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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.

For her, dissent's no laughing matter

To the editors:

I would like to respond to the (letter to the editor) written by Father Robert Collins, from St. Thomas More Church in Brighton (*Catholic Courier*, April 29: "Eliminate repetition — replace letters with comics page"). I happen to be a Roman Catholic that is startled at the acceptability of blatant dissent in the diocese. Therefore, I would like to express my views on this cryptically written (letter). I find the expressions of "Awful and bad" or "wonderful and good" not quite sufficient and leaves one with the impression that Father is blatantly mocking the Catholic Church.

I will start with abortion. Yes, it is "awful and bad," it also happens to be a sin. Is this not one in the same? Regarding the state of the diocese. I have to agree with Father on that one also. If the diocese was in harmony with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, there would be little need for Father Collins to have the desire to refer some of these (letters) to the comic strips.

I do have to disagree on Father Collins' thoughts regarding our Bishop as "awful and bad." I hope and pray he is just confused. Because if he isn't, his behavior might be considered blatant dissent. I am referring in particular to the activities that revolve around encouraging discussion that might affirm the ordination of women. This is dissent and there are no other words to describe it. So, hopefully he is confused. We keep praying for him.

I have to disagree with Father's idea that gays are "awful and bad." They are not, but the practice of homosexuality is a sin, and that is awful and bad.

I am in TOTAL agreement regarding The Magisterium of the Church as being "wonderful and good." HE IS WONDERFUL AND GOOD. Thank God!!!



You see, it does go to show you that God does REALLY know what He is doing. His choice for the successor to Peter is tremendous. If anyone has a problem with that, maybe it would be best taken up with God, rather than the *Catholic Courier*.

Yes, EWTN and Mother Angelica are "wonderful and good." There is a possibility that some of the sheep in the diocese just might get fed, instead of relying on the kinds of analogies I am presently responding to...

... Regarding Medjugorje, yes, I have to agree that it is "wonderful and good." This small village has been instrumental in bringing millions into taking seriously living their faith and praying etc. I guess, "THEY SHALL BE KNOWN BY THE FRUIT THEY BEAR" might be satisfactory for the time being.

YES, old time priests and nuns are wonderful and good. They should be commended for the persecution they experience, even from their fellow

priests and nuns, because they actually realize that they are God's servants. Therefore they don't live their lives serving their own agendas, and have defined the word OBEDIENCE!!!

Last but not least, Father, in regards to placing some of the (letters to the editor) in the comic strips. I and many other Catholics find absolutely nothing humorous about dissent. ... I should let you know, I am not a liberal or conservative, a radical or a modernist. I AM A ROMAN CATHOLIC. ... When did the Roman Catholic Church become a smorgasbord? When did OBEDIENCE become unfashionable? Of yes, I almost forget. What is this "New American Church" and "In the Spirit of Vatican II"? ...

Stephanie Jones
Eaglehead Road
East Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with the *Catholic Courier's* Letters Policy.

Disputes foundation of case for deaconesses

To the editors:

In his column "God's ways are not our ways" (*Catholic Courier* May 6) Father Hart sketches the evolution of the early Church. He tells us that "nothing can be farther than the truth" than to "conjure up early church images" resembling contemporary U.S. Catholicism. In addressing the third century church he mentions deaconesses. Referring to them as "female counterparts" of the deacons, he avers that in assisting the local bishop they engaged in "charity works, teaching and liturgical ministry." Furthermore, the canons of the Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) recognized these deaconesses as "full members of the clergy." While his statements are not devoid of some verisimilitude, Father Hart seems to fall victim to the very conjuring he would have his readers avoid.

He would have his readers accept

early church images of deaconesses as "full members of the clergy." Yet admittance to the clerical state requires, as Father Hart knows, sacramental ordination. Of course, he does not say that these "counterparts" of the deacons were sacramentally ordained. He dare not because the preponderance of evidence, notwithstanding the ambiguities, is heavily against such a conclusion. He merely implies such an ordination, and his silence suffices to create the image of deaconesses on the same sacramental footing as deacons.

It is curious that in mentioning Chalcedon he does not cite the canon which allegedly confers clerical status on the deaconesses. No such canon exists save one which treats the issue of accepting deaconesses before the age of 40. It is hard to believe that Father Hart would conclude to the full clerical status of deaconesses on the basis of the expres-

sion "to place hands on" which is found in the canon. Of itself the word does not mean sacramental ordination since the gesture of hand-laying was common to several sacraments and used extensively in non-sacramental rites.

One such rite was that which admitted women into the ranks of deaconesses. There was a rite which despite some resemblances to that of the deacons did not empower for service at the altar. In fact, deaconesses were permitted neither to enter the sanctuary during the liturgy nor to preach or teach in public. Yet Father Hart accords them a "liturgical ministry" and once again conjures up for his readers the image of deaconesses as the female equivalents of sacramentally ordained deacons. While deaconesses did indeed exercise "charity works" under the bishop's jurisdiction, their role in "liturgical ministry" never entailed the administration of sacraments. Thus, for example, deaconesses, in the interest of modesty, assisted at female baptisms which involved disrobing. But the priest was required to effect the laying on of hands, the anointing and the pronouncing of the baptismal formula.

As chief organizer of the diocesan synod, Father Hart is, of course, familiar with its agenda purporting to mirror contemporary U.S. Catholicism.

But contrary to his own advice he conjures up images of deaconesses to accommodate that contemporary agenda. Of such images, however, "nothing can be farther from the truth."

Joseph J. Murray, chairman
Concerned Roman Catholics
of the Diocese of Rochester
Wyndover Road, Rochester

Mercy sister thanks newspaper for story on opera star's concert

To the editors:

On behalf of all the Sisters of Mercy and the Whitley and Connors families, I want to thank you for the excellent article you wrote on Kevin Connors (*Catholic Courier*, April 29: "Opera star to make triumphant homecoming"). The story, placement and pictures were excellent. The result was nearly 1,000 people present for the concert.

Kevin provided an evening of marvelous entertainment, which was enjoyed by all. As Mr. Thomas Paul,

internationally known bass and Kevin's voice teacher while he attended the Eastman School of Music, put it: "Kevin is a very colorful, generous kind of performer who has all the attributes of becoming a major artist."

Thank you for helping us to make the concert a magnificent success.

Sister Nancy Whitley
Director of Development
Sisters of Mercy of Rochester
Blossom Road
Rochester