

1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, NY 14624
716/328-4340

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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 original, signed 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 letters writers.

We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and other concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only.

Mail letters 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.

Priests need our prayers, support

To the editors:

The Knights of Columbus, had adopted the theme of "In Solidarity With Our Priests" at their 1993 Supreme Meeting in Washington, last August. We in the NYS Council, incorporated this theme into our programs for the 1993-94 Columbian Year.

As I would travel throughout New York State and speak to this theme, I place great emphasis on the word OUR. Our priests. Not our Bishop's priests, not Pope John Paul's priests. Our Priests. Our brothers, our sons, our uncles, nephews, cousins, our friends. OUR PRIESTS.

Yes, we are so painfully reminded, at every opportunity, by a totally insensitive, biased and at times blatantly anti-Catholic media, both electronic and written. Some of our priests have failed. They have failed their vows, their Church and themselves. And we as Catholics are saddened by this failure and we must pray for them, for they are in pain. But the number of priests who have failed is minuscule, in proportion to the numbers who are faithful. Yet all, are somehow stigmatized for the failure of a few. This is not fair and is obviously tied into a far more nefarious agenda.

As painful as these "revelations" are for many of the faithful in our parishes, there just may be a message from God in and through them. That message, very simply, but oh so clearly presented is, that our priests are human just like you and I. When they get cut they bleed. They have needs and feelings both physical and psychological, just as we do. And they very often have no one to turn to but themselves.

WE all too often have a tendency to put them up on a pedestal — where they belong — but we also have a tendency to



leave them up there, by themselves. We in effect might say, God will take care of them, I am too busy taking care of my own problems, I do not have time for them — except when I need their support or services. This is wrong. We belong up on that pedestal, with them, supporting them, holding them up, LOVING AND CARING FOR THEM, just as we expect them, to do for us. This is as Christ would do it and I am sure, just as He intended it to be for us. If we fail to support and defend our priests, all of our priests, even those with which we might disagree and even dislike, then we in effect fail one of our primary missions in life, to love our neighbor as we

would love ourselves. Our priests are also our neighbors.

There are some who suggest that this virulent attack on our priests is driven by the forces of Satan. An interesting and very feasible hypothesis. Our priests do represent our Church in their lives and activities. Our Church is also undergoing a virulent and venomous attack by many contemporary progressive minded advocates of major cultural changes in our social structure. Changes which are hostile to all religions. But much more likely, these attacks are directed at the Eucharist. Our priests minister the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the one Power that Satan fears and cannot overcome. So why not attack and defeat those, whom Christ has ordained to be ministers of the Eucharist, by destroying their credibility and self-respect. Once again, if we fail to support and defend His ministers, we in effect, fail to defend the Eucharist.

We, as Catholics, face many challenges in our lives, both physical and spiritual. We live in a world engulfed in chaos and crisis. There is little or no respect for life or property. This very simply is the result of our lives being ensnared by the forces of materialism and consumerism. Hate and suspicion has replaced love and compassion. Greed has replaced charity. Intolerance and ignorance has replaced tolerance and understanding. Paganism and decadence has replaced Christianity and morality.

Without a return to love and respect, our world is doomed. And so to, might we all be. Why not start, by loving our priests as we would love ourselves. And most of all, PRAY FOR THEM.

**Robert J. Fallon, State Deputy
New York State Council
Knights of Columbus**

Process leaves great deal of room for error

To the editors:

Father Robert L. Collins' stated his personal position in his Oct. 21 letter to the editor titled "Magisterium not last word on conscience," I would publicly like to question him a bit further.

He arrived at two basic conclusions in his letter: 1) Once a person's conscience is formed they must follow it and 2) Someone who has formed their conscience correctly and still disagrees with the Magisterium does not deserve the label "dissenter." As far as I know the Catholic Church has always taught that one must follow their conscience. I think we can all agree with his first conclusion. In order to address his second conclusion, we must first start with the definition of dissent. Webster's dictionary defines dissent as follows: "to reject the doctrines of an established church." Therefore the label "dissenter" has nothing to do with one's conscience and indeed does apply to one who disagrees with the Magisterium.

Father Collins also outlined his own interpretation of the process to properly form one's conscience. His fourth step refers to the teaching of the Magisterium, opinions of responsible theologians and advice from good Christian friends. Just who do we rely on as responsible theologians; those who dissent from the teaching of the Magisterium or those who are in communion with the Magisterial teachings of the Church? Who are our good Christian friends; those Christians who are not a part of the Catholic Church who have widely varying views and teachings on moral issues, our Catholic friends who agree with our own thinking, those Catholics who go to Mass each Sunday, those Catholics who might disagree with us on church teach-

ings, etc.? As you can see, Father's oversimplified process to formation of conscience leaves one wide open to accepting majority opinion at the expense of truth.

Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter "The Splendor of Truth" (*Veritatis Splendor*) was recently published to address the Church's concern over issues such as the one outlined above. The encyclical has many references to Church teaching, the Bible and Vatican II. An excerpt follows:

"As the Council affirms: 'In forming their consciences the Christian faithful must give careful attention to the sacred and certain teaching of the Church. For the Catholic Church is by the will of Christ the teacher of truth. Her charge is to announce and teach authentically that truth which is Christ, and at the same time with her authority to declare and confirm the principles of the moral order which derive from human nature itself...' The Church puts herself always

and only at the service of conscience, helping it to avoid being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine proposed by human deceit, and helping it not to swerve from the truth about the good of man, but rather, especially in more difficult questions, to attain the truth with certainty and to abide in it."

The Magisterium may not be the last word on conscience; but it does teach the truth regarding moral issues! Once we know the truth we must then use our properly informed conscience to accept or to reject the truth. The ultimate decision is ours alone!

My last question to Father Collins: How are you as a Catholic Priest promoting the proper formation of conscience when your letters and communications to Catholics down play the Magisterium as the source of truth in our Church?

**Michael A. Gallagher
West Church Street
Fairport**

Catechism points out complication of truths

To the editors:

Having studied the New Catechism since it first appeared in Paris — I am bilingual — I continue to be amazed at how men through the centuries have added and complicated, sometimes having to subtract, at a later date, the SPLENDID TRUTH Our Lord put so simply for every soul to unequivocally understand and live:

"Love God. Love one another."

**Georgette M. Murphy
Cortland Street
Geneva**

Correction

A line inadvertently was omitted from the third paragraph of Barbara Fredericks' letter, "Plan will compel abetting abortion," last week. The complete paragraph is as follows:

So, if abortions will be paid for by our tax dollars, we will de facto be "assisting" a woman in obtaining an abortion. This places Catholics in a "Catch-22" position. If we pay taxes, we assist in the killing of God's pre-born children and thus violate God's law! If we do not pay taxes, we violate the federal law!

We regret the error.