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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.

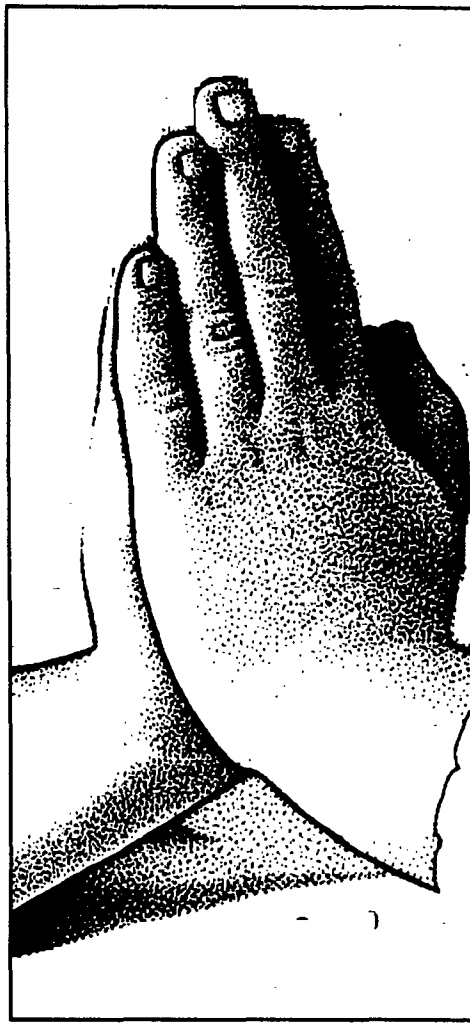
Preserve sanctity of the temple

To the editors:

I am convinced that the ever growing shortage of religious in the Catholic Church and the rather large numbers of the older Catholics who have left the church stem from the fact that today the general church-going population — including many clergy — have lost sight of the sanctity and solemnity of the temple of God. Church going has reduced itself to the lowest common denominator: Mass has become a frivolous social gathering, a lawn party, a picnic, a song fest, a good time!

God, the omniscient, omnipotent Being is addressed as just another person who will sing, and clap and joke along with the next person! He's our buddy! Come have a good time as we jump around, cavort, and really enjoy ourselves.

It is no wonder that older Catholics are dissatisfied with the church and that young men and women are not attracted to the religious life. No longer is there anything attractive about Mass nor is there evidence that anything special can be attributed to leading a holy life and making that pact with and commitment to our creator. If commonplace resides in the church functions, and if what the priest and sisters accomplish lend merely to the almost silly games and activities that seem to occupy the crowds in parish after parish, then young people will probably continue to search for a challenge that will make better use of the talent they possess. They aspire to do great things and become party to greatness, not so much for personal accolades, but rather to better fulfill a purpose of significance. They want their lives and activities to represent what they do best and they will search for the opportunities to perform such roles. And, why attend Mass if afterward one leaves with



feelings of pessimism and disgust?

God is not our "buddy," and His Temple is not "Good time Charlie's." God's house is a solemn place, it is the residence of the almighty, our creator. And the temple is not to be used indiscriminately. And His ministers are not to be taken for granted, either. They have dedicated their lives to the service of their creator in a special way, a way that is not in the mainstream of humanity. Certainly the priest

works with humans, but on God's level and by God's conditions, not man's.

The Catholic Mass must necessarily return, at least, to a former state that was serious and solemn. The faithful must once again show respect for the place of sacrifice by treating the church as something more than a congregational hall. Witness the flowing red candle light that indicates the real presence, and perhaps the thought of its significance will surface. And, move the tabernacle back to the church proper; don't hide it in the chapel and out of sight! Why, we show more respect for a darkened movie theater than we do for the temple of God. At least we tend to be quiet in the theaters!

There is time enough to give the glad hand shake and pleasant greetings outside the church, the place where all such things should occur as a result of the time we spend conversing with the Lord. Certainly we can be happy attending Mass; it's a wonderful experience. It is also a sacred experience and a most solemn event, considering that it is a reenactment of the greatest sacrifice ever. I expect there was little clapping going on among the faithful at Calvary.

