has a sense of humor. Anyone who doubts that simply doesn't believe that Jesus was truly human.

Profanity is innocent children starving

to death while the very adults who should be protecting them and teaching them their heritage go around stealing the food that they need as a source of power and control. Profanity is bombing a whole population into oblivion because they don't think or look or feel or smell the way you do. Profanity is denying the full human worth of someone simply because of their color or gender. Profanity is treating our children like little puppets and not letting them discuss or explore who they are and what Christianity or Jesus is. Profanity is the self-

righteousness that leads to elitism that borders on Gnosticism. Life is not so black and white that a thing is always right or always wrong simply because someone says it is.

Perhaps there would be less division in God's Church and among God's beloved people if we could all remember that only two things are important: God loves us and we must love God who indwells all creation. Peace to all.

Deacon John D. Tomandl
Park Avenue
Auburn

Agrees with criticism

To the editors:

I agree 100 percent with the letter of Jean Lloyd regarding the production at Nazareth Academy (*Catholic Courier*, March 11: "Habit humor was horrid"). If some one told me about that play I would be tempted to look them in the eye and say I don't believe it a Catholic Academy would never permit it.

I thank God I had 12 years of Catholic schools. Eight at dear old St. Patrick's, Elmira and four at Mt. Mercy Academy, Buffalo, N.Y. all taught by (Religious Sisters of Mercy). Five of my relatives were Sisters of Mercy, two aunts entered 1869,

my aunt, their niece 1896 and three cousins no two in later years entered, then one cousin a cloistered nun and her sister (a Sister of St. Joseph).

I cannot believe a Catholic Academy would allow a pupil or pupils to profane Our Blessed Mother and His religious.

I am 90 years old and the doctor who gave me the necular brain test at St. Joseph's hospital told me I have thank God the mental ability of a woman 40.

I wonder if this play could be a result of Vatican II since then in U.S. Many want to do "their own thing" and seem to get away with it.

Theresa McLaughlin
Maple Avenue, Elmira