

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.

Spirituality of natives still strong

To the editors:

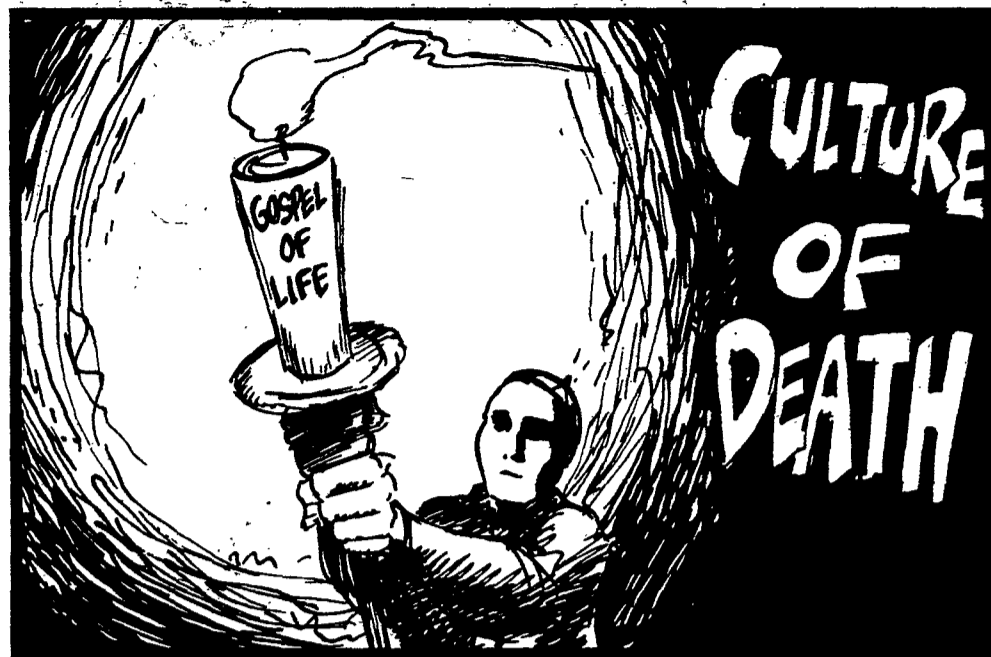
I recently attended the Symposia on Native American issues, which was (publicized) in the *Catholic Courier*, and had all of my inherent convictions confirmed! They are truly a "spiritual people!"

I wondered to myself if we would ever have succeeded in claiming this land if it were not for the large numbers of colonists and superior war machinery at our disposal. I am so disillusioned with our "white supremacy" — a joke for sure — that I hope the Good Lord finds a way to return this land to those who see themselves as privileged to live upon it and as "custodians" of the magnanimous gift of the Creator.

One thing is for sure — they do not wish to be assimilated into the great American melting pot! Bravo! They are not the ones with an "identity" crisis. They know who they are, what they believe and will not compromise. When is the last time we, as individuals, held fast to our principles without rationalizing mediocrity?

Although we did everything we could to literally exterminate 20 million American Indians — calling them "savage" — and failed, they live on clinging to a faith which is as beautiful as it is true. The similarities between their beliefs and Roman Catholicism — when it is truly and purely practiced — is what will "resurrect" their way of life again. You can not murder Love. It was tried 2,000 years ago. Just a small "tribe" of believers survived, but they managed to witness to the Word and we clearly hear His voice today.

Living for others, survival and nurturing of each human being as brother and sister of the "Great Father" — Oh! if only we held as "fast" to what we preach as our Indian brothers and sisters! When I view the mess we all have made of our



planet — Mother Earth — politically, socially, economically, spiritually environmentally, I do weep the same tears as our Indian brethren. Will altruism ever replace "profit and power" as the motivating force behind all human action — or are my dreams as nebulous as the return of the great "Buffalo herd?"

I am impressed by the patient wisdom — definitely not a "white" characteristic — of these original Americans, by their humility and unflinching sense of "self." They struggle daily against white control,

the threat of cultural extinction and the challenges posed by poverty. Still they do not lose their pride. Hopefully, they will not lose their unity.

Someday we will read our history in relation to these Native people written by them and through their eyes. The shame we will experience will be the chiasm that baptizes us into true "blood brothers." Let us heed the whisper of these "Native Voices" for they speak for all humanity.

