

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 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.



Put others' problems ahead of own

To the editors:

We could all probably "write a book" as we get older based on our observations and experiences. It would be great if we did! Think of all the wisdom we could impart to the generations to follow...

I have deduced that *true happiness and fulfillment* comes when one realizes that although he has the supreme gift of "choice" there is a vocation designed for us according to the will of God. It is not easy to discover the will of God but the search is what gives meaning and value to our lives. It also gives direction and purpose. Viktor Frankl, an eminent psychiatrist who spent years in the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Dachau, discovered that "heroism" in men who remained true to their humanity despite conditions of lowest bestiality, was due to their belief in a higher Image, a higher Power. If one develops a set of principles according to how we interpret the will of God, early in life, it relieves us from the frustration of making decisions by chance or whim. We discover a sense of "contentment" in referring our actions to the principles we have decided should guide our lives, however difficult. A life lived purely for *oneself* is doomed to failure, because as Thomas Merton says, no one is that *perfect* that he can find fulfillment in himself alone! Jesus showed us throughout the New Testament that happiness is service to others. Think of all the loneliness, misery and alienation of all those who focus on themselves rather than try to form in-

Media bombard us with sexual images

To the editors:

Sexual exploitation has become the biggest industry in America. Few are the companies or businesses that haven't used it to some degree. We are bombarded with it on TV and just about everything that is advertised uses sex to sell. These are arguments few can deny. But the exploitation of married people to use condoms, artificial birth control, sterilization is so subtle that even people that realize how powerful peer pressure is and recognize the power sex has in their lives, still deny that this plague of fearing to have more children is their reason for denying God and themselves cooperation in the creation of new life.

The signs of our times to me indicate a falling away from our God who created us to a self made God of "control thine own destiny."

Mary Parker
Spruce Lane, Seneca Falls

terpersonal relationships within their community. How readily their problems would disappear if their concern could be shifted from themselves to their neighbors. Jesus showed this in every encounter. Psychiatrists know this and try to utilize this method with their patients. Why are we so hesitant to "reach out?"

I do get disturbed listening to all the "excuses" and attempts at evasion of personal responsibility in this present day. Personal experience has proven to me that past "traumas" and unhappiness need not determine my future! Freud stopped too soon in his philosophy of biological, sociological and psychological determinism of the individual. The past may have influenced me but the fu-

ture is mine by *choice*! Didn't Jesus always leave the individual with a feeling of love, acceptance *but* the admonition, "Go and sin no more"? In other words, the past can't be changed but the future is yours to determine. As a student of psychology, I am convinced that any therapy that fails to connect an individual's sense of worth to a suprahuman identity will give only "temporary" relief and not true fulfillment. We can do magic and make symptoms disappear, perhaps even return a "functioning" individual to society. But I believe Christ's true message to be that we must be more than that — we must be an incarnation of love.

Evelyn Dodd
Windmill Road, Pittsford

Citations in catechism retain original degrees of authority

To the editors:

The new Catechism of the Catholic Church is a welcome summary of Catholic belief, piety and devotion. As we read the Catechism, it is important for us to realize that the statements made in it do not all have the same authority or importance. Thus statements from the Councils of the Church would have the highest authority, since they come from the highest teaching body in the Church, namely, the Pope and the Bishops gathered together in solemn assembly. Statements from individual fathers of the Church or from various theologians would have whatever authority these statements possessed before they were included in the Catechism.

This is not simply an opinion of mine; it is the position taken by the man to whom Pope John Paul II gave the charge of bringing the Catechism to completion, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. In a seminar held on July 9, 1993, at Madrid

in Spain, Cardinal Ratzinger said: "Every doctrinal point proposed by the Catechism has no other authority but that which it already possesses."

The Cardinal is making a very important point which we must keep in mind in reading the Catechism, namely, it is not inclusion in the Catechism that gives authority to the statements contained therein. Rather, as the Cardinal makes clear, the only authority the various statements in the Catechism possess is the authority that belonged to them before they were inserted into the Catechism. Understanding the Cardinal's principle will help us to see that not everything in the Catechism is of equal authority and importance. Catechists especially need to keep this principle in mind as they use the Catechism as a reference work for their catechizing.

Monsignor William H. Shannon
East Avenue
Rochester

Affirms letter on anti-Semitism

To the editors:

A few weeks ago I saw a letter to the editor entitled "True Christians cannot hate Jews." I wish to add my very strong approval of this letter. You are to be congratulated for printing it. It should also be printed in the *Democrat and Chronicle* so it would reach more readers.

I hope the author of this letter Jerry Paladino reads this letter and will be encouraged to continue and intensify his efforts in this situation. I am not Jewish but if I were I would be very proud of ad-

vances in medicine and science made by Jews.

I cannot add much to the thoughts in the letter except that we should approve and endorse the efforts of people like Jews for Jesus and other such groups who seek to convert Jews to follow *their messiah* Jesus of Nazareth. After all the first Christians were Jews who were converted and followed Jesus.

Ray Guinsbeck
Penview Drive
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