

OPINION COMMENTARY

Church nears end of 'dim past'

Catholic Courier

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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 as well as legal concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable.

Mail letters to: *Catholic Courier*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for verification purposes.

To the editors:

The concern of Maureen O'Neill regarding "attitudes" against the Synod aren't attitudes of fear of the Holy Spirit. They're about why an official body might want to celebrate dissent's competing "Gospel" of urging a women's ordination that would set the Spirit against the root of Scripture. Precisely because "God is pure Spirit and neither male nor female," and beyond natural signing, Scripture avoids the cyclic female/male of nature to identify His Unique Being. God signs the Covenant using male blood of Singular Priesthood to exclude the nature worships humanity originated in the goddesses and its attendant male gods that supplanted but accommodated her. We're not at the beginning of a long journey toward women's ordination. I believe we're nearing the exciting end of a journey out of the dim past of earth deities building to a height to be finally, and unexpectedly unseated as obstacles to a purely spiritual Universal Kingdom.

I disagree that we're "Nowhere able to find the establishment of a male priest-

hood by God the Creator or by Jesus." It's institution, and then confirmation as ordaining are the Passover banquet in Exodus 12, Ordination banquet in Exodus 29, and Christ's Last Supper. One Event with the same elements: 1. an Anointed male to represent Deity, 2. uncircumcised or ineligible representatives non participant, 3. a washing, 4. the feast, 5. sacrificial male victims, 6. bread, 7. shed blood, 8. festive garments, 9. victim wholly consumed, 10. bread raised to God, 11. bread passed to inheritors, 12. oils, with laid on hands and crosses - Pesach greeting, and Crucifixion.

The Exodus promise of a coming final authoritative Word was fulfilled with Christ. At His baptism, God was inviting direct access to Himself to all tribes, all individuals not just Jews or males. Baptism celebrates, not an opening to cultic priesthood, but an open invitation to nothing less than a redeemed relationship to God Himself as a loving Father. Obscuring the Son's male priesthood that opened Redemption would be like agreeing with those who wished to bury a Divine Christ;

and cast aside a world salvation. Only the infinite reach of a divine Power in all perfection can transcend the human reach alone. Even Christ spoke of His own humanity as submission, knew even His was God's own sacrifice of condescension. Reducing Priesthood to solely human dimensions, however hopeful, trusting, however "good faith," or well represented and majority ruled it ultimately epiphanizes only the earmarks of humanity's inability to bridge the Holy Abyss.

What the world needs now is not "love, sweet love" of simplistic human song. Love "in persona Christi" pours Himself for Infinite Healing. What is needed now by a world too ready to surrender the things of God to the human order of Caesar, is to repay Love with the obedience of healing belief; be stripped of self concerns and immobilizing countermandings to conceive itself in a divine Lamblike Spirit of obedience. A Spirit forming itself into a Christlike altar of holocaust letting itself be consumed just for the sake of love.

Gene Charles
Canandaigua

Letter raised tide of negative attitudes

To the editors:

In her letter to the editor Maureen O'Neill voices her concern about "the constant negative attitudes" expressed in the opinion section. In an apparent attempt to offset those attitudes, she cites as positive things: the diocesan synod, the presence of dissent in the Church, and the feminist agenda of ordaining females. How closely linked, indeed, are the three items! In the initial stages of the synod, Bishop Clark chose a panel of "writers," predominantly female and all favoring women's ordination. To no one's surprise, their dissent from the Church's apostolic practice of male ordination found its articulation and approval at the diocesan synod.

Presuming to represent not only 350,000 diocesan Catholics but also "the will of the Holy Spirit," 1,400 synod delegates set the local Church at odds with the universal Church and its immemorial practice of a male clergy. With the Holy Spirit working at cross purposes, Ms. O'Neill can still feel positive. In fact, she says, "Dissent hasn't destroyed our church, rather it has made it stronger." This is a rather curious evaluation in light of the rending of the Body of Christ through dissent in the 16th century.

