

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

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1150 Buffalo Road
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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.

People merit priority over profits

"TRW to leave Union Springs." That was the headline in the Jan. 26, 1996, edition of Auburn's daily newspaper, *The Citizen*. The newspaper reported that TRW's departure will cost Cayuga County 420 jobs.

That translates into hundreds of people looking for new jobs. The announcement by TRW, which operates an automotive-electronics plant, came on top of several others. In January, we learned of job cuts at Bausch and Lomb, Inc., Rochester Gas and Electric Corp. and Rochester-area Ames Department Stores.

And those announcements followed layoffs in recent years at Eastman Kodak, Xerox, IBM and others.

Business analysts say U.S. corporations laid off nearly a half-million people in 1995 alone. These displacements have a ripple effect, tearing at the lives of workers' families and of the broader community.

Families may be forced to relocate, or learn to live on reduced incomes. They often face severe economic and emotional stresses. Sometimes, they crumble under the pressure.

Local businesses lose customers and may, in turn, be forced to reduce the sizes of their own staffs.

Meanwhile, insecurity grips many the workers who have retained their jobs — at least for now.

The causes of these layoffs are complex. They include factors native to a free-market economy: competition, demand fluctuation, inflation and normal risks associated with doing business.

In such cases, layoffs are easier — if no less painful — to understand.

But all too often, displaced workers pay the price of poor decisions made by managers who are protected by lucrative "golden parachutes" and other devices. Volatile stock trading,

meanwhile, creates pressure for short-term results in favor of long-term prosperity for shareholders and employees alike.

Even worse, workers often are thrust aside as companies move to locales where they can find cheaper labor or as part of a quest to increase profits above "normal" levels.

In other words, profits are more important than people to many corporate executives. And sadly, some of those executives are Catholics.

Catholic social teaching clearly denounces such priorities. In pastoral letters and encyclicals, Pope John Paul II repeatedly has proclaimed the rights of people above profits. And, as our cover story notes, this year marks the 10th anniversary of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' efforts to influence our nation's economic life through their pastoral letter "Economic Justice for All."

"The challenge of this pastoral letter is not merely to think differently, but also to act differently. A renewal of economic life depends on the conscious choices and commitments of individual believers who practice their faith in the world," the bishops wrote.

"Every economic decision and institution," they declared, "must be judged in light of whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person."

In 1986, some economic experts criticized the bishops for being naive, oblivious to market dynamics or for interfering in other people's "business."

Some of these criticisms may be partly valid. As events of the past decade have shown, however, the bishops were prophetic in predicting grave social consequences if our economic priorities were not revised.

These past 10 years have shown that faith must play a role in the work place.

Otherwise, we all pay the price.



Christ offers compassion and challenges

To the editors:

Would a doctor be a good doctor if he had compassion for his patients but did not provide them with the medical help they needed because the procedure was painful to them or because it was a difficult procedure for them to go through?

Would a judge be a good judge if he had compassion for their children as they struggled with difficult choices but did not teach and advise them of right and wrong for fear they might alienate them?

Would a priest be a good priest if he had compassion for sinners but was unwilling to teach them the truth of the Gospel as revealed by Christ through His Church because the teaching was hard to accept and he was afraid that they would choose to turn away from Christ and His Church?

I offer these questions in response to the letters to the editor in the Jan. 18 *Catholic Courier*. In order to support their positions, three of four contributors present an incomplete view of Christ by touching ONLY on His compassionate side. They conveniently avoid the fact that along with His compassion, Christ challenged each sinner to change their ways and to sin no more. When we attempt to break Christ and His teachings apart to justify our individual lifestyles, we will only end up with a distorted view of the reality of the truth.

Most of us — me included — have a great deal of difficulty accepting and/or living out the challenges of Christ and His Church. This does not, however, change the compassion that Christ and His Church feel for us. It also does not change the fact that we remain sinners and must continue to go to Jesus through

the Sacraments to be forgiven and to obtain the grace necessary to strengthen our resolve and to live a more perfect Christian life.

Each of us, especially those responsible for the spiritual development of others, has the moral responsibility to practice true Christian compassion and at the same time challenge ourselves and others with the truths taught by Christ through His Church — no matter how difficult those truths are to live out!

Can any one of us honestly say that the

cross that we bear by accepting and living out the truths taught by the Catholic Church is heavier or more difficult to bear than the cross that Christ bore when He willingly embraced His own passion and death for our sake? So let's stop the moaning and whining as we courageously pick up the cross that we have been given by our loving Father. It's what we, as true followers of Christ, are called to do.

Michael A. Gallagher
West Church Street, Fairport

Present church's moral teachings

To the editors:

I am prompted to write by the Jan. 11 letter of Mr. Michael McBride ("Ambiguity of column is dangerous"). I also have been disappointed to see the promotion of moral ambiguities at a time when the moral clarity of the Gospel is so obviously needed. Many Catholics, especially young Catholics are seeking to commit themselves to the Lord in a deeper way and are searching for clear presentations of Church teachings. We are often reminded of the importance of freedom of conscience but we are less often reminded that we must work to form and educate our consciences correctly. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that when faced with difficult moral decisions we must, "... always seek what is right and good and discern the will of God expressed in divine law" (#1787). As Catholic Christians we have a responsibility to form our consciences in accord with Church teaching and should not be led to believe that in certain situations

objective moral evil is acceptable. Pope John Paul II in *Veritatis Splendor* reminds us, "The Church has always taught that one may never choose kinds of behavior prohibited by the moral commandments expressed in negative form in the Old and New Testaments" (#52). *Veritatis Splendor* and the Catechism are excellent sources for one to look to when seeking the clarity of the Catholic Church's authentic moral teaching. The Church's high moral standards should not be seen as discouraging but should rather encourage a greater trust in the mercy of God. The Lord certainly will bless us if we strive, despite our failings, to follow the clear moral precepts of the Church. I join my voice to others in commending those lay teachers, priests, and religious who remind us of our dignity as sons and daughters of God by clearly and unambiguously presenting the moral teachings of the Catholic Church.

Robert Pokalsky
Salem Court, Fairport

Priest's 'tired old thinking' proves inconsistent with Jesus' example

To the editors:

Father Robert Collins article, "Pastor's attempt to stir dialogue produces just 'tired old thinking'" (*Catholic Courier*, Jan. 18) seems to produce more of his tired, old thinking. Why does he use *The New York Times* as a role model for Catholics and refer to Catholics who follow the teachings of the Magisterium as "Pope-quoters?"

The teaching body of our church does not condemn the homosexual — it con-

demns the act or manifestation of homosexuality. In Father Collins' article, he asserts "let gypsies (people who rob travelers in Rome) be gypsies. It is good for gypsies to be gypsies." He makes it clear that as long as you can be whatever you want to be, we should accept not only you as a person, but condone and even think favorably of your actions. This is not consistent with the life of Christ. Jesus despised the sin, but loved the sinner. If one were to expand on Father Collins litany,

we would have to say, if you are a rapist, continue to be one; if you are a thief, continue to be one; if you are a racist, continue to be one; etc., etc., etc.

The Catholic Church loves the homosexual but cannot condone behavior that is contrary to the teachings of Christ regarding conjugal love; no more than it could condone adultery or fornication for the heterosexual.

Rita B. Sartori
West Clinton Street, Elmira