

Catholic Courier

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Letters Policy

The *Catholic Courier* invites readers to express their opinions on all sides of issues affecting church life through original, signed letters to the editors.

Although we cannot publish every letter, we seek to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions. We will select letters based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree. We reserve the right to edit all letters for length and legal concerns. With respect to errors in the text of letters, we correct spelling errors only.

Mail letters to: *Catholic Courier*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please enclose your telephone number for verification purposes.

'Where the bishop is, there is the church'

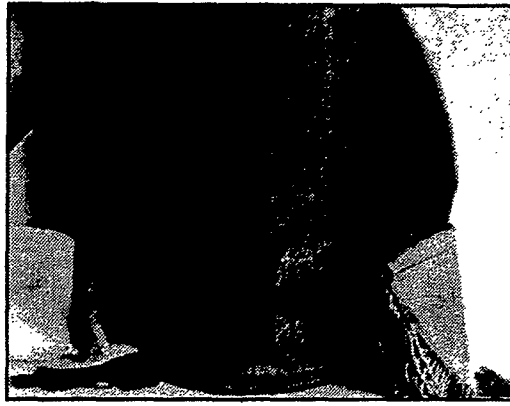
If asked to name their "local church," the average Catholic might proudly proclaim, "St. Mary's" or some other parish.

While the neighborhood parish is a "local church" in the secular sense — that is, a nearby church building — it is not the "local church" to which Vatican II and other theological documents refer. Theologically speaking, the "local" or "particular" church is that collection of parishes commonly called a diocese.

"A diocese is that portion of God's people which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him ... this portion constitutes a particular church in which the one, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative" (*Christus Dominus*, The Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church, #11).

Lumen Gentium, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, stipulates that the individual bishop is the visible principle and foundation of unity in his particular, or local, church. This concept is conveyed in the quotation from St. Ignatius of Antioch used in the headline above. *Lumen Gentium* also proclaims that "bishops have the sacred right and the duty before the Lord to make laws for their subjects, to pass judgment on them, and to moderate everything pertaining to the ordering of worship and the apostolate" (#27).

"For their part," the document continues, "the faithful must cling to their bishop, as



the Church does to Christ, and Jesus Christ to the Father, so that everything may harmonize in unity, and abound to the glory of God" (#27).

Christus Dominus states, however, that "a bishop should stand in the midst of his people as one who serves." The Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops exhorts the bishop to "combine in himself at one and the same time the qualities both of a brother and of a father" (#14).

The bishop is to observe a modest lifestyle and avoid "imperious domination" and "the exaggerated fatherly approach commonly referred to as paternalism" (#34). He must realize that his office is not "a title of secular honor but a heavy burden weighing the bishop down and purifying the episcopal dignity of every stain of worldly vanity and secular lordship" (Conclusion).

This paradox of power and humility is

mirrored by the church's dual nature as a hierarchical yet pastoral organism. The church has long been described as a pyramid, bestowing various levels of power to prelates of various ranks, but it might also be viewed as a circle, in which the greatest is called to serve amid the least (The Roman Pontifical).

Lumen Gentium clearly states, for example, that the power of the bishop is not derivative — that bishops do not serve as delegates of the pope. "Nor are they to be regarded as vicars of the Roman Pontiff, for they exercise an authority which is proper to them and are quite correctly called 'prelates,' heads of the people whom they govern" (#27).

The documents of Vatican II and the Revised Code of Canon Law clearly give "all the ordinary, proper and immediate power which is required for the exercise of his pastoral office" to the local bishop (Canon 381). Yet both reserve special powers to the pope and to the bishops of the world acting in union.

Balancing these two dualities, then, is the challenge Bishop-designate James M. Moynihan will accept Monday, May 29, when he is installed as pastor and governor of the Church of Syracuse. We send him our prayers and heartiest congratulations as he assumes this mantle of service and authority.

EDITORS' NOTE: This is the first in a series of monthly editorials, written in consultation with the paper's Editorials Advisory Panel.

Violence is not answer to tragedy

To the editors:

The Oklahoma City tragedy has understandably outraged people to the point of demanding imposition of the death penalty on persons convicted of the bombing.

