

## 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.

## Readers respond to movie 'Priest'

## To the editors:

As a Catholic with a passion for theatrical films, I couldn't resist the temptation to see "Priest," a movie that has been labeled as highly controversial. It has always been my opinion that I should see a movie, before making premature judgments as to whether or not the content is blasphemous. In the past, I have viewed such controversial films as "The Exorcist," "The Last Temptation of Christ," and "Jesus of Montreal."

While there were indeed some disturbing elements in each of these films, there were also some redeeming qualities. In "The Exorcist," I was inspired by the Rite of Exorcism which was used in the film under the guidance of actual priests. The theme of good over evil was a predominating theme in this film, which made up for shortcomings of the story. "The Last Temptation of Christ" was admittedly difficult to watch in parts, but it offered some intriguing views of Christology — namely, the human and divine attributes of Christ.

As I entered the Little Theater on April 19, I couldn't help to notice the protesters across the street. Since this was the opening night of the film, the protesters had obviously not seen it, so I felt like inviting them into the theater in order for them to have some objectivity to their views.

When the movie was over, I was admittedly disturbed by two graphic homosexual scenes, but was otherwise moved by the compassionate way two difficult subject matters were handled. In the first circumstance, the film emphasizes the difficulties some priests have with the celibacy issue. A strong point is made by a senior priest to the effect that Christ did not demand celibacy as a condition for his apostles; this is a requirement that came about many centuries later in the Church's development.

The portion of the film with the most impact for me has to do with the Sacrament of Reconciliation, formerly known as Confession. In the film, a young girl comes to Confession and tells a priest of

continuing episodes of incest with her father. Shortly afterward, the father comes for Confession and tells the priest how much he enjoys having incest with his daughter. The priest, horrified, was torn between honoring the secrecy of Confession and his desire to help the girl get out of her terrible circumstances. In a very dramatic scene, he pleads before a Crucifix and asks Christ what he would do under such circumstances. Although he ends up honoring the secrecy of Confession, he was tormented by the fact that he was unable to reveal what was happening to this little girl. At the end of the film there is a beautiful reconciliation between the priest and the girl, which leaves with the impression that somehow things worked out.

In the final analysis, "Priest" is not for everyone. However for those with inquisitive minds, the film does indeed provide sufficient material for group discussions.

Raymond A. Crosswirth  
Academy Drive, Rochester

## Movie makes case for prayer

## To the editors:

I saw the movie "Priest" the other day. It certainly is not a great movie; the main characters all seem to be caricatures. Yet I would not call it a bad movie; it presents a powerful story of forgiveness and reconciliation. I suspect the movie would be abhorrent to all those who place their priests on pedestals, considering them to be blameless, sinless, all-knowing, workers-of-wonders. I suspect the movie would be painful for all those who consider priests to be "other Christs."

I do not consider myself to be a "blameless, sinless, all-knowing, worker-of-wonders." I consider myself to be a flawed, sinful human being who tries to share with my parish my love for Jesus Christ, my love for the Church, and my love for them. Sometimes I fail. I need often to be forgiven.

I do not consider myself to be "another Christ" at all times during my priesthood; many times I see myself — and I am sure my parishioners see me — as another Peter or Thomas or even Judas. "Another Christ" becomes visible at the "peak moments" of my priesthood — and those "peak moments" may not even be visible to me.

I do not recommend "Priest;" it may be too shocking and a scandal to some. But I do recommend ongoing, fervent prayer for all priests, that we may continue to serve God's people faithfully and well despite our tendencies to be very human and sinful — like Peter, Thomas, and Judas.

Rev. Robert L. Collins  
St. Thomas More Church  
East Avenue, Rochester



Tom Wilkinson (left) and Linus Roache star in Antonia Bird's 'Priest.'

## Challenges USCC rating

## To the editors:

The Disney owned Miramax movie "Priest" received a rating of A-IV-for adults, but with reservations, by the USCC Office of Film and Broadcasting (*Catholic Courier*, April 13).

Such a classification leads one to wonder what elements a film must violate to warrant a morally objectionable-condemned rating. Surely "Priest" justifies a condemned classification for its blatant anti-Catholicism and depiction of the priesthood as an institution of depravity, with the tenets of Catholicism as the causative agent. Compounding the griev-

ance is the USCC's evaluation that "any movie which treats the Catholic faith as seriously as this one can hardly be said to be anti-Catholic, let alone irreligious." Incredible!! To portray the character priests as a homosexual, an alcoholic, an adulterer, a psychotic and a malevolent is a flagrant distortion and a rank insult to the dominant dedicated, loyal, faithful to their vows priests who truly represent the Catholic clergy.

This Catholic would expect the USCC and the NCCB to be as vociferous as Mrs. Judy Brown of the American Life League, Dr. William Donohue, President of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights and Dr. Howard Hurwitz of the Family Defense Council, in their condemnation of this offensive film.

With reservations?? Spare us O Lord.  
A.J. Annunziata  
Holiday Drive, Horseheads

## Catholics becoming 'wimps' to detractors

## To the editors:

Last Wednesday, I joined the picket line in front of The Little Theatre, protesting the showing of "Priest."

I was appalled at the small turnout. There were about 90 picketers, including only two identifiable priests. Considering the area's Catholic population of both lay, and religious, the turnout was discouragingly meager.

Inasmuch as it was the Catholic Church in general, and Catholic priests in particular, that were the subject of this scurrilous attack, I wonder what it would take to arouse our diocesan leaders. Is it that we have become so sophisticated and "broadminded," that we think it unworthy to publicly protest?

As long as we're willing to lie down and play dead, our detractors will be happy to accommodate us. I hate to say it, but I think we Catholics have become wimps. Shame on us!

John Fedick  
Saddleback Trail, Rochester

## Prayer discovered at concentration camp offers 'thread of sanity' amid violent acts

## To the editors:

While doing research I came across this prayer written in the midst of the horrors of World War II. In the aftermath of the Oklahoma City trauma, perhaps it may offer a thread of sanity to which we may cling as we work our way through this tragedy and the debris of other acts of violence as well.

(Originally) found on a piece of wrapping paper, near the body of a dead child in Ravensbrück Nazi Concentration Camp, (it is) quoted in Martin Israel, "The Pain That Heals," p. 113.

Mary Carol Wall  
Avoca, N.Y.

## For Men of Violence

O Lord  
Remember not only the men and women of good will but also those of ill will.

Do not only remember the suffering they have inflicted on us, remember the fruits we brought, thanks to this suffering, our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, the courage, the generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this.

And when they come to judgment, let all the fruits we have borne be their forgiveness.