

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

©1995, Rochester Catholic Press Association.

1150 Buffalo Road
Rochester, NY 14624
716/328-4340

President

Bishop Matthew H. Clark

General Manager/Editor

Karen M. Franz

Editorial Department

Associate Editor

Lee Strong

Copy editor/Staff writer

Kathleen Schwar

Finger Lakes

Staff writers

Rob Cullivan

Genesee Valley

Mike Latona

Southern Tier

Staff Photographer

S. John Wilkin

Business Department

Circulation Manager

Jeanne A. Morin

Office Manager

Mary DiPonzio

Administrative Assistant

Lenna Hurley

Advertising Department

Advertising Director

Ray Frey

Sales Representatives

Ivan Ramos

Ron Granston

Production Department

Graphic Designers

Kim Parks

Amy Sundstrom

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 letter writers' opinions.

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.

Priest, pastoral assistant earn praise

To the editors:

As the Thanksgiving-Christmas season comes each year, I remember thankfully the wonderful priests and nuns who sacrificed so much to give their time and talents to us and our parish. The meaning of these holidays cannot be separated from these good, heroic people. The list of names would be endless; some have gone on to receive their rewards and some remain still giving.

Without meaning to omit any, I would like to acknowledge with gratitude my pastor, Father Bruce Ammering, and Sister Margaret Rose, his pastoral assistant. On sultry, hot, or bitter cold days Father is always in the confessional on Saturday afternoons, waiting for the two or 20 who come to receive God's forgiveness. He spends endless hours visiting the sick and shut-ins, whether or not they are in the

parish.

When a terrible accident left him hospitalized several years ago he made arrangements so that the Mass schedule at Blessed Sacrament would be continued until he returned. His generosity knows no bounds. He traveled 75 miles along Route 104 in February to be at my mother's funeral Mass. Financially he has given of his substance to individuals in need. He not only supports the Supper Program to feed the hungry, he works there. He can also be found selling Christmas trees, sorting items for the Next to New Sale, or sitting over a cup of cocoa with a 7-year-old at parish functions.

He shares stories about his growing-up days in St. Monica's or his visits to an elderly person who has recently died, but in all of these he honors those who

touched his life. Among these people he remembers Monsignor Connors and has initiated special memorial services for priests, nuns and families of our parish. His profound love for the Eucharist, his patient cheerful temperament, his huge heart, and dedication to the priesthood that he obviously loves, are a gift to me and my family.

Sister Margaret Rose, SSJ, who spent most of her life as a wonderful teacher, now has dedicated her service to our parish. Her patience, kindness and love for the Eucharist are exemplary. Like Father Ammering, she is ever humble and puts all emphasis on Christ. Both of them show their love for Christ by example! I thank God for them and the many others who show us The Way.

Margaret M. Finucane
Canterbury Road, Rochester

Applauds dialogue over 'same-gender love'

To the editors:

I am heartened by the continued dialogue (Nov. 16) regarding the church and same-gender love. Father Robert Collins' call for "...thoughtful, prayerful reading (of Scripture) with an open mind" is the best answer to some readers' discomfort of the very idea of fostering divergent

opinions among the people of our church.

Regarding sinful actions, the Scripture does not seem to support any kind of relativism about the weight of one sin over another. But the compassion of Christ's teaching requires us to also focus on easing the suffering of our neighbor and the downtrodden. The physical violence that grows from intolerance, or the apathy in the face of a spreading HIV virus, can never be morally justified by someone's perception and reaction to another person's sin.

I chose the phrase "same-gender love" to emphasize Father Collins' comment about the harm of assumptions and generalizations. There are individuals reconciling their sexual identity among our brothers and sisters, co-workers or fellow students, professionals, teachers, and even clergy. None of us chose who we are, and God asks us to strive to find the best in ourselves. For some with divergent sexuality this call is answered by celibacy; but for those who have found like-minded partners to express their love — who has a right to make assumptions and generalizations about what they cannot even see, inside their neighbor's bed-

room? Also, the very concept of the "homosexual" as a kind of person rather than a kind of activity is a very recent construct of Western thought, one that squeezes people into categories and thwarts attempts to reconcile our sometimes disparate sexual motivations "hard-wired" — in my opinion — by our genetic inheritance.

