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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.

Column sparks ire among devotees



This photo from 1984 shows visionary Vidka Ivankovich (left center) during a reported apparition at St. James Church in Medjugorje. Ivankovich is one of six young people to whom Mary allegedly has been appearing for 12 years.

God's ways are not ours

To the editors:

This letter is in response to a recent (column) by Father McBrien in which he professes scepticism concerning the authenticity of the apparitions in Medjugorje. He seems to think authentic apparitions must be directed to the leaders of the country, the powerful and affluent so that the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina might be ended sooner. He is under the impression apparitions are of questionable validity or are perhaps wasted when the recipients are very young and are unable to influence the course of events.

From the beginning God seems to act in ways contrary to human logic and understanding. His ways are not our ways. After all wasn't His divine Son born in a stable and initially revealed to poor shepherds? Human reasoning would dictate He be born in Herod's court or in Rome so that the mighty and proud could use their means to spread His kingdom. And how could God chose 12 humble apostles to begin the work of forming His church? ... But despite the apparent exclusion of the rich and famous, the kingdom of God continues to grow.

Why does God seem to hide from us and not show His mighty ways more directly and prove His kingship over us? Peter Kreft states it is that way so to humble us. Prophets spoke constantly that God would be hidden and that He would be a stumbling block on which many would fall. Didn't Jesus say he

came to blind those with sight and to give sight to those who were blind; to fill the hungry with good things and to send the rich away empty; to call sinners to repent and to leave the self-righteous to their sins? Didn't Christ come to give His light as a gift; but not to force it on us? Gifts must appeal to freedom and must be freely given and accepted.

Christ does not deliberately hide from the wicked. He gives the right amount of light for all. If He gave less we would never be able to find Him. If He gave more the wicked would still reject Him or find Him against their will...

... The history of revelation seems to act contrary to Father McBrien's conceptions. The apparitions at Fatima were to three poor children and not government officials who might be in a better position to work for God. Yet the effects of Fatima had a profound effect on rejuvenating the faith in Portugal and the rest of the world and Fatima's message has been influential in bringing about the collapse of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe.

Perhaps peace has not yet been obtained in war-torn Yugoslavia but the edifying influence of the apparent events in Medjugorje have had a deep effect on the millions of people who have visited that village...

**Michael R. Aiello, M.D.
Clintwood Court
Rochester**

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

Believers have right to follow faith

To the editors:

"Father" Richard McBrien strikes again! McBrien sounds like those who chided Jesus as He hung from the cross, including one of the thieves who hung beside Him. If He was really the Messiah, why should He not come down from the cross?

We know why Jesus did not come down from the cross, at least if our faith is such that we believe that we have been taught.

Has McBrien ever pondered the incredible fact that with all the death and destruction going on all around, Medjugorje has remained virtually untouched? There have been death and destruction throughout the countryside for months, yet some STILL travel there, returning unharmed! Does this not move McBrien AT ALL?

Why did Jesus not warn Judas of his fate? Judas refused to recognize Jesus' willingness to forgive, and went out and hung himself. Peter, on the other hand,

denied Jesus three times — even AFTER Jesus had foretold he would. Peter went out and cried, but then returned to the others who remained, to mourn, and ponder what it all meant.

Peter, who was portrayed in Scripture as the weakest and most abusive of the Twelve, was chosen by Jesus to become to ROCK on which He built His Church, promising that what he would declare bound on earth, would also be bound in Heaven! Imagine! The WEAKEST would be rendered the STRONGEST!

Peter — the Pope — and the Magisterium — all the Bishops of the world in union with the Pope — have not yet spoken out finally on the events of Medjugorje. Thus those who choose to believe, pending a final decision, have full right to do so, and travel there as their FAITH leads them! ...

**John Lentricchia
Bly Street, Rochester**

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

To the editors:

I am OUTRAGED at Father Richard McBrien's column in today's issue! Clearly, the situation in Medjugorje at present is dangerous and frightening. But, it is NOT the choice of the Blessed Mother to allow this or to appear to those who would only continue to show an extreme lack of faith, as Father McBrien has!

Mary has made a great contribution to peace by shaking up the world in appearing to a handful of beautiful young people who live in a land of oppression. Unfortunately, Catholics, throughout history, have been many of the persecutors, including during the Holocaust. The terrors being inflicted on the people of Yugoslavia are inexcusable acts of violence. However, Mary did not cause this, nor can Our Lady stop it.

God gave us a free will, the freedom to choose between what is evil and what is good, between the sacred and the profane. Father McBrien, shame on you for blaming the Mother of God for acting indifferently! It is up to us to stop this terrible, sad violence. We must begin with prayer to find the right direction. This is, and has been, Mary's message all along.

Since the May 12 Medjugorje dateline, many people are more frequently praying the rosary again. I use a finger-rosary which came directly from Medjugorje. It was a gift from a teen-age pilgrim who went there in 1988 and thoughtfully remembered my need for a new rosary. Perhaps, Father McBrien could put the energy of his anger into the energy of prayer for World Peace. It would certainly be more positive than expecting the Blessed Mother to scare "the living daylight's out of the Serbian military command"!

**Vicky Peltier
Mountain Ash Drive
Canandaigua**

If fruit is good, how can tree be judged wrong?

To the editors:

Father Richard McBrien's column in your June 3 issue started off good. He described that the Blessed Virgin Mary has been appearing for almost 12 years to six young people in Medjugorje, now part of war-torn Bosnia, or so some believe. He mentioned that Mary's messages urged, "a quest for peace through prayer, penance, and personal conversion."

Then Father McBrien went on to discuss how this was a financial boon to Yugoslavia and seemed to imply that it is all a scam. I'm afraid that Father McBrien has missed the point of the Medjugorje experience. I say this because I have personally been deeply affected by JUST hearing about Mary appearing in Medjugorje. I have never been there, but it has changed my life, by setting me on the road to personal conversion and a closer relationship to God.

When I first heard about Mary appearing in Medjugorje in 1987, I was very frightened — how could this happen in this day and age? "But then, I decided to pray as Mary asked. Now I KNOW that God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are personally involved in my life. They are always with me and hopefully, I am now letting God lead my life. I thought I was a good Catholic before, but I wasn't. I'm still working on it through prayer.

This is why simply hearing about Medjugorje, and Mary appearing there, has done for me. How can it not be a work of God?

**Mary Ann Kozak
Jennings Pond Road
Ithaca**