At its May 16 meeting, the Diocesan Public Policy Committee discussed appropriate and timely diocesan response to the public outcry. The consensus was to urge and facilitate use of ongoing public debate as another teachable moment in forwarding Consistent Life Ethic advocacy.

The committee has called on pastoral leadership to address in homilies, bulletin inserts and special convenings the issues of violence, and the violence of state-sanctioned killing.

We would also urge all people of faith, who are striving to be consistent in their respect for life, to reflect personally and communally on these questions:

- What is an appropriate way to work through the valid, emotional anger we may feel toward those who committed this crime?
- How should the lens of a Consistent Life Ethic influence our view?
- What can each of us do to promote nonviolence in our community and society?
- And on the question our U.S. Bishops posed in their pastoral "Confronting a Culture of Violence":
- How do we teach the young to curb their violence when we embrace it as the solution to our social problems?

**Rev. Michael J. Bausch, chair
Diocesan Public Policy
Committee
and Jack Balinsky, director
Diocesan Catholic Charities**



CFC thanks parishes

To the editors:

Since the inception of Catholic Family Center's Refugee Resettlement Program, numerous parishes have partnered with us to provide essential resources and services for new arrivals to our city. Their help has enabled us to assist thousands of refugees and their families.

Until a few years ago, many parishes provided hands-on resettlement assistance to these refugees. In a recent interview with the *Courier*, a CFC Resettlement staff member commented on the lack of parish volunteer involvement with our more recent resettlement efforts. His statement has been interpreted by some to mean that parishes have not helped with refugee resettlement in the past several years. This is not the case. However, it is true that only one parish, St. Catherine of Siena, has provided resettlement volunteers during the past two and one-half years.

opportunity to express our regrets publicly to any parish that may have been offended by a seeming ingratitude on our part toward our volunteers. Parish volunteers are an integral part of the services provided by many of CFC's 48 different human-service programs. We are most grateful for their ongoing help.

We wish to acknowledge Joan Bouthillier of St. Catherine of Siena Parish for bringing this matter to our attention. Ms. Bouthillier's recent letter to the editor (April 27) chronicled her parish's heartwarming role as a friend to refugees from the 1980s to present. She wrote of the uphill battle facing most refugees. She also showed us many tangible ways in which a group of people can convey Christ's love to those in need.

Thank you for this opportunity to clarify this matter.

Since the inception of Catholic Family Center's Refugee Resettlement Program, numerous parishes have partnered with us to provide essential resources and services for new arrivals to our city. Their help has enabled us to assist thousands of refugees and their families.

**Carolyn A. Portanova
Executive Director
Catholic Family Center**

Geneva school misses Fr. Mura

To the editors:

The loss of Father David Mura has made a profound impact on the lives of the students, faculty and the Board of Trustees at DeSales High School.

Although never "officially" assigned to DeSales, Father Dave was closely associated with the school since 1976. Year after year, Father Dave celebrated liturgies, conducted class retreats, and counseled an untold number of students. Father Dave's association with DeSales started when he was assigned to St. Mary of the Lake in Watkins Glen. He considered himself to be just a few miles "down the lake" from DeSales (Geneva) and just popped in on several occasions. He always wanted to know how he could assist us. When he was transferred to St. Michael's in Penn Yan, he said he was "just around the corner."

Four years ago, Father Dave was invited to be a member of the DeSales Board of Trustees. He responded graciously and was a vibrant contributor. His dedication to his priesthood and to the youth of the Finger Lakes was visible at every meeting he attended. I consider Father Dave to have been one of the finest and challenging Board Members in the past 20 years. Even after Father Dave was made pastor in Rochester, he continued his board membership and commuted monthly to the meetings. In fact, just prior to Father Dave's operations, he completed a series of four weekly retreats for the students.

Father Dave has been a sacrament to DeSales. He quietly gave of himself without counting the cost. Father Dave is deeply missed, but the message he brought to us of the Good News is deeply embedded in our hearts. We love him more than ever.

**Edward J. Tracey, Principal
DeSales High School**