**Evelyn Dodd
Pittsford**

Catholics embrace suffering as Christ welcomed the cross

To the editors:

In her pre-Holy Week column, Sister Patricia Schoelles claimed that (1) suffering is to be resisted as a force in the world that happens against God's will; and (2) Jesus was "not committed" to suffering, but endured death on the cross only "when it became clear" that this was necessary. The Catholic Church teaches to the contrary on both points.

Pope John Paul II opens *Salvifici Doloris*, his 1984 apostolic letter on the

Christian meaning of human suffering, by quoting the famous declaration of St. Paul that "in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church" (Col. 1:24). The Holy Father notes that by these words, St. Paul meant to help others understand the salvific meaning of suffering. Observing that through the Redemption Christ has opened His suffering to man, the Holy Father indicates that in a certain sense, those who suffer repay the infinite price of the passion and death of Christ. In the words of St. Paul, we are "heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8:17).

Thus, the Catholic who is serious about his or her faith will embrace suffering, not resist it. As Dietrich von Hildebrand points out in his book *Transformation in Christ*, suffering has acquired an entirely new meaning through Christ. What was merely an inexorable consequence of original sin before the sacrifice of Calvary now has the character of fruitful penance and purification. Although we need not seek for suffering, Dr. von Hildebrand states, we must welcome in love the cross that God sends to us.

The proposition that "Christ did not always possess the consciousness of His Messianic dignity" has been condemned by the Church (Syllabus Condemning the Errors of the Modernists, n. 35). The Risen Lord upbraided the two disciples on the road to Emmaus for not understanding the Scriptures: "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things before entering into his glory?" (Lk. 24:26). As Pope John Paul II states in *Salvifici Doloris*, there were many messianic texts in the Old Testament which foreshadowed the sufferings of the future Messiah. The same Son of God who took up the scroll containing Isaiah 61 in the Nazareth synagogue and said that he himself fulfilled it (cf. Lk. 4:16-22), knew equally well that it was he who was the Man of Sorrows depicted earlier in Isaiah (Is. 52:13-53:12), who would be "wounded for our transgressions (and) bruised for our iniquities." We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

**John F. Wagner Jr.
Lark Street, Rochester**

Superior clarifies AQ questions

To the editors:

Will you allow me to provide your readers with elements of a statement I prepared for concerned Aquinas parents and friends?

1. Two questions seem to concern friends of Aquinas. The first is the perception that the announcement of Mr. Patrick Hanley as Aquinas' inaugural President is a first step toward the inevitable withdrawal of the Basilian Fathers from the school.

2. This perception is not true. No decision has been taken or even envisaged by our General Council to leave our service to the school.

3. What is true is that in the future there simply may not be enough qualified Basilians to provide Presidents or Principals for all six American secondary schools we presently serve. In this regard the Aquinas Institute is in exactly the same situation as all these other schools.

4. Naturally, Basilians hope we can make adequate numbers of Basilians available to Aquinas even though pressure on our numbers is increasing. Certainly no decision has been made to leave Aquinas or any other American school.

5. The Basilians, at both the General and local levels, have contributed our own voices to discussions about the future of Aquinas. Now we seek to support the Board of Trustees in ensuring that the decisions made are fruitful and continue to promote the good of the Catholic education available to Aquinas students.

It is essential for everyone involved to realize that the Basilian Fathers serve the Board of Trustees and seek to help them discharge that ultimate responsibility for

the school which the Trustees themselves bear on behalf of the Catholic community in Rochester.

6. The second question is the perception that the Board of Trustees has pressured the current Principal, Father (Denis) Noelke, to leave the Aquinas Institute. Again I can say plainly that this is not true.

7. Common Basilian practice encourages senior administrators to move on when new administrators assume responsibility. This allows the new officer to work more freely. Moreover, I myself told Father Noelke that I would give him the freedom to decide for himself what to do. Father Noelke has made his own decision that he thinks it best to serve elsewhere in the apostolate of our Congregation, and I have told him I will accept his decision.

8. Let me repeat what I said in the earlier press release announcing the appointment of President Hanley. "The aim of the Basilians at Aquinas will continue to be that of serving the good of the students at the school to the best of our abilities and of enhancing the influence of Catholic education in the Catholic community of Rochester."

I would like to add my personal view that for any Basilian to serve young people is an enormous privilege, not a right or entitlement of our own. It is an honor for any Basilian to collaborate with all who dedicate their energies and their lives to Catholic education.

**The Very Rev. Robert Barringer, CSB
Superior General
Congregation of St. Basil
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