

OPINION COMMENTARY

Church remains faithful to truth

Catholic Courier

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

President

Bishop Matthew H. Clark
General Manager
Bishop Dennis W. Hickey
Editor/Asst. Gen. Mgr.
Karen M. Franz

Editorial Department

Managing Editor
Richard A. Kiley
Senior Staff Writer
Lee Strong
Finger Lakes
Staff writers
Rob Cullivan
Genesee Valley
Mike Latona
Southern Tier
Staff Photographer
S. John Wilkin
Photo Intern
Lauren McFalls

Business Department

Circulation Manager
Jeanne A. Morin
Office Manager
Amy D'Accursio
Receptionist
Lenna Hurley

Advertising Department

Advertising Manager
Bernie Puglisi
Advertising Account Exec.
Kathy Welsh

Production Department

Graphics Manager
Lorraine Hennessey
Graphic Artist
Kim Parks

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 letter 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:

I am writing in response to Father Robert L. Collins article in the Feb. 10 issue of the *Catholic Courier* ("Priest replies to challenge"). I would like to address his "complete, accurate, and fair summary of the Church's teachings about conscience" with a list of my own:

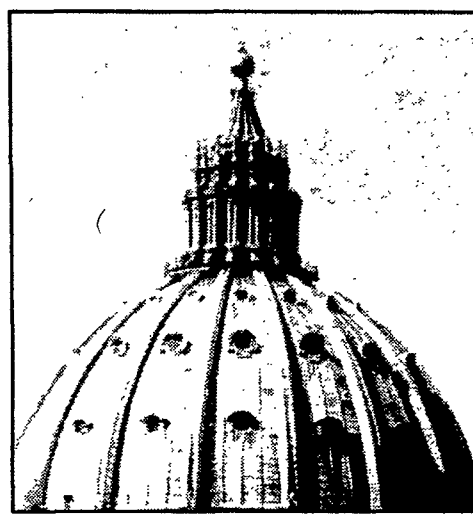
1.) A correctly formed Catholic conscience can make morally correct decisions.

2.) The Catholic conscience is formed through knowledge and study of the Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition as presented by the Magisterium...

3.) Personal sincerity will not make or unmake reality, wrong decisions made in "good faith" are still wrong decisions. Personal certitude or personal convictions have nothing to do with a moral question's correctness. There are absolute truths in Catholic Moral theology: Life begins at conception... there are just two ends to marriage: unitive and procreative... Those two absolute truths are just some of the basics of our Catholic moral beliefs. They are not debatable.

4.) If one's conscience has led them away from the Church's clear teachings on morality, it does not mean that person was malicious — it does mean that person was wrong. Thus the reason Christ instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation, that one may receive forgiveness of sins and guidance in correcting their wrongdoing.

In response to Father Collins' absolute truth:



1.) The Magisterium is the moral teaching body of the Catholic Church and is under the authority of both Christ and the Pope, teaching the absolute truths of our faith. The Magisterium's correctness is not determined by ones personal convictions, nor is it dependent upon "certain circumstances." ... This "authority" allows the Pope and the Magisterium to teach the basics of Catholic morality in the same way Christ taught the disciples.

2.) Our Church is not being divided by conservatives or liberals, it is being divided by the fact that nobody wants to be caught "judging" another persons actions or choices. A sincere conscience can be an erroneous conscience, and an erroneous conscience can be directed to right paths. The Catholic Church has clearly stated that we can rightly judge wrong actions, we can NEVER judge anothers heart —

only Christ can do that — but, yes we can judge an action! If those responsible for passing on the "True Faith" would do so with conviction AND compassion we would soon begin to reap the benefits.

For example: Instead of ignoring the topic of birth regulation in pre-marriage preparation start having some serious, and required, Natural Family Planning education — a method which is 99.5 percent effective and has a divorce rate of less than 1 percent! Or informing our young that saving yourself for marriage increases your chances of staying married by 80 percent! If the adults in the church do not know their faith how then can it be faithfully passed on to the young? How can our children form a correct Catholic conscience in those teaching them do not know what to teach? Catholics must make the effort to learn, study, and know the Catholic moral teachings as handed down from Christ's Vicar and the Magisterium...

...Father Collins' "depending on the circumstances" does not apply to the Magisterium or the Church. These moral truths apply in all circumstances. While the Church's history does have it's good and bad it has remained faithful to it's moral teachings from day one — because they are infallible truths which, when followed, reap a harvest of healthy marriages, healthy families, and healthy church communities.

