

OPINION COMMENTARY

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 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.

Pope leads us to total communion

To the editors:

Of all the features in the *Catholic Courier*, I think I enjoy the Opinion and Commentary pages the most. Lately much has been written there about dissent within the Church. I believe the Body of Christ is a very diverse group in many ways; what ties us together is our common faith. This is what makes us Catholic Christians; we all profess to believe in what the Church calls the "Deposit of Faith," which has been handed down to us by the apostles and their successors for the past two thousand years.

Part of this Faith involves obedience — not a popular concept in today's society — to the Vicar of Christ, the Pope, and to the Magisterium, which is the teaching authority of the Church. When our Holy Father speaks clearly on topics such as contraception, abortion, homosexuality, or women's ordination, it behooves those of us who profess to be Catholics to form our consciences accordingly. This was expressed clearly in the documents of Vatican II, including the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Chapter 2, Number 12. There we read, "God's People accepts not the word of men but the very Word of God. It clings without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints, penetrates it more deeply by accurate insights and applies it more thoroughly to life. All this it does under the lead of a teaching authority to which it loyally defers."

We know that the early Christian community was characterized by assent to, not dissent from, Church teaching. In Acts 2:42 we read, "They devoted them-



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selves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers." The result was that (verse 47), "Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." Yet by the time St. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, the spirit of dissent in the Body of Christ had appeared. He wrote about this in Chapter 16, Verses 17 and 18 in the following words: "I urge you brothers, to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles, in opposition to the teaching you have learned; avoid them. For such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent."

By the grace of God, we now have a Pope of the highest caliber in the person of John Paul II. He has given us the new catechism of the Catholic Church

which, thank God, will be free of the negative ideological influences that have contaminated so much of secular society. He has given us one splendid encyclical after another, including his latest, *Veritatis Splendor*. I believe he is a gift from our Heavenly Father for just this critical time in Church history. Let us heed his voice, and the voice of the teaching authority of the Church, the Magisterium, when we consider how we should relate to the moral confusion present in a sin-sick society like this one. May our Lord guide and bless our Holy Father, and those bishops, clergy and laity in loyal communion with him. May he also grant the graces of discernment and repentance to those, especially within the Body of Christ, who are not yet in such communion.

Walter D. Bialkowski
Austin Road, Troupsburg, N.Y.

Bosnian war shows foolishness of theory

To the editors:

Regarding Joseph Conder's letter, "Naive to insist on total nonviolence" (*Catholic Courier*, April 21): Is it rational and practical to insist on the theoretical possibility of a just war when these theories have provided the barest, yet apparently sufficient, pretext for Christian participation in horrific un-Christian-like violence in hundreds of wars? All too often the "implacable enemies" themselves have been Christians!

Mr. Conder's second paragraph demonstrates that one must first make Jesus irrelevant to the issue of Christian participation in state sponsored killing — war — before one can embrace just war. Finding no clarity on this issue in Jesus and the New Testament, Mr. Conder proceeds to St. Augustine who, in his turn, found that Greek philosophers were more amenable than Jesus to "practical" speculations.

It is not hard to understand how, after

300 years of persecution in the Empire, Christians were lulled into collusion with Constantine. 100 years later, Augustine simply sought to justify what had already happened.

In our century, and especially in Bosnia, it is becoming harder to understand the grip that "just war" has on Church leaders. A news correspondent who was in Sarajevo and later in Mostar reported that Croatian atrocities at Mostar had exceeded Serbian violence at Sarajevo! Perhaps when every Catholic and Orthodox family has seen the "disembodied limbs" of their members, Mr. Conder and Christian leaders will care to speculate about which side was just and how clearly Jesus' Gospel of Peace, Non-violence, and Reconciliation was presented through the centuries when love grew cold.

I don't want to reduce the Gospel to a single principle. After 1,700 years of untold Christian contribution to the climate of violence in the world, it is also time to practice the principle of repentance, especially as it applies to our failure to follow Jesus' command to love enemies. This command follows immediately, the Beatitude "principles" in Matthew and Luke. Jesus himself showed the application to the implacable Romans.

The possibility of terrible violence directed at me and my family that Mr. Conder mentions is a real one. As I read the Gospel, I know I have a right and duty to resist such evil. The nonviolence that Jesus displayed throughout His Passion and death are the greatest resistance to evil the world has ever known. If I remain in Him, my active resistance to evil will be similarly nonviolent.

What is foolishness to some is the power and wisdom of God to others, as St. Paul says. The end of a "kingdom without violence" can only be worked for through nonviolence means.

Mark Scibilia-Carver
Cold Springs Road
Trumansburg

Hopes others will sample Cursillo

To the editors:

Today, many feel that there is little happening in the Church that can strengthen its mission in the world, that can truly change the world for the better.

Should prayers seek different objectives?

To the editors:

As the priests of our diocese gather for their annual convocation (April 18-20), we are exhorted to pray and work to encourage the young men in our diocese to consider a vocation to ordained priestly ministry. We are reminded that there are no new priests to be ordained this year in our diocese.

I wonder if we might better pray to be opened to the many ways we are all called to priestly ministry, to be strengthened to respond to these calls, and to be humbled to recognize that our ways are not God's ways and perhaps the time has come to consider the possibility that God may be calling more than young men to ordained priestly ministry.

Suzanne M. Pearson

Doerun Drive, Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: A backlog of letters prevented earlier publication of this letter, which was received in mid-April.

I disagree. After attending the Cursillo weekend retreat in Owego April 8-10, I believe the Holy Spirit is dynamically present, building a great fire on the earth. My hope in Christ and His Church zoomed to new highs as I heard the many talks given by the presenters.

At Cursillo the men learn about the transforming power given to us by God. Few times in life does a man admit that a friendship or bond was formed with other men: it happens at war, or in a disaster.

After a Cursillo many men admit that true and lasting friendships are formed for the best of purposes, the most ideal goals.

My hope is that more men — and women — begin to ask about Cursillo; ask your parish priest to direct you to people who have participated in Cursillo. The Pope has approved of this movement and encourages the faithful to get involved in the movements that the Church has approved — Regnum Christi, Marriage Encounter, etc.

I feel that my time is valuable, and I received a thing of great value when I attended my weekend. I thank all those men and women involved in prayer and volunteering for the success of Cursillo in our Diocese. The fruit is very good.

Frank Netti
Auburn