

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.

Recommends reading on spirituality

To the editors:

Members of the St. Bernard's and Certification for Ministry faculties were always willing to recommend quality material on spirituality during my diocesan training. I would like to pass on that blessing. So, I recommend the following works to *Courier* readers whose interest in everyday spirituality was piqued by Sister Schoelles' column of Jan. 18 ("Spirituality is for everyday people").

The first is *Finding God at Home: Family Life as Spiritual Discipline* by Ernest Boyer Jr. (Harper & Row). Boyer is an excellent, down-to-earth writer. He identifies and joins two different approaches to spirituality: the desert spirituality of contemplatives and the spirituality of everyday concerns. The title of the third part of this book, "Childcare in the Desert," resonated with a close friend of ours who, like many of us, struggles to find spiritual fruits while living the day-to-day grind of family life. To promote adult group study, Harper's publishes a leader's guide to accompany this energetic, well-crafted and delightful book.

Spirituality for Everyday Living by Brian C. Taylor (The Liturgical Press), an adaptation of the Rule of St. Benedict, is a 70-page practical resource for people who want to seek God while trying to balance

their commitments to family, work, study, and relationships.

Many of us would welcome a refreshing look at how faith can help to relieve the stresses that touch people's everyday lives. *Spirituality, Stress & You* by Thomas E. Rodgeron (Paulist Press) offers an encouraging look at stress as a wake-up call to taking a closer look at our lives and our spiritual health.

Two Jesuits, William A. Barry and Thomas Green, a native of Rochester, have published several excellent volumes on prayer and spirituality. *Finding God in All Things: A Companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Ave Maria Press) is Barry's very useful book, offering a fresh approach to finding God in everyday life. The author offers valuable hints on how to enjoy Jesus, uses good literature to make several key points, and encourages us to use our imagination to benefit our relationship with God. Barry's more recent work, *What Do I Want In Prayer?* (Paulist Press) uses biblical insights to help the reader bring their deepest desires into the act of praying. Green presents his own guide to personally encountering God through the Ignatian Exercises in *A Vacation With the Lord* (Ave Maria Press). Spiritual directors often offer one of his earliest works, *Opening to God* (Ave Maria Press), to those

who are just awakening to a need for a closer relationship with God.

For those interested in the role psychology plays in spiritual development, Dr. Robert Wicks offers *Living Simply in An Anxious World* (Paulist Press). Here, in this very down-to-earth and very readable primer on spirituality, Wicks teaches us to reflect on the way we think, use our imaginations, serve others, and experience God through our emotions. He helps us fashion a spirituality in response to God's most basic call — to love.

Many men are sure to enjoy Patrick Arnold's strongly positive book on men's spirituality, *Wildmen, Warriors, and Kings* (Crossroad). Here, Arnold gives contemporary men new insights on masculine spirituality and the Bible through the stories of Elijah (the wildman), Moses (the warrior), and Solomon (the king). *The Wild Man's Journey: Reflections on Male Spirituality* by Richard Rohr and Joseph Martos (St. Anthony Messenger Press) offers a challenge to all people who want to tap into "male energy" and develop the spiritual potential to change.

I hope this small sample of works proves helpful. For further works of interest, consult your parish staff. I am sure they will be willing to help.

Deacon Brian Mahoney
Walworth

Express view on programs

To the editors:

This letter is in response to the Feb. 1 article on TV Programming ("Tuning out on marriage: How much does TV programming weigh on our attitudes and beliefs?").

Scientific studies now conclude that it isn't a question anymore of whether or not TV is harmful, the question now is, to what degree? The National Family Foundation Media Workshop stated, "TV that models socially valued behavior, responses, attitudes or beliefs is TV used to best advantage." We are becoming a society that is desensitized to pain, suffering, sickness and even death.

Studies have shown that children cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality and don't know where to draw the line. Seeing violence on TV, they accept it as normal behavior and believe there really is much more violence than there actually is. They exhibit more fear, apprehension and mistrust. The study concludes that when people become accustomed and hardened to violence from seeing too much of it, they could be less likely to respond to real violence.

Sex and violence on TV comes, not in 30 second clips to promote a brand name, but in all lengths and forms. The messages are just as powerful: "Use violence to solve your problems." Sex and violence are glamorized while the negative consequences of long jail terms, unwanted pregnancies, divorces, sex addictions, sexual diseases, death by AIDS are all underplayed, and rarely mentioned. Poisoning by the media is even more harmful than poisoning by cigarettes or saturated fats, because it destroys not just individuals, but culture and out of culture comes behavior.

Decency and humanity in the media lies in the realm of ethics and morality. In that realm, law and regulation are not as powerful in shaping behavior as the combined voices of individual citizens expressing their view. Public opinion can be changed, people can be rallied and culture can be changed for the better. It all starts with YOU!

Joyce Cavanaugh
Director of CAN DO
Auburn



Driver was 'angel' for her daughter

To the editors:

December 24 was the Fourth Sunday of Advent for the Christmas season just past. I was scheduled as Eucharist Minister at the 8 a.m. Mass, a privilege that I am in awe of having been raised in a Catholic tradition which allowed only the priest to touch the host and the communicants to receive only on the tongue.

Decorating the church for Christmas could not be accomplished until after the Sunday Masses were finished and the Advent season complete. So I returned to the church at 11 a.m. to help in this endeavor. Many hands made short work and a sense of community grew. By 4 p.m. I was back at church with family to celebrate our Christmas Eve Mass. Again, I was Eucharistic Minister. As I said the words, "The body of Christ" and placed a host in each waiting pair of hands, I was overwhelmed with the eagerness in the eyes of each believer as they received the bread which united them body and soul with the child born this night.

On the same Christmas Eve, my youngest daughter, Peggy, was traveling in a rental car from Boston to Rochester. She'd had to work until 4 p.m. and, wanting to bring home her 6-month-old Elkhound puppy, bus or plane travel was out. Along Interstate 90, still three hours from home at 10 o'clock that night, her rental car broke down. The alternator had failed. She waited but no one stopped. The State Trooper she'd stopped to talk with five miles previously did not check on the frightened young

woman traveling alone with dimming headlights.

Finally, a car passed, stopped and backed up. Another young girl traveling along to Buffalo stopped when she saw a woman in distress. Instead of bringing Peggy to the next service area, Tracey brought her, her dog, her Christmas packages and luggage right to our door and then went on her way for an additional hour's ride. Most people, on hearing the events of that night, remark that God had sent an angel to help.

The Christmas story is full of angels. The word itself means messenger. It was an angel who brought Mary the message that she would bear a son through the power of God. It was an angel who told Joseph about the baby, and that he should trust in Mary. It was an angel who told the shepherds that a savior was born in Bethlehem.

Tracey was an "angel" as we use the word casually now when we praise someone's kindness. But she was not a messenger. In her, I felt the fulfillment of the eagerness in the eyes of my fellow parishioners as they received "the body of Christ." As we share in His body, we are called to be "Christ for one another." Tracey was Christ for Peggy that Christmas Eve, Christ for her waiting family, the Christ we all strive to be as we reach out our hands to hold the host and consume His body and become one in His love.

Judith Skelly
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