Undaunted by historical fact, she then invokes the authority of the inspired Scriptures to justify dissent. Without citing any references, Ms. O'Neill says that

"there are many accounts of this throughout the New Testament." This is a perplexing statement implying that dissent is part of the Word of God. With dissent biblically sanctioned, a person could, within the logic of Ms. O'Neill's position, invoke Scripture itself to dissent from Scripture. It is hard to comprehend a positive attitude toward dissent when the price is the Word of God undermining itself.

Ms. O'Neill may, of course, be merely equivocating in her use of the word "dissent." Thus, the "many accounts" of dissent which she has in mind may in fact be no more than the tensions and disagreements evident in the nascent Church as it struggled to fathom and live the Christian mystery. Dissenting from that mystery is quite another thing, however.

Lastly, Ms. O'Neill is positive about the feminist agenda to ordain women. Her argument that gender is not decisive for standing "in persona Christi" rests on making redemption the act of Jesus' humanity irrespective of his maleness. This is dichotomous and abstractive thinking since in the real order humanity does not exist apart from an individual male or female. The scandal of Christianity is its particularity: one man saved the entire world. Salvation for all men and women comes historically and sacramentally through the body of Christ. In terms of

visible sign and sacrament, such particularity requires a male to represent Christ in his redeeming act of offering his body and blood for us.

In expressing positive views of the synod, its feminist agenda and dissent, Ms. O'Neill's letter is more likely to raise rather than lower the tide of "constant negative attitudes" in the *Catholic Courier*. To those sharing her views, my letter is proof.

W. Randolph Smith
Rochester

Film critics trusted more than the pope

To the editors:

In response to Maureen O'Neill's very eloquent and erudite letter depicting the Holy Spirit's leading of the delegates who participated in the general Synod of the Rochester diocese, I have but one question. Do you think that there is any outside chance that Pope John Paul II might also be "discerning prayerfully and in good faith," and could also be being led by the Holy Spirit? Whaddya think? Just a question. Seems to me that we trust movie critics more than the Holy Father, or at least as much.

Melanie Cecere
Wood Creek Drive, Pittsford

Sisters in Brazil express thanks for assistance

To the editors:

With the beginning of a new year, we wish to express our heartfelt thanks to the friends in the Diocese of Rochester who so generously support our mission in Brasil. This new year of 1994 will mark the 30th anniversary of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester in Brasil, and of the faithful participation of the Rochester Diocese in our work there.

This has been a difficult year for our Brazilian people. There has been much

political upheaval; we have seen the impeachment of a corrupt president and the current investigation of congressional scandal involving massive corruption at every level of government. In Rio de Janeiro and other major cities, there has been mass killing of street children by unrestrained police violence. Indian groups, struggling to secure their lands, have been massacred, and drug wars have resulted in widespread violence in the *favelas* (slums). Perhaps the worst violence

is due to our out-of-control inflation rate, the highest in Latin America and the worst in 50 years; this condition leaves families desperate regarding basic necessities.

In the midst of this, the deep faith of the poor in "God-with-us" remains a constant and concrete sign of Incarnation for us all. Their faith shines like a Bethlehem star confounding all the violence that the Herods of this world try to perpetuate.

We would like you to know that as we participated in the annual Christmas novenas celebrated here by groups of neighbors in their humble homes, we prayerfully remembered in joy and thanksgiving the goodness of God and the generosity of our caring friends from the Diocese of Rochester.

Sisters of St. Joseph in Brasil
EDITORS' NOTE: We have left unchanged this letter's use of the Portuguese spelling for Brazil and its people.

Equality comes of respect, openness

To the editors:

Equality in the job-market, housing, politics and the Church will not become a reality: when there is male bashing, when there is female bashing, when there is ethnic bashing, when there is racial bashing, when there is religious faith bashing.

Equality becomes a reality: when there is respect for each other, when we respect each others opinions, when there is the willingness to listen, when there is the willingness to learn, when there is an abundance of humility.

Victor M. Yanaitis
Harpington Drive, Rochester