Kathleen McCusker
Seneca Manor Drive, Rochester
EDITORS' NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with space limitations.

Magisterium is guide for the conscience

To the editors:

If Father Collins rejects the teaching authority of the Church's Magisterium — except in those circumstances which he finds agreeable — as well as the revealed truths of Sacred Scripture — save one: "God is love. All else is relative" — why did he seek to share in the power of the priesthood by submitting himself to the authority of the Church and drawing upon its power to ordain him? Surely he could have ordained himself. Don't we all share in the priesthood of Christ?

This is the kind of nonsense that follows from the notion of the Church only as "the people of God." While it is that, it is more. The Church has survived for two thousand years precisely because it is more. The Church is an institution, "one, holy, Catholic and apostolic," having been established as such by Jesus Christ, who gave authority to the apostles and primarily to Peter to teach, interpret, admonish, and lead the faithful to a share of eternal life.

In exercising that authority, the Church rejects Father Collins' position: everything goes given the right circumstances. Even though he recites the right words in defining the role of conscience — how bold to claim it to be a complete, accurate and fair summary — he fails to mention our obligation to be guided by Scripture, tradition and, yes, by the Magisterium, in forming conscience. Instead, he clearly denies this obligation. "The Magisterium is more or less correct, depending on circumstances." All truth is relative, save "God is love." In saying this, he makes the case for the primacy of conscience without reference to the truth. In spite of his statement that "conscience does not create the truth," this is exactly what he advocates. Once we make ourselves the arbiters of truth, the easy next step is to will the truth, which is the affliction of the modern world in which the church operates and by which it is presently affected. Thus, we arrive at truth by opinion polls and "consensus" — e.g. synods.

We should remember that every priest has his own gift, his own mission—but that

mission must be consistent with the whole mission of the Church: the salvation of souls.

The Church itself has two gifts: one is the authority to teach in the name of Jesus — the institutional church through which this power flows — which authority is conferred upon its messengers: bishops and priests, by ordination; the other gift is personal to those messengers. Through ordination these messengers are infused with the light of the Holy Spirit.

But it is a reflected light not to be confused with one emanating from themselves. Individual priests and bishops possess the objective holiness of both gifts, but unfortunately some lack subjective holiness and humility. Today, we see this misfortune more and more often, resulting in great injury to the Body of Christ.

Yes, Father Collins, there is room for you in the Church. Why not come back?
Joseph A. F. Valenti
Franklin Street, Rochester

Debate on conscience bespeaks development of selective belief

To the editors:

Touche, a brilliant response, you are vindicated; your forensic exercise is a draw; your ego has been served (re: Rev. R. L. Collins vs. Mr. Michael Gallagher letters). Anyone who writes so well should realize that if the good Lord wanted is all to think alike, He — sorry gals — would have made everyone to think like me!

Not many years ago the expression "salad bar catholic" was coined. The analogy, though somewhat vague, could mean a lay person who picks and chooses — agrees or disagrees — with what he — sorry again gals — wants to follow, and believe, in the catholic church. Perhaps it is now time to coin, if not now available, a new expression, "the dining room priest." The meaning to be the same as for salad bar catholic with an additional sentence; for I can justify ALL my actions. The word clergy being substituted for lay person, naturally.

If there is a viable solution to the years of aggrornamento in our church, perhaps relief may be found in statement three; my preference.

1. We now have, more or less, "liberal thinking," catholics.

2. We also have, more or less, "conservative attitude," catholics.

3. How's about, more "ROMAN catholics," for those among us whom desire to follow the Bishop of Rome.

As our much maligned bishop is re-

ceiving unsolicited advice, warranted or nor, I submit;

One, he change the name of his *Catholic Courier* "Along the Way" column.

Two, he stop bending over backwards to prove — to himself — his fairness; one whom stands upright cast a longer shadow.

In closing I would like to say to my dear sister in Hornell — a small city, 10,000 plus or minus population, located in one of the far corners of the diocese, whose priest no longer straddle the fence — stay resolute in what we were taught.

James Morey
Green Knolls Drive, Rochester

Seeks to be enlightened on specific circumstances

To the editors:

With regard to Father Robert Collins' letter to the editor noting "absolute truths," we were taught the Church is "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" but never "more or less the one true Church depending on circumstances."

Perhaps Father Collins would like to share with those of us who are not properly enlightened under what circumstances the Church is not the one true Church.

Anne C. Erdle
Canandaigua