

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 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.

Ambiguity of column is dangerous

To the editors:

Our country is rotting in immorality. According to recent studies, in the last generation alone, abortions have increased over 600 percent, sexually transmitted diseases over 900 percent, illegitimacy over 700 percent, and divorce over 350 percent. Violence, up over 500 percent, has taken over neighborhoods. The sleaze and filth coming into our homes via television is unbelievable. Our schools have become unbelief with drugs and weapons. Students seem to have lost the definition of right and wrong. Our judicial system is letting hardened criminals free with little or no time.

Meanwhile, Sister Patricia Schoelles, President of St. Bernard's Institute, writes a column in the *Catholic Courier* called "The Moral Life." What a tremendous opportunity to promote Godly virtues and values, and encourage the Judeo-Christian morals that hold our culture together. However, when I recently read Sister's column on October 19, titled "Being a U.S. Catholic has 'uniqueness,'" I was very disappointed. Sister's message only seemed to add to our problem of immorality, by painting a picture of moral confusion.

Sister explains that it is not adequate for Americans "to simply 'export' from Rome a single solution to moral and social problems..." She believes that Americans (live in a society that) "cannot sur-

vive without tolerance. Thus, we are often unsure about how to oppose abortion, for example, when many of the people who comprise society with us disagree with our position. And those who disagree on this question have the right to disagree."

She believes we could respond to issues of disagreement with absoluteness and uncompromising moral certainty. She states, "Historically, it has been an admirable strategy in formulating authentic responses to moral issues... (However,) we live in a nation with a strong commitment to moral pluralism, compassion and majority rule. The reality of our situation includes a kind of 'moral ambiguity' that is characteristic of any pluralistic society."

Sister concludes that "we need to accept the fact that moral pluralism is part of the democratic way of life" and "it is not enough to proclaim absolute posi-

tions on moral issues. We need also to search for ways to be tolerant and compassionate in the face of differing positions, and to engage in a complex political process that requires compromise and a recognition of moral ambiguity."

Doesn't all this sound a little confusing and dangerous? How can moral ambiguity and moral pluralism ever be applied to our morally sick society! At a time when our society is in grave need of moral principles, guidelines and definition, Sister's preaching a wishy-washy, anything goes, marshmallow morality. There is no absolute right or wrong anymore; everything is relevant. For Sister to preach moral ambiguity for America, is like throwing a drowning person a rock!

Michael McBride

Fillingham Drive, Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: Parenthetical phrases have been inserted to correct quotations from Sister Schoelles' column.

Appreciated column's look at clericalism

To the editors:

Thank you to Sister Patricia Schoelles, SSJ, for providing the people of this diocese with such a fine column. It is a consistent beacon of theological clarity written in a manner that respects the readers while informing us on important issues to Catholics.

In particular, I am most grateful for her recent column which touched on Americans' proclivity to clericalism, a grave affliction which eats away the church's vitality from within. Indeed, we hear so many voices these days that urge "defending" the Catholic faith from external threats, as if this most deleterious internal condition did not even exist.

Priests and women and men religious have reason, with Sister Patricia's column, to celebrate. You see, each of us, embracing our baptismal call to ministry, has entered a particular form of service to the people of God, but none of us assumes that we would be the only ones expected to carry out the vast ministry of our church.

Thankfully, there are Catholics who have recognized the call to ministry inherent in their baptism, and have taken up their part of the work of the church. Let no one be fooled: these people are not "temporarily filling in" or "just helping Father"; they are legitimately exercising ministry. But not enough people have heard a clear message about their own baptismal call to ministry, and so they assume that the church is the private domain of priests and religious. Such an assumption is a formula on the one hand, for overwork and burnout on the part of priests and religious, and on the other hand for frustration and spiritual torpor on the part of the rest of the baptized. Surely, we do not desire this.

Thanks, and congratulations to Sister Patricia Schoelles and to the *Courier*! Keep up the good work!

Father Paul F. English, CSB
Fairport Road
East Rochester



'Silly' personality theories remind reader of self-absorbed 1960s, '70s

To the editors:

I read with some amusement the *Courier* article on MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) and Enneagram formulas for identifying personality types (Dec. 14: "What's your type? Personality theories offer guides for spiritual growth").

It brought back memories of the '60s and '70s when I thought I could "find myself" through the arbitrary but oh-so-fluid philosophies and prescriptions of astrology and the like. All these years later, I still occasionally feel the effects of all that self-absorption.

We do indeed need "tools" to direct our meditation and contemplation, and wasn't it brilliant of God to provide ab-

solutely perfect ones? We have His grace to provide the sense of freedom we need to explore; His Word to give concrete, absolute standards to measure our musings against; His Holy Spirit to provide the intuitive-level guidance so necessary to fullness of truth; and His love to reassure us he is present through it all, and to help us channel the wisdom he provides on out to our brothers and sisters.

"Tools" such as MBTI are not evil, just a little silly when measured against the complete program for spiritual growth already authored by God.

Sandra Dunn
Mattie Street
Auburn

Former victim describes abusive patterns, reminds Catholic community of obligation to recognize, understand domestic violence

To the editors:

(This is) my response to the coverage of the Oct. 16 conference on domestic abuse (*Catholic Courier*, Oct. 19: "Churches called to aid abused women").

Living with domestic violence becomes a way of life. Control issues are daily, sometimes very subtle. The abuser is "always right." It is not a onetime frightening argument, punch, or occasional tension. Life goes smoothly for a while; things seem quiet. Then, as always, domestic violence escalates. It never gets better. I know. I lived in such a marriage almost 20 years.

I couldn't "just leave" because I hoped he would stop hurting me, that it would be the "last time." I didn't want to rock the boat — we had children, family, friends and a house and were very active in our parish and Catholic school!

We all have an obligation to recognize, not judge, this issue. When the victim denies any abuse, it helps the domestic violence to continue. When we as a church deny abuse, it helps the ignorance to continue — and it is a "way of life" for some people!

Donna M. Carson
Winchester Street, Rochester