

# 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.

## Evangelism thwarted by family feuds

### To the editors:

Blocking the path to evangelism for the Church are legions of folk within the congregations of the Diocese. Their patterns of folk behavior block the evangelistic thrust of the Church Militant in the Diocese.

Ignorance and illiteracy are concomitants of folk life. On neither ignorance nor illiteracy does the Church either thrive or grow.

Family groups feuding with each other and with the world in general for generations replicate a folk pattern which comes into the Church and unfortunately finds root with us within the social relations of parish life.

We know these groups also by the term "small groups." For ecclesiastical purposes, let's call them "family groups." In their ignorance do such self-serving groups feud, refusing to see beyond their own members so as to effectively spread the Gospel both within the parish community itself and the world outside the Church. Not from various Christian Communities, but from the Church.

How would any such vindictive groups come to exist within our Church? By individuals of these groups making sizable donations to our financial needs, these people become the recipients of a temporal indulgence. And being indulged, their patterns of folk behavior, though challenged, do not change.

In contradistinction to ignorance and illiteracy, to folk life itself, is the truth that Reason and Faith are not dread adversaries. However, Reason most definitely is a dread adversary of Ignorance. Ignorance, deplorable Ignorance, we long ago have identified as an appendage of folk life.

And so, in this case, we can see why the folk do not ally themselves with profound evangelism by the Church as they receive the gospel in a parish. Their patterns of folk behavior do not sanction their spreading the gospel to those outside their folk groupings.

The folk tradition of the Jewish people, by way of comparison, was steeped in religious practices. Through the Pharisees, these religious practices — the traditions of Jewish life — carried the weight of folk custom. Ironically, in the process of conformity to the traditions of religious law, the Jewish people of Jesus' day were disregarding the spirit of those laws; their hearts were elsewhere, definitely not with the inner spirit of divine law although these Jews were devout, indeed scrupulous in religious practices.

In Mark 7:9 we see that the Jewish people of the time were concerned firstly with their folk tradition, and only secondarily with the will of God. The pointedness of the passage is that these Jewish folk traditions were centered on scrupulous behavioral adaptation to religious law. Behind the facade of their religious piety, however, their hearts were not reflecting the love of God, but rather were significantly at odds with that love. In verse 13 of Mark 7, the Lord rebukes them: "You nullify the word of God in favor of your traditions that you have handed on." In verse 8 lie hearts at odds with the love of God: "You disregard God's commandments but cling to human tradition."

Folk life takes root in the soil of tradition. Through our Lord, however, we learn the dangers of tradition.

**W.G. Beene**

**Rock Beach Road, Rochester**

*EDITORS' NOTE: Mr. Beene identified himself as a parishioner at St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Irondequoit.*



## Distortion of Scripture calls for reaffirmation of witness

### To the editors:

Sister Patricia Schoelles was right to question my playing fast and loose with the term eyewitness (*Catholic Courier*, Feb. 15: "Facts often usurp truth"), but only insofar as Luke is concerned. Even in his case, he received the truth from those who bore eyewitness to it.

We cannot compare such incidents as the Kennedy assassination to the ministry of Jesus when discussing the relative merits of eyewitness accounts. In the former, we are speaking of an historical event whose consequences are temporal. In the latter, we are speaking of eternal life or death for all mankind. There was no room for speculation when the foundations of the Church were being laid. Nothing but the absolute truth would do, and this was accomplished by the Holy Spirit bringing "all things to their remembrance." Thus the words of the Gospel writers are validated by God

through His Holy Spirit to be truth and not mere fact.

God does indeed reveal truth in stories and poems and a million other wondrous ways, but the discussion here concerns the often distorted interpretations contemporary scholars give to the Gospels. When it is implied that miracles described in the Gospels may or may not be true, when absolutes are compromised through the influence of contemporary theological thought, when the Gospels are transformed from a witness of the truth to an expression of the truth, then their inspired and eyewitness status must be reaffirmed.

I don't mean to paint all scholars with the same brush, but it's becoming very apparent that many possess knowledge yet lack understanding.

**Sandra Dunn  
Mattie Street  
Auburn**

## At any point in baby's development, abortion is both tragic and criminal

### To the editors:

Authorities are investigating the suspected illegal abortion of a fetus from a woman believed to have been in her seventh month of pregnancy, according to *The Buffalo News*. A physician had aborted a fetus that was 29 to 31 weeks old. In New York state aborting a fetus more than 24 weeks old is a felony.

Abortion cannot be justified at any stage of an unborn child's development seeing that life begins at conception. Science tells us that when the 23 chromosomes of the sperm unite with the ovum's 23 chromosomes, a new 46-chromosome cell is formed. When this process — fertilization — is complete, a new human being exists. It has been med-

ically proven that the baby's heart starts beating from 14-28 days after conception. By the 30th day almost every organ has started to form. Brain waves can be read by 43 days. By eight weeks the baby has his very own fingerprints and is capable of feeling pain. At 12 weeks the fetus now sleeps, awakens and exercises its muscles energetically — turning its head, curling its toes and opening and closing its mouth — and by 16 weeks the ears are functioning.

Majority of the unborn child's development takes place before 24 weeks, which makes abortion not only a felony but also a tragedy.

**Dianna Richmond Ives  
Simpson Road, Rochester**

## Project cancellation is blow, not death knell

### To the editors:

It is true that the cancellation of the Bull's Head/St. Mary's Project is a blow to the short-term revitalization of the Bull's Head Neighborhood (*Catholic Courier*, Feb. 22: "Hospital, MCC ax Bull's Head development"). Nevertheless, Ss. Peter and Paul Church, a mainstay of the area since 1843, continues to foster personal and economic growth in this west-central city neighborhood. Our outreach ministries range from Head Start/Day Care which provides schooling for 68 children, to St. Peter's Kitchen that serves over 1,500 hot meals a week.

We are very excited about the near future when the adaptation of the church

building will be completed. Then, we will be able to offer an interactive, secure, handicapped-accessible space to nonprofit agencies and neighborhood groups where they can more efficiently work with area residents and each other to address quality of life concerns in Bull's Head.

So you see, the loss of the \$22 million project isn't a death knell. It's a wake up call for us and our neighbors, challenging us to exuberantly go forward in our tradition of good work.

**Mary Seebach  
Director of Development  
Ss. Peter and Paul Church  
Rochester**