

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.

Priests *should* be viewed differently

To the editors:

This is regarding the guest commentary by Father Edward L. Palumbos in the July 27 issue of the *Courier*: "Why are priests viewed differently?"

"Wow, you look just like one of us today." Like Father Palumbos, those words kept rolling around my head for days also.

Biologically, priests are no different than any other human beings. They have feelings, emotions, strengths and weaknesses, just like all human beings. Priests become different from us because they are chosen by God; they have been set apart; they are the Lord's anointed. They are acting, as Vatican II put it, "in persona Christi."

Our Lord's death on the cross reveals to us His supreme love and total giving of Himself. End of chapter? No, thanks be to God. It is the ordained priest, and he alone who represents Christ during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. For it is through this celebration that we commemorate the Last Supper and Christ's death on Calvary and we give thanks and remember all that God has done for us. It is the Breaking of the Bread for "all who eat the one broken Bread, the Bread of Life." Christ changes us into Himself so that we become one body with Him. This sacred function could not be without God's chosen one, an ordained priest.

When we have sinned — offending God and His people and the Church — we need to open our hearts to another person. That person is the priest, ordained by the Church to represent Jesus, from whom we can ask for God's forgive-



ness. Jesus gave the priest the power to forgive sins. Jesus said to His disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you, receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." The successors of Jesus were His disciples and through the centuries the bishops and priests continue His work.

Yes, I do view a priest differently from other human beings. After all the priest represents Christ on earth... Priests should be no different today than yesteryear. The Church has not changed, but some leaders have, and perhaps this is where the problem lies. Humanity was always a precious gift given to all priests. How else did they touch the hearts and

lives of so many people. Perhaps the demands and expectations placed upon priests are superhuman and unreal, but maybe priorities are in the wrong place. First and utmost obey the Pope, the Vicar of Christ, and follow his teachings and God's laws. Cease to make so many changes and most importantly save the souls of your people.

When reading Father's comment about wearing sports clothes because of the hot weather, it brought back memories of my mother. As a child, there were always times when I preferred doing things my way or not at all. My mother had a beautiful expression, "offer it up for the poor souls in purgatory." Today I am older and wiser and still remember what my mother said, and when life's difficulties arise, I offer my prayers and sufferings for the poor souls. Perhaps if it is a hot day, Father can wear the Roman collar and offer his discomfort for the poor souls in purgatory or for someone else who needs his prayers. After all, the wearing of the Roman collar is the repeated ardent desire of Pope John Paul II who feels that it is a powerful way of "keeping God's presence in a secular city." This is further substantiated in Canon Law 284.

Priests are very special and deserve the greatest respect and reverence... Thank God priests are not "just like one of us."

Astrid H. Smallenburg
Brookdale Park
Irondequoit

EDITORS' NOTE: To comply with space limitations, a lengthy passage from a "Prayer for Priests" (circa 1905) and a statement by St. Gregory of Nyssa were deleted from this letter.

Agrees with dentist on revising practices

To the editors:

I write in support of the letter from Walter C. Ervin Jr., regarding the hygienic implications of utilizing the Communal Cup and of the practice of having the same Communion Minister distribute the hosts both on the tongue and into the hand. As a physician, I find his arguments exceedingly compelling and his recommendations should be adopted as soon as possible. For 40 years, I have wondered why our Church has not made these changes. In informal conversations with other Catholic physicians, I find that they too have misgivings about the current practices but

hope that somebody else will do something about it.

God gave us intelligence to use. We can not demand miracles from God. Two writers on this same topic in your August 10 addition seem to imply that God will temporarily suspend the natural transmission of viruses and bacteria during the distribution of Communion! Another writer would accept suffering meningitis were it contracted through current Communion distribution practices "as the will of God." I do not believe for one moment that God expects her to suffer such a penalty.

God expects us to take reasonable

care of ourselves and to utilize new information as it becomes available. It is no insult to God, the Church, or Tradition to adopt the changes recommended by Dr. Walter Ervin.

I completely agree with him when he suggests "an alternate line of Communicants for those willing to share saliva with others." That one phrase pithily summarizes the entire problem. The risks are small, but they are not negligible and this situation should have been corrected before now. Count me in Dr. Ervin's line.

John A. O'Sullivan
Stone Road, Rochester

We must follow path on which Holy Spirit guides

To the editors:

In response to Dr. Ervin's letter of Aug. 10 on contamination of the Eucharist:

As a retired Public Health Nurse, I am concerned that his influence may turn people away from Holy Communion. Whether on the tongue or in the hand, the host is still the Body of Christ, the miraculous gift to empower us to be like Jesus — that He may be one with us. Sanitation does not enter the picture.

As Eucharistic Ministers, we do come to church washed and presentable and disposed in the Spirit to help serve the divine Lord. Any disturbing ritual requiring frequent washing during the service denies the sacredness of the host. We cannot contaminate the Eucharist; it is never contaminated. Even if we make every effort to sterilize the presentation, nothing short of frequent changing of surgical gloves would suffice. And isn't this a far departure from the Last Supper where Jesus simply broke the bread and distributed it with those memorable words?

I am grateful for the guidance of the Church in these matters. You hear people say about receiving Communion on

the tongue, "We've always done it this way, as we were taught. Why should we change?"

The Church is a vital, growing, ever-renewing body of God's people, led by the Holy Spirit in journey to God's kingdom; it does not stand still. Al-

though dogma does not change, routes of travel are shaped by the wise discernment of the Holy Spirit. And we should be girded in unison to continue the journey under His guidance.

M.V. Brown
Elmira

Cannot believe Savior would permit harm through receiving Him in Holy Eucharist

To the editors:

In response to those who feel that there is a danger in the present method of receiving Holy Communion under both species, the Host and the Cup, it is the Holy Eucharist that we are receiving, that is, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; and we have been receiving His Body and Blood ever since He instituted this sacrament in the year 33 A.D. at the

Last Supper; that's 1962 years ago!

Do these people really believe that our Savior would allow anyone to be harmed in any way through the valid reception of the sacrament which He Himself instituted? I don't believe a change from our present reception of Christ's Body and Blood is at all necessary.

Joseph Beirne
Baty Street, Elmira

Notice to readers:

This is the second installment of letters in response to our article on health considerations and the Common Cup. Since little more can be added by way of theology or science, we will reject any subsequent letters on this subject.