

OPINIONS

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.

How do you judge nonjudgmentally?

To the editors:

Father Richard McBrien's column in the September 21 *Catholic Courier* began with a lecture about those individuals, who he views as unwilling to compromise on the difficult moral issues facing the church today, and are therefore, responsible for conflict in the church becoming even more bitter. Divisive issues which the church needs to compromise on, according to Father McBrien, include homosexuality, clerical celibacy, abortion and birth control. In this context he introduced Cardinal Bernard Law.

According to Father McBrien, Cardinal Law has behaved uncharacteristically compassionately in response to a priest who came to him with AIDS, requesting that Cardinal Law say his funeral Mass. The cardinal not only agreed to the priest's request, he offered to care for him in the cardinal's own residence. He showed the kind of unquestioning love that Jesus taught us through his life and death for us. Cardinal Law asked for no explanations, he did not care how the disease was contracted and he said so. He did his Christian duty as

he has done it many times before.

It is to be appreciated that Father McBrien has finally seen the good in the cardinal, but it is very disturbing that he imply that this is unusual and a charge for Cardinal Law. One can only infer that Father McBrien does not think that someone whom he describes as conservative and loyal to the Vatican can act with compassion. To liberals, forgiving is not something that conservatives do. It is the preserve of liberals like himself.

Aside from being praised for his "uncharacteristic" compassion, the cardinal also receives praise for being non-judgmental. There is no evidence that Cardinal Law had to suspend judgment in order to offer his love to this man who was in need. In this and other writings by Father McBrien it is clear that he views nonjudgmentalism as one of the virtues. The manifesto that it is always wrong to judge is unavoidably a judgment in itself. Contradictions abound, of course, as Father McBrien's article is full of judgment as is most of his writing.

In truth, we all must make judgments constantly. In the October, 1994 issue of *First Things*, Jean Bethke Elshtain's essay

"Judge Not?" questions the ideology of nonjudgmentalism. Requiring that we avoid judgmentalism, according to Elshtain, obliges us to stop forming moral judgments altogether and denies the very existence of a universal standard for judging whether an act is moral or immoral, good or bad. Elshtain states further that "The evacuation of the very capacity of judging would spell the end of the human subject as a self-respecting, accountable being."

The requirement that we stop judging is, of course, not only dangerous but impossible as well. To stop judging is to stop thinking, to stop forming opinions. Those who have accepted the nonjudgmentalism of a morally relative society have a great deal invested in their acceptance of this ideology, so much so that they seemingly do not recognize that even the statement "One must not be judgmental" requires that they make a judgment. How ironic it is that a man who professes the ideology of nonjudgmentalism could judge Cardinal Law so unfairly.

Patricia Klass

Mile Post Lane, Pittsford

Clean up church before chastising business

To the editors:

I'd like to respond to the fear of the two priests who questioned the implications of the Wegmans 25 million dollar gift to the Catholic school system in the Oct. 19, 1995, edition of the *Catholic Courier*.

We've all heard the expression that you should be careful not to bite the hand that feeds you; and I feel that this expression applies to the hand of the Wegmans more than any others.

First, in reference to the critique of some aspects of their business practices, it should be emphasized that the Wegmans operate a business and not a charity. If they'd failed to succeed in their business, their failure would have also failed others, in the prospect of some inner-city Catholic schools having to go out of business without their gift.

Second, I've never heard of a business surviving by keeping unprofitable stores open. That responsibility, that of providing food to those with no transportation, is in no way the responsibility of the Wegmans. Catholic Charities has done a superb job of trying to meet that need; and with more people following the Wegman example in contributing more to more Catholic institutions, Catholic institutions could do more, so that the real needs in the inner cities might be met by something other than unreal expectations as to business practices.

Third, the assertion was made that the Wegmans have blocked their employees right to unionize. In reference to this last point, I'd like to include my own experience as an educator in reacting to the less



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Robert Wegman speaks to reporters at an Aug. 22 press conference at Holy Rosary School announcing a \$25 million gift to Catholic schools.

than tolerant policy toward unionization in some Catholic institutions. I've never worked in a Catholic institution in this diocese, so I cannot speak to the issue here; however I have worked as a professor in a Catholic college in another diocese. Unfortunately, as in many non-Catholic private colleges, unionization was blocked there, and it continues to be blocked in other Catholic institutions.

At the prior unnamed educational institution, the right to unionize was dismissed as secondary to the religious order's primary duty to "serve the poor." The refrain from the employees and professors, in particular, was that the administrators' vow of poverty seemed to be a

vow to keep all of us poor. Accordingly, I removed myself to a state university system wherein unionism was still respected.

I admire what the Catholic school system has accomplished in having graduated from Catholic schools through the university level; and I admire what the Wegmans have done.

I would suggest that before any of us look for any speck in the business eye of the Wegmans, we, as Catholics, turn our sight to removing any vestiges of anti-unionism in any of our Catholic institutions.

Dr. Edward Ryan

West Water Street, Elmira

Fearful fathers should further, not fight, philanthropy

To the editors:

It was incredible to me to read in the *Catholic Courier* last week (Oct. 19) the letter written by Fathers Tracy and Miller. Maybe their cynicism comes from their experience that the Catholic community is not known for their philanthropy. They just couldn't believe someone such as the Wegman family could be so generous.

The Wegman family must have an alternative motive for doing this!

Those of us that have lived in Rochester can remember when Wegmans was a small company compared to the competition. They had 10 stores in the early 1950s. One competitor had 26 and another over 40 stores. They "drove" the competition out by giving customers the

highest quality service and products.

The results of their success is they became the area's third largest employer. They do not run unprofitable stores. That isn't what they are good at. They share their profits with the community. More than we can say for some recently bought out Rochester companies.

Unfortunately, it is more popular to criticize success than praise it. Fathers Tracy and Miller should personally thank the Wegman family for what they are doing for Catholic education in the inner city parishes. They should be promoting philanthropy, not trying to stifle it.

Donald S. Cameron

Lake Lea Road

Rochester

It's strange to see strings where none are tied

To the editors:

A strange and muddled way to say Thank You for a substantial gift for the future of our schools, Fathers Tracy and Miller appear anxious to encumber that

which Mr. Dwyer eloquently portrays as an unencumbered treasure to the support of Catholic Schools.

Joseph P. Leahey

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