

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.

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Pre-Cana should stress natural family planning

To the editors:

The Feb. 9 (Catholic News Service) article in the *Catholic Courier* titled "Role of Conscience root of Eucharist dispute" (page 11A) cites opposition by Catholic couples to the church's teaching that artificial contraception is immoral and indicates studies show a majority of Catholics, citing conscience, ignore the teaching.

One of the problems encountered in the post Vatican II era is that couples have not been instructed on Natural Family Planning and have erroneously formed their consciences primarily on ignorance. Priests and religious have almost never spoken positively on the issue and many are ignorant about the method itself as well as the harmful side effects of the pill.

Consider:

- in our country, 50 percent of the abortions are done because contraception has failed.
- contraception itself causes abortions.
- contraception enslaves women by making them alone responsible for the responsibility of family planning and places them as the only ones to be at risk from all the harmful side effects of the pill.
- contraception causes depression, mood swings, weight gain and diminished sexual drive.
- the pill changes the environment in the woman's reproductive system allowing deadly viruses like herpes, and other harmful organisms like Chlamydia and gonorrhea to thrive, often resulting in sterility.

- the pill causes breast and cervical cancer.

Natural Family Planning has been taught in the marriage preparation courses in our diocese more as an option, and the method itself is often not well explained. It is time for our clergy and marriage preparation instructors to thoroughly learn about the method so they can enthusiastically espouse it to all they encounter. Natural Family Planning instruction must become mandatory for our future husbands and wives.

Implementing new attitudes is challenging but when this approach was adopted in other dioceses in our country, the response by engaged couples was overwhelmingly positive. Young people want to learn what is best for them but they need the influence and example of their religious leaders to help them to practice the teachings of the church. The gains by such an endeavor include the very preservation of the family. The low divorce rate of 2 percent among couples who use the method proclaims the special graces and blessings given by God to enrich family life.

Natural Family Planning is as important in marriage preparation as is discussions on finances and the emotional relationship of the future spouses. We urge our diocesan leaders to adopt a more positive attitude toward Natural Family Planning to better protect the health and preservation of the family.

Michael R. Aiello, M.D., President
The Catholic Physician's Guild

Bishop can blame only himself for fall

To the editors:

I am concerned with Father McBrien's article of Feb. 16, "French bishop's case troubling many." McBrien cites the opposition of "conservative" Cardinal Lustiger — close friend of the pope — instead of the realization that "marrying a gay couple" etc. might of brought about the demise of the unfortunate French bishop.

By the way, Father McBrien, since when did bishops cease to be deputies of the Pope?

Note: Cardinal Lustiger, a convert from Judaism became a Catholic at age 14. His mother died at Auschwitz. He became involved in Catholic action and made cardinal the hard way.

I have often wondered about Father McBrien's credentials and connections.

James A. Myers
Gatewood Avenue, Rochester

Thankful for Courier visit

To the editors:

I write to thank you for your enlightening and inspiring visit to our parish on the weekend that our parish was profiled in the *Catholic Courier*. Indeed we were well pleased with the article and photographs, and your presentation and displays. Your openness to comment and critique, were matched by your warm and enthusiastic hospitality at the coffee hour. I'm glad our parish response was broad and helpful.

I think such experiences for all of us go a long way in establishing and maintaining the healthy support needed for a successful diocesan newspaper.

Father William J. Amann, Pastor
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church
Hamlin

Lent serves as a time to reform our lives

To the editors:

Because we are sinners, we must do penance. Before Vatican II, the Church to ensure that we did at least some penance obliged us to: eat no meat on Fridays, keep a Eucharistic fast from midnight, keep a 40 day Lenten fast. Now honestly, have we kept doing all these penances even though the Church has very considerably modified these obligations. I sincerely doubt it. The onus for doing more than the minimal church mandates is now on the individual.

Well Christian, another Lent is upon us. Holy Mother Church wisely sets this time aside for a special soul search to recognize our failures to make "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on

earth as it is in heaven." If there is someone or something keeping us from being all God intended, now is the acceptable time to purge that encumbrance and begin anew.

Prayer, almsgiving, and fasting have never gone out of style.

Pray for enlightenment and grace to know where you can use your time, talent, and treasure — things that are meant to be shared with others. Look about you with eyes and ears open and try to discern the cries for help that you will hear from those you encounter in your family, church, community, job, or the news media. Pray for them and reach out with a helping hand.

And for penance, here are some ideas:

keep the 40 day Lenten fast, discipline our eyes; curb your tongue; accept our crosses and infirmities as our part of suffering in union with Christ to save others; never complain about anything; skip something that we really enjoy like a favorite TV show, a sporting event, dessert, a cocktail; take part in your parish lenten offerings — or choose your own.

Accept each day as very important and meaningful in our faith journey.

May the world and the people in it, with God's help, somehow be touched by us and be better because we were here.

Jerry Paladino
Rock Stream
N.Y.