The new movement in the Catholic Church to urge more people to take active roles in the liturgy is exemplary. But let it not degenerate to common place. Rather, let it build a crescendo to excellence and move the faithful to a reverence of that great mystery in Christendom, where once again the significance of the sacrifice of the Mass will take its proper place. Then let us see whether or not young and old alike are willing and anxious to align themselves with Christ and His church.

Dr. Dennis K. Murphy
Keuka College
Keuka Park, New York

Church has room for all viewpoints

To the editors:

Please tell those who wrote to "dis-sent" with Maureen O'Neill to relax and not to worry. Bishop Clark has not ordained a woman priest. But, wouldn't it be nice!!

What bothers me is that they seem to think that women's ordination was the only item on the agenda of the Diocesan Synod. It is not something that has been established. It is something that must be discussed.

I am not schooled in theology and know little or nothing about Canon law, but I do know that the Holy Spirit works in the lowly and sometimes great words of wisdom come out of the mouths of children. It is prudent, therefore, to listen to every voice. There is room in the church for different points of view.

In proper balance, I should like to suggest that you reprint here what Father Joseph Hart wrote about being "prophetic." It appeared in the *Courier* on April 29, 1993.

When I was a child in a small town, some of the neighborhood kids taunted me, "We can't play with you. You're Catholic!" By the same token, the church said it was a serious sin to attend any type of service in a non-Catholic church so, in a sense, I couldn't play with them. One day a Methodist friend invited my mother and us kids to a special "Children's Day" service at her church. My mother said, "I don't care what the church says, this woman is a good Christian and we are going." I'm sure she had no reason to confess it because it was not a sin even if the church said it was. God love her! She lived by the Spirit!

I should like to suggest that the letter writers refer to Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 5, verses 33 to 42, and what Gamaliel, a respected teacher of the law, had to say.

In part, "For if this endeavor or this activity is of human origin, it will destroy itself. But, if it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them; you may even find yourself fighting against God."

Grace B. Carnes
Eagle Ridge Circle, Rochester
EDITORS' NOTE: Space does not allow us to reprint the full text of Father Joseph A. Hart's April 29, 1993, column, "To be or not to be 'prophetic.'" Ms. Carnes' letter seems to relate most specifically to this para-

graph: "In Christianity, our firm belief is that the Holy Spirit's gift is not given to only a few individuals in the community but is freely given to all the baptized... Thus the Christian community is a community of prophets, anointed in baptism by God's Holy Spirit. As a community of prophets we are both conscious of the Spirit's action in our midst and conscious of our vocation to call each other and our institutions to right action, to necessary reform and to sincere repentance."

Urge legislators to commit to fighting cancer's scourge

To the editors:

Roughly 22 years ago, then President Richard Nixon announced this country's all-out war against cancer. All of America's remarkable ingenuity, talent and skill was going to be pressed into service in this cause. The cure was going to be found.

Two decades later, over 500,000 people per year still die from this disease. Admittedly, we have seen some advances in the treatment of both child and adult cancer but we have an immense distance yet to go. Because of cancer, parents are still violating the laws of nature by burying their children, and 500,000 families per year are still dealing with the loss of a loved one. One out of every three of us will eventually have to deal, on a direct basis, with this terrible disease.

As our legislatures go back into session for the 1994 year, we have got to write our elected representatives and get them to once again commit the funds to finding the cure for cancer.

Government must recommit itself to this cause.

I beg you, if your life has been touched by the scourge of cancer; I beg you, if you are a parent; I beg you, if you love children; please write your representatives and ask them to put cancer research back on the front burner.

We have made real progress. We are so close. It is precisely in the area of childhood cancer that the major research advances have been made. We are almost to the day when no parents will ever be given the news that their child has a malignancy, when no parent will ever again wake up in the middle of the night wondering what his or her child might have turned out like if he or she had lived.

Our voices must not fail the children now. We are so close to winning.

Gary Mervis
Camp Good Days
and Special Times
Mendon