

OPINION COMMENTARY

Catholic Courier

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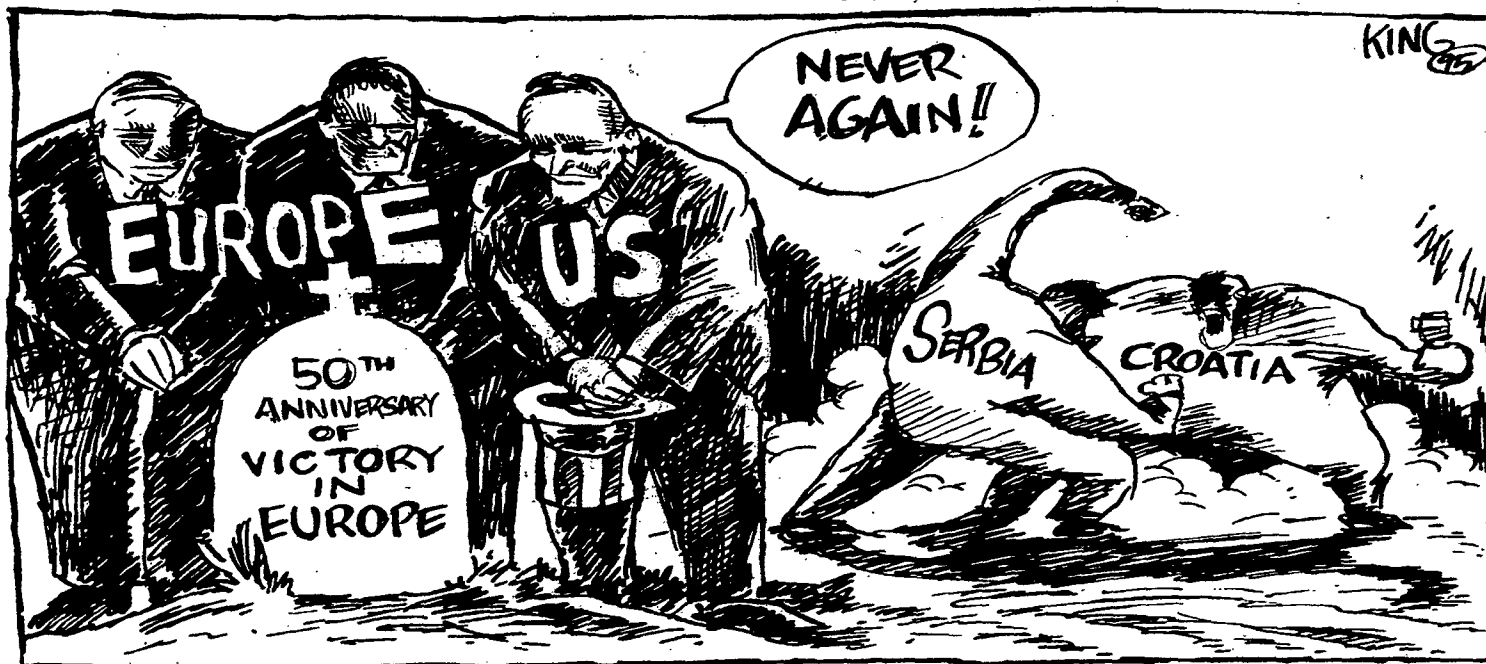
Letters Policy

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.



Boycott spurs convocation debate Women's exclusion did not discriminate

To the editors:

I read with dismay the article in the *Courier* about Father Callan boycotting the Annual Priests' Convocation this year in Auburn. As you can see by my signature, I am a woman and in a leadership role in my parish.

I looked up the word convocation in *Webster's New World Dictionary*, and one of the definitions given — "the act of convoking ... to call together, gather for a meeting." If the Priests' Convocation in Auburn is a convocation of pastors and Pastoral Administrators (not all priests are pastors) and women were excluded, then you would have an argument. It was said that Mary Ramerman, Pastoral Associate of Corpus Christi had requested to attend. If pastoral associates were to be invited, (sometimes Pastoral Associates help prepare Liturgies, and help with adult education.) why not invite Religious-Ed directors, and how about the Liturgy Directors, Music Directors, Parish Visitors, etc. Is one ministry more important than another? As

you can see, this could get carried away.

