

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.

Encyclopedia has ideological bias

To the editors:

As fate would have it, I recently received as a gift a copy of the Harper-Collins "Encyclopedia of Catholicism" edited by Father Richard McBrien. Your readers may recall Father McBrien's glowing review — reluctantly written, so he tells us — of this book in his *Courier* column of June 15. In that review, he claimed two outstanding features for his encyclopedia: 1) it is comprehensive and 2) it is free of ideological bias. With a copy of the encyclopedia now at hand, I have put these two claims to the test.

There is certainly some validity to the first of these claims. The book is impressively comprehensive for a single-volume work, covering everything from "abbess" to "zucchetto." The claim of ideological neutrality, however, is another matter.

Beginning with the list of contributors, I find it odd that Father Charles Curran — identified by the Church as someone who could "no longer be considered suitable or eligible to exercise the function of a professor of Catholic theology" — should be asked to write entries for of all subjects "birth control" and "moral theology." Can a man who lost his teaching position because of his views on sexual

morality give us an authentic Catholic position on these two topics?

It is also interesting to note that in the entries on "consequentialism" and "proportionality" no reference is made to Pope John Paul II's *Veritatis Splendor*, even though this encyclical deals specifically with these two moral theories. Is one to conclude that the Pope's view on these two topics is unworthy of mention?

Ideological bias may also be detected in the encyclopedia's biographical entries: Who is included and who is left out? In Father McBrien's book we find that: Father Hans Kung, whose canonical mission to teach Catholic theology was withdrawn by the Church, is included, but Bishop Christoph Schonborn, general editor of the new "Catechism of the Catholic Church" is left out; Leonardo Boff, former priest of liberation theology fame is included, but Michael Novak, 1994 recipient of the Templeton Prize in Religion is left out; Sister Teresa Kane, who confronted the pope on the women's ordination issue during the 1979 papal visit is included, but Sister Rose Mary McGeady, the courageous successor to Father Bruce Ritter at Covenant House is left out; Father McBrien himself is included, but Dr.

Ralph McInerney, distinguished Catholic intellectual and director of the Jacques Maritain Center at the University of Notre Dame is left out. This doesn't strike me as an ideologically free selection process.

The manner in which space is allotted to those who earn a biographical entry is also revealing. Father McBrien managed to sum up the life work of Monsignor Ronald Knox, renowned writer and Biblical scholar, in just seven lines, but he needed 15 lines to list the achievements of former priest Eugene Kennedy. Would this not strike any unbiased reader as disproportionate?

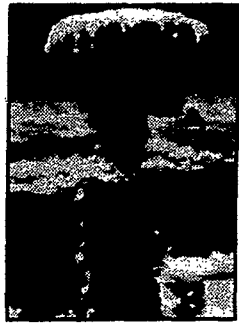
One could go on, but I think the case has been made that the "Encyclopedia of Catholicism" has a definite liberal tilt to it. There is, in my view, an effort here — using "hand picked" contributors for key entries — to bury a "progressive" message among an otherwise informative assembly of Catholic topics. The book is attractively done and, I dare say, useful in some respects, but it must be read cautiously and with a keen awareness that it does not live up to the "ideologically free" reputation its general editor claims for it.

Joseph O'Donnell
Bethesda, Maryland

Has Courier joined ranks of A-bomb revisionists?

To the editors:

I was surprised when I read the *Courier's* lead story in the August 3 edition questioning the use of the atomic bomb which resulted in the surrender of Japan. It appears the *Courier* has joined others who have revised the history of the end of World War II.



There is no doubt that had the bomb not been dropped, the necessary invasion of Japan would have resulted in the deaths of thousands of Japanese as well as countless numbers of U.S. servicemen. I have several friends who were in the military at the time and who were preparing for the Japanese invasion. These gentlemen are convinced the atom bomb saved their lives.

Perhaps Father Heindl who was quoted in another story — which should have been your lead story — said it best: "(the atomic bomb) saved millions of lives, both for the enemy and ourselves. Most of us hated the concept of war, so I can't understand why people are against the atom bomb when it brought the war to an end."

I couldn't have said it better.

David J. Dwyer
Genesee

EDITORS' NOTE: The local story on Fathers Heindl and Heisel deliberately was included to balance our news package on the bomb anniversary. Since the *Catholic News Service* article provided an overall national perspective, it was considered the lead story in the package. Ideally, the story on the two local priests' views would have appeared alongside the start of the lead story on page 1 instead of with the end of that story (page 10), but the use of photos and a map of Japan precluded such a side-by-side presentation.

We did not intend any bias in the story layout and regret if any inadvertently was conveyed.



End of war marked 'happy days' for congregation in Philippines

To the editors:

The 50th anniversary of VJ Day reminds me of a delightful demonstration of meaningful liturgy that I witnessed in the Philippines on that day in 1945.

In our camp on Luzon, some 30 miles north of Manila, I learned that a VJ Day Mass of Thanksgiving was to be celebrated in a church in the nearby city of Angeles.

This was long before concelebration so I gathered with the large congregation of mostly women and children, the men still being away in service. There were no pews in the church so we spread ourselves out on the floor.

At the consecration when the celebrant elevated the host and the chalice a

native band in the vestibule belted out "Happy Days Are Here Again!" After all those people had endured this was indeed liturgically meaningful.

Father Raymond G. Heisel
Mother of Sorrows Church
Mt. Read Blvd.
Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: A week after mailing the letter above — and following the Aug. 10 publication of several letters responding to the prior week's communal cup story — the ever-wary Father Heisel added this postscript:

"To qualify for space on the Letters Page, perhaps it would have been well to note in August 4th letter that during the VJ Day Mass in the Philippines the Communion Cup was not passed."

Spirit, not clothing, make the worshiper

To the editors:

This letter is in response to Ms. Florence Goodwin's concern of the way people dress at church (*Catholic Courier*, Aug. 3: "Eucharistic ministers set tone for style of Mass attire"). I can remember the days when church was a place for women to show off their finery — their furs, jewels. It was a real fashion show! As a child in the '60s, going to Catholic school, I was heavily reprimanded by the nun for wearing pants to church in the dead of winter.

Mercy! Heaven help you if you forgot your hat. The days of repression and pretentiousness are over. Has it occurred to anyone that struggling families don't have the money for nice new clothes. Food and shelter take precedence over the real reason we are there — to worship, to pray and thank the Lord for his blessings. He doesn't see our clothes but our spirit.

Diane DeLille
Marne Street, Rochester