Further, I am skeptical of our willingness to pick and choose from Leviticus, while not reflecting on the conspicuous absence of homosexual condemnation in all of Christ's lessons. I gently request that the young man who is so certain about the infallibility of the church remember what a rebel Jesus was in striking down assumptions and stray dogma in the Temple of those times. He might reflect on the suffering of some of his fellow teens, some of whom struggle for acceptance of an identity where "Truth" is far from certain, both in Scripture and in their own lives. Mankind is infinitely fallible and only reflection, tolerance, and most of all, love, will deliver any kind of peace to our communities, both inside and outside the church.

Thomas Steedle
Bay Street, Rochester

Church is clear in condemning homosexual acts

To the editors:

I am perplexed by Father Collins' question to me in the Nov. 16 *Courier*, since it had no relevance to my letter. I made no assumptions about persons living together in community. I agree with Father Collins that assumptions can do great harm. Therefore, as he suggests, how about prayerful thought, with an open mind, on the following: Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:10; 1 Timothy 1:10.

Father applauds the Lopatas choice of positive Church teaching and then chastises nameless others for their selective use of documents to support their opinions and ignore those with which they disagree. However, the Lopatas left out two entire paragraphs of Catechism which include the hard teaching that calls us all to be chaste according to our state in life. If anyone really wants the whole truth, they should read all three paragraphs in the Catechism.

I do not believe that the Church needs to grow in tolerance. This would imply that the Church is judgmental. It is not. It teaches, as it must, the whole truth, as a loving and merciful Mother would do. False compassion is not unconditional love. It is in fact harmful. All the theories regarding the genetic origins of homosexuality do not and never will change God's teaching. Homosexual activity is always morally reprehensible. God is our Creator and He knows our nature from the time we were in the womb. God is always in the Present. There are no limitations on God's word. The truth does not depend on what scientists or any other finite minds may discover at some future date.

God gives us the Plan that He knows will make us happy. Only if we choose to follow it, will we have peace in this life and eternal happiness. God does not require further knowledge to make new rules for the 21st century. He already knows all there is to know about human nature.

Catherine M. Lennox
Princeton Road
Webster

Group concerned about omission of pastoral associate from staff list

To the editors:

The Pastoral Associates' Association of the Diocese of Rochester wishes to express our concern over the omission of the Pastoral Associate's name from the staff listed in the profile of the Church of the Transfiguration (*Catholic Courier*, Nov. 9).

Perhaps many are unaware of the scope of a Pastoral Associate's training and responsibilities. Although job descriptions vary according to the person's gifts and the needs of the parish, it is fair to say that our job is parallel to the parochial vicar, except for that which is specifically reserved to the ordained. We make hospital calls and home visits, do spiritual direction, pastoral counseling and retreat work, give homilies, lead prayer services, call forth and train lay volunteer ministers, engage in faith formation at many levels — for example, coordinating the RCIA process, developing and running programs such as marriage preparation — often have budgetary and supervisory responsibilities, and cover for the pastor on his day off.

Pastoral associates are professionals, required to have a Master's degree in theology or its equivalent. To place this in context, at the present time, the permanent deacons in our diocese are required to complete course work for the MA in

theology; priests normally earn the Master of Divinity degree. Most of the Pastoral Associates have the MA in theology, and a number either have completed or are working on the M.Div.

Ours is a role of pastoral leadership — one of the few open to women, given the current restraints. Most, but not all, pastoral associates are women. In light of our synod goal to promote the dignity of women in church and society, the exclusion of the Pastoral Associate from a staff listing is a particularly offensive denial of the value of women in the church. We hope that you will be more sensitive in the future.

Executive Committee

Pastoral Associates' Association
Deirdre M. Hetzler, president

EDITORS' NOTE: Four of the staff members Church of the Transfiguration in the Official Diocesan Directory were omitted from the parish profile "Snapshot" box. The text noted that the "Snapshot" listing was not inclusive. The omissions were made due to space limitations alone, and should not be interpreted as any sort of statement about the value of the individuals or ministries omitted. We regret that Pastoral Associate Barbara Swiecki was among those omitted, and that deadline pressures did not permit us to rearrange the page in order to include all of Transfiguration's staff.