

OPINION COMMENTARY

Sees Eucharist as solemn moment

Catholic Courier

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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 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:

Regarding the Eucharist/Mass, I believe we will all agree that "We gather together to sing the Lord's praises, to worship the Father through Jesus His Son ..." as the song says.

Let me share with you, an experience that we are not to blow out of proportion. It was the simple loving gesture of a father toward one of his children willing to listen to Him. I found myself before God our Father in our eternal dimension and He showed me and I understood three things simultaneously:

- 1) my total, less than zero, nothingness,
- 2) my total dependency on Him for everything,
- 3) the cherishing — the tender caring, nurturing, loving as one of great value to Him — of the Father for each one of us, a cherishing beyond human imagination.

While I realized that He knew the deepest desires of my heart of hearts, my soul, even one of many years ago that I hadn't thought of for some time, at no time did I consider Him "buddy buddy." "Honor thy father and mother" and He was my Father, my Creator and my God and I was fully, keenly conscious of it. I felt reverence — deep respect and awe — not fear, at His Presence, His cherishing and at the intimacy of our relationship.

At the Eucharist/Mass it is to Him that



we plead for mercy and forgiveness for what mankind and we are doing today, the terrible horrors. There is no joy but a desperate plea for mercy. So too, when we ask His Son "Lamb of God... have mercy on us." We crucified Him once and look at what we're still doing today!

But I'm sure we will agree that there is a time and place for everything. When we join with the messengers of God, the angels, as at the "Alleluia" before the Word of God, or with the "Glory to God," and the "Holy, Holy, Holy" there

is a tremendous joy for at that moment, with them we are part of God's Kingdom. I've heard them sing and while their singing is beautiful beyond any sound here on earth, it is always filled with reverence for the One whose praises and glory they sing.

At the Offertory, we are offering once again the sacrifice of the Son to the Father as well as ourselves. How terribly sad that sorry Sacrifice is so awesomely and desperately needed. What a solemn moment in our lives. And while Passover may be a joyous occasion normally, Our Lord knew this was His last supper with those close to Him, He gave them His last instructions and teaching. He fully knew of the torture, mental, emotional and physical He was shortly going to suffer. Would we be joyous at that moment? Or would there be the solemnity that we find when we sing or speak the Our Father?

When we receive Our Lord, our hearts do burst with joy and love. So you see if we concentrate on our Father we will find joy, sorrow, solemnity but always with reverence at the Eucharist/Mass but only if we "Love God and love one another." Kindness is a token of love.

Georgette M. Murphy
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Eliminating celibacy rule isn't the answer

To the editors:

In response to Ann Roeger's letter in the March 31 edition of the *Courier* ("Write to cardinal") regarding the requirement that priests participate in the discipline of celibacy:

Our Holy Father, a man of peace and love solemnly dedicated to the will of God expressed by the Holy Spirit, has said that celibacy is a valid discipline, and I'm puzzled that so many question this, but upon reflection — as one who feels I may be called to lead a celibate life as a priest — I must say respectfully that many of these questions are based on misunderstandings.

For example, Ms. Roeger speculates that alcoholism and sex offenses ... would be reduced if celibacy were no longer mandated. While I am neither a psychiatrist nor a psychologist, I do respect these professionals' knowledge in their fields of study, and several prominent psychologists ... theorize that the number of priests who are pedophiles is no greater than those in other professions, professions which allow marriage... It's just that our society has idolized sex to the point that no one believes anybody is capable of living without it, and the press attempts to verify this by reporting on priests who are pedophiles and ig-

nor, for the most part, other professionals with this problem...

... Regarding alcoholism, once again Ms. Roeger's theory is based on both a misunderstanding of alcoholism — ignoring possible genetic or early environmental factors — and celibacy — the false notion that sexual expression in particular or marriage in general are the only vehicles toward ultimate fulfillment. By no means am I de-valuing marriage, for it is a sacrament, like Holy Orders; I am merely challenging the implied belief that marriage is the only means of attaining happiness. This is an insult to anyone who is living a celibate life, whether as a priest or religious, or as a single lay person, all of which certainly are valid vocations and thus are lives filled with holiness and meaning.

Regarding the belief that allowing priests to marry would increase vocations: history tells us that this simply is not true. For several hundreds of years celibacy has been mandated for priests, yet there has not been the shortage we face now. As a matter of fact, at one time there were 500,000 first-order Franciscans alone in Europe — quite a significant percentage of the population — all of whom took a vow of celibacy...

... On the contrary, one could come

up with many arguments for not allowing priests to marry, instead of responding to objections, as I have. Look at psychological profiles of the children of ministers, for one. But that is another letter.

Personally, I believe it is valid to ask our priests to remain celibate, for through celibacy ... the will is made rock-solid, and this is a vital trait in Christian spiritual leaders ... For some, it is a sacrifice, but it is a sacrifice entirely appropriate within the context of life as a priest, and look at the rewards! Bringing Jesus physically into the world, which is inherently glorious but all the more so because of the sacrifices made. I would add it is no more or less significant than the sacrifices spouses and parents make... Life is filled with sacrifices, but these make the rewards so much sweeter!

Sadly, Ms. Roeger touches upon some real problems in her letter, but for the answers we must not look to eliminating mandated celibacy but elsewhere, for allowing priests to marry would not solve these problems, and it may create many more.

James A. Davis
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EDITORS' NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with space limitations.

Pray for guidance on achieving 'perfect' church

To the editors:

Does anyone out there, in his heart of hearts, have an idea, an image of what the perfect church would be like? By church-hopping and exploring the myriad and diverse theological opinions available, are we searching for the fulfillment of that image?

For me, the perfect church would have to begin with an unquestioned acceptance of moral and spiritual absolutes, truths given us by a loving and omniscient Father who knows us far better than we know ourselves. It would encourage a deep humility, a recognition that we are totally dependent on God's grace for our salvation and spiritual well-being; a church that recognized at the same time that "faith without works is dead," that it is in allowing God's love to fill us and then pour out into the world in our works that our Christianity is-giv-

en substance.

It would be a church that gives full credence to the grace and power imparted through the sacraments which are not symbols, but real channels of real spiritual nourishment and power. It would be a church that could claim direct succession from Christ Himself, the continuation of the teachings He uttered and the recipient of the channels of grace He established.

Walking into this church, I would feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, a sense of peace and warmth and joy and love and wonder. I would understand that here, my sins would not be overlooked or excused, but would be forgiven by a merciful God.

I would see the tender expression of Christian love on each face, and know I was safe and accepted in the company of brothers and sisters.

In theory, we already have this church, we are this church, but in reality we thwart the realization of Her promise at every turn. We won't allow things like humility and submission to stand in the way of personal desires and ambition. We cling to our "positions" in the Church as if they were thrones of prestige rather than stations of service. We love whomever it suits us to love, and ignore or belittle the rest.

It doesn't have to be this way. We know how to pray, and who to pray to. If it is our desire to realize the promise of the Catholic Church, God will most assuredly answer our prayers to that end, and has given us His vicar on Earth, Pope John Paul II, to lead the way. Blessed be He.

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