The bottom line is that the Priests' Convocation should remain just that — for priests. Priests need to get together as a group. The number of priests are dwindling, and that is all the more reason to support each other. This summer I am attending a weeklong seminar for church organists. Would you say it's discriminatory for other church musicians not to be invited? Church organists have certain concerns other musicians don't have and wouldn't understand. Priests have concerns other ministers in the Church don't have and wouldn't understand. Priests need to have the forum to discuss certain issues freely.

Yes, I am painfully aware that at this time women are excluded from ordination, and because of this many are justifiably angry. This however is another issue and should be addressed at another time. But remember married men are also excluded from being ordained priests at this time, (unless converted from another Christian Tradition and

are already a married ordained minister ... again, another issue.) It is not the fault of the priests nor anyone else in this diocese.

I don't believe that Sr. Anne Michelle, Mary Ramerman, myself, or any other woman in the diocese is doing the "work of a priest." We may be doing work that was formally only done by a priest, but we are doing the work of the Church in a designated ministry. We are on equal footing, but not the same as a priest. Though not many feel respected in what they are doing, that is changing and respect for other ministries in the Church is growing. One of my favorite readings is Paul's analogy of the body ... "As it is, God has put all the separate parts into the body as he chose. If they were all the same part, how could it be a body?" (1 Cor. 12:18-20a). We cannot all be priests, nor should we be.

Peggy Szczesniak
Music Director/Liturgy
Coordinator
St. Mary's Church, Genesee

Forum needed for all 'pastoral ministers'

To the editors:

On April 24-27 the priests of the Church of Rochester gathered in convocation in Auburn. This gathering included Basilian, Jesuit, Precious Blood, Redemptorist, Sacred Heart and Diocesan priests. They are involved in education, campus ministry, hospital and prison chaplaincy, the administration of the local church, as well as those who serve in parish communities. There were active priests and those who have retired after long and loyal service to the Church. What we shared in common was the ordination to the Presbyterate, which certainly is a worthy office around

which to gather, to pray and to share.

Sadly, ministerial priesthood is limited as to who can be included. On my part, I have taken every opportunity to speak out about this injustice and would gladly celebrate the inclusion of all "who are called" into the ranks of the ordained. I pray regularly that this change in church discipline might occur in my lifetime, for there is no room for this type of discrimination within the Church. But, discrimination comes in different forms, as was evidenced at the 1994 Priests' Convocation. At that time, selected pastoral ministers were invited to participate in a "one day activity,"

along with the priests. I suspect this process was rewarding to those who were invited. It was however, exclusionary by its nature, to those pastoral ministers of the local church who were left out. Thus, it appears, and rightly so, this concept was eliminated from this year's convocation vision.

What seems to be needed is a forum for "pastoral ministers" to gather. The "Ministry Day" activity may be the logical place. However, I might suggest that a "fixed date" might be established for these days. (Note: Priests' Convocation is always the week following Easter week.) Perhaps the programs should be of better quality and the importance of participation by ALL pastoral ministers (including parish priests) be emphasized. This would allow "pastoral ministers" to assemble, to pray, to learn and to share with each other. Since we live in an age of specialization and see many other professions gathering according to specialty, I do not believe the Priests' Convocation, as it is now, should be sacrificed while we go through the process of discerning a parallel gathering for pastoral ministers.

Many thanks to Bishop Clark, Judith Kollar, Father Edward Palumbos and the Convocation Planning Team for providing priests with the opportunity to gather. I hope it shall continue.

Father Melvin H. Walczak
Administrator
St. Vincent DePaul Church,
Churchville

Priest's logic was 'a little off base'

To the editors:

In a *Courier* article last week (April 27, 1995), it was disclosed that Father Callan, Pastor of Corpus Christi Church boycotted this year's Priests' Convocation because he claimed it discriminated against women.

I admire someone who has the "courage of their convictions," risking the wrath of the "powers that be" for something they strongly believe in. I have found myself in similar situations on occasions.

However, I question Father Callan's reasoning on the statement "that these women do the work of a Priest and share the responsibilities of a priest." Father is a little off base in his logic. The two women he cites as examples, only share

the administrative and pastoral duties (visiting the sick etc ...) of a Priest. They do not say Mass or administer any other sacraments of the Catholic Church. Hence the name "Convocation of Priests." I'd also like to point out to Father Callan, that in my lifetime our Diocese has had four Bishops (the late Bishop Kearney and Sheen), the retired Bishop Hogan and currently Bishop Clark) and two auxiliary Bishops (the late Bishop McCafferty and Bishop Hickey) and I can honestly say that none of them has been more sensitive and outspoken about the role of women in the church than Bishop Clark.

Alan Rector
Flower City Park
Rochester