

Catholic Courier

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 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.

Legislature must increase welfare

To the editors:

More than 130,000 New Yorkers are homeless. Homelessness is a problem that hits every community in our State. A major factor is the small amount of money that the welfare systems pays for housing costs.

For instance, in Monroe County, a family of three on public assistance receives \$343 a month to rent an apartment — assuming that heat is part of the rent. HUD estimates that the Fair Market Rent for a two bedroom apartment in the County is \$577 a month. Nearly 90 percent of welfare recipients in the County have rents higher than what welfare gives them, forcing them to use their basic grant and food money for housing.

This situation is occurring in every county in the State. More than 48 percent of the recipients in New York City pay rents above the maximum shelter allowance. In the rest of the state, 83 percent of the recipients pay above the maximum; 38 percent pay more than 150 percent of the maximum.

Our State's highest court ruled in 1990 that the welfare housing allowances in New York City are illegally low, forcing many families with children into homelessness, shelters and welfare motels. It costs taxpayers far more to keep a household in a shelter or welfare motel than it would to provide them with sufficient funds to obtain their own apartment.



Counties often pay \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year to keep families in shelters and motels rather than spending an extra \$200 to \$300 a month to enable them to have their own apartment.

Unfortunately, the Court of Appeals sent the case back to the lower courts to develop a remedy. Similar lawsuits have since been brought in Westchester, Nassau, Orange and Suffolk Counties, Recipients in New York City and these counties are able to get court-ordered in-

creased housing payments and rent arrears. These increased payments now costs DSS more than \$160 million a year, a figure that increases every week as 300 additional recipients apply to the courts for help.

More than a million and a half New Yorkers are unable to obtain the basic necessities of food, housing clothing and heat due to our present inadequate public assistance benefit package. Even with food stamps included, the average family on public assistance has an income of only 82 percent of the federal poverty line. This low level of public assistance benefits is one of the major reasons why more than 800,000 of New Yorkers must use food pantries and soup kitchens each month.

Welfare is the main anti-poverty program for our children. Two-thirds of welfare recipients are children. Despite the Decade of the Child, nearly one out of every four children in our state lives in poverty. Governor Cuomo has not proposed an increase in public assistance benefits since 1989.

It is time for the State Legislature to take action to correct this injustice and bring the State into compliance with the law. We need an increase in the housing allowance in the upcoming state budget.

**Mark A. Dunlea, executive director
Hunger Action Network
of New York State, Albany, N.Y.**

Book lacks sound analytical foundation

To the editors:

Father McKenna's book review of "Theology and Canon Law: New Horizons for Legislation and Interpretation" by Father Ladislaus Orsy, S.J. (*Catholic Courier*, Jan. 20) positions itself, I believe, on the need of "canonical research in the contemporary church." I agree but only if 2,000 years of canonical research is not excluded in favor of employing only that segment of contemporary theology consisting of technocratic theologians who are determined to chart new ways into the spectrum of theology via their musings and theories.

Such speculations and theories may be valid if they remain within the orbit of the knowledge bequeathed to us by tradition, Scriptures, the writings of the Fathers of the Church and the Magisterium. To do less than this connotes a foolishness that denies most if not all of the

integrity of the past.

It continually amazes me how these periti can ignore the foundations of their knowledge to the point of abnegating them for the allure of will-o'-the-wisp cogitations. They truly fail to see the forest because of the trees.

As Father McKenna explains in his review, the quest of the book is to answer the question "How can we find the right harmony between Christian beliefs and the laws governing the life of the community?" I question that premise — why should there be a basic conflict between Christian beliefs and the laws governing the life of the community? Whether community refers to the secular or the Church communities is not made clear. Community laws in either case should correspond with Christian beliefs which encompass the natural law. Vatican II in *Dignatatis Humanae*, or Declaration on Religious Lib-

erty, n. 3 affirmed that "the highest norm of human life is God's divine law or natural law — eternal, objective, and universal — whereby God orders, directs, and governs the entire universe and all the ways of the human community according to a plan conceived in his wisdom and love. Man has been made by God to participate in this law, with the result that, under the gentle disposition of divine providence, he can come to perceive ever increasingly the unchanging truth."

However there is an overall sense in this book, I believe, which tends to shift inquiry into channels which lead to conclusions apart from the admonitions of Vatican II, the influence of the Magisterium, and yes most importantly the guidance of the Holy Spirit which is always ready, if invited.

I think this book can be compared to following a path that gets narrower and narrower until it disappears into the bush and you are lost.

I state this because what is more obvious about it in the review is (1) the lack of any reference to the faith and (2) a mischievousness in promoting a slavish attention to analytical technique to the neglect of substance.

In his book "Principles of Catholic Theology, Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology," Cardinal Ratzinger points to the dangers inherent in basing analysis solely on the historico-critical method and/or the scientific method of literary criticism which I believe is what has been done in Father Orsy's work.

The Cardinal's book, a masterpiece, stresses a careful amalgam of the nature of God with the nature of literary criticism, if true and valid results are to be realized...

... That unity which must exist if a full, well rounded exegesis is the objective, is unfortunately not apparent in Father Orsy's work as summarized by Father McKenna. To paraphrase — if our interest is not centered on Christ, we will find ourselves dealing with shadows.

**William T. Hammill
Clardale Drive
Rochester**

EDITORS' NOTE: A lengthy quotation has been deleted from this letter to meet space limitations.

Catholics need to consider why U.S. church is going downhill

To the editors:

The February 1 issue of the *Courier* contained (a letter to the editor) by Dr. Dennis K. Murphy which very clearly spells out why the Catholic Church is going downhill in the United States, and why so many Catholics are leaving the church, and why men and women are no longer attracted to the religious life. We see Dr. Murphy along with many others voicing their concerns to what is happening in our church. His observations blend in with those from the many others from around the country. The church is becoming a social church, becoming commonplace and less a "temple of God."

As a longtime Roman Catholic I cannot dispute his concerns. I have seen many things occurring in my lifetime as a Roman Catholic, some good, but many that give one cause for concern. Being an open-minded traditional senior citizen, does not make me outdated and ready for pasture, because change is often for the better. Change for the sake of change and convenience is dangerous. Unfortunately, many Catholics, laity,

priests, sisters, and educators, have become hung up on "change" as the cure for our ailments.

We Catholics need to consider and analyze the following "WHYS" and what must be done about them:

- So many people have left the Catholic Church.
- So many are hopping from parish to parish.
- The young are not being attracted to the religious life.
- Family life and family values are deteriorating.
- The Ten Commandments mean little.
- Catholic teachings on morality seems to be a waste.
- Too many think that money is the cure-all.
- Reverence and respect are only two words.
- American Catholic is replacing Roman Catholic.

**Michael Tarkulich
Curtis Road
Hilton**