

## OPINIONS

## A risky business

## EDITORIAL

## Catholic Courier

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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.

Letters must not exceed 500 words. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable. We reserve the right to edit letters for legal and other concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only.

Mail letters to: Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for purposes of verification.

At some point in the coming years, Pope John Paul II will join his papal forebears in the bosom of Abraham and a new pope will assume the throne of Peter.

Many people apparently would place before that new pope an ambitious agenda. They expect him to change church teachings on such issues as the ordination of women and married people, contraception, abortion and the election of bishops.

Those expectations become clear in conversations among Catholics, former Catholics and even non-Catholics who frequently predict — sometimes with unseemly enthusiasm — that things will change "with the next pope."

The late Peter Hebblethwaite even wrote a 1994 book, *The Next Pope*, in which he explained the process of papal election, discussed some surprise choices over the years, and noted his own speculations about the leading candidates to succeed John Paul II.

He also criticized Pope John Paul II, especially in light of the pope's 1994 letter *Sacerdotalis Ordinatio*, in which the pontiff said women could never be ordained as priests.

Hebblethwaite called the decision "an act of the monarchical, or even imperial, papacy produced without serious consultation on its contents or its 'opportunity.'"

"It is time for a new style," he concluded.

But as history has shown, speculating about the next pope and wishing for "a new style" are often risky exercises.

First, we do not know what kind of a pope will emerge. The cardinals who gathered in conclave in 1958 thought, for example, that they were choosing a safe, interim pontiff in electing Cardinal Angelo Roncalli. Little could they have guessed that "safe" Pope John XXIII's legacy would include the Second Vatican Council.

So Pope John Paul II's successor may well hold views that

differ from those of the current pontiff in ways the next-pope boosters do not even envision — ways they may not like.

Or, given the fact that Pope John Paul II

appointed most of the cardinals who will elect his successor, our next pope may possess views and a style similar to his own. Those who build up expectations about the next pope also risk bitter disappointment.

Such was the case in 1968 when Pope Paul VI released the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. As the document was being prepared over several years' time, many observers assumed that the final product would change church teachings about birth control. A number of people began making personal decisions based on that assumption.

The encyclical had much of beauty to say about marriage and sexuality. But contrary to expectations, it also reaffirmed many traditional teachings concerning birth control.

Because their hopes had been built up, some people became so frustrated and angry that they quit the church. And as various sociological studies have suggested, a significant number of people who chose to remain in the church did so with a new attitude about selective obedience to church teachings.

One wonders if *Humanae Vitae* would have produced such reactions without all the pre-release speculation.

Will more Catholics leave the church or see their faith shaken if the next pope fails to fulfill the expectations being predicted today?

Instead of speculating, it would seem more realistic for those who seek change to pursue their objectives prayerfully and patiently and, when the time arrives, to echo the words Cardinal Roncalli wrote in his diary on learning of Pope Pius XII's death in 1958.

"The Pope is dead, long live the Pope."

## Photo failed to show event fully, honestly

## To the editors:

In response to the Editor's note on the bottom of the Opinion Page June 20th edition of the *Catholic Courier*: Personally I do not expect you to "depict life as one would like it to be," but to truly and honestly show and report events as they occur.

Your photography may be accurate but did not fully depict what happened at Planned Parenthood on May 18, 1996. It did not depict the violence against our unborn sisters and brothers that occurs on a weekly basis inside that "dirty brown house" on University Avenue. It didn't depict the mockery of our prayer vigil by the small group of pro-aborths across the street. It didn't depict their blasphemous speech or their catcalls directed at the clergy — both our guests and local pastors.

We invited the *Courier* to come with us in an attempt to educate members of the Church who can't attend or choose not to attend for whatever reason. You chose to send a photographer and not a reporter and then messed up the caption under the photograph. Your style may be good journalistic practice but did it depict what occurred there? I don't believe it did.

There is no need for you to depict life as I would like it, but please report events as they happen.

Bob Dorscheid  
Aspen Drive, Rochester



## Panel missed point on movement

## To the editors:

Reading the June 20 article on Promise Keepers, I had to wonder how it was that the (U.S. Bishops') Committee on Marriage and Family Life came to their conclusions, namely that what those 70,000 Catholic participants found in Promise Keepers was "a viable and attractive ministry to men."

I would suggest that what they are finding can be located in the preceding paragraph of the article.

I'm in love with my Catholic faith. There is a depth and beauty and mystery in the Church that cannot be found anywhere else. Now, call me evangelical, but my love and respect for the Faith has only been deepened by placing "heavy emphasis on the authority of Scripture," not as it's interpreted by 2,000 conflicting theologians, but straight up, as it was written. It's amazing how a literal interpretation of the New Testament draws us

together in "one mind and one Spirit," strengthening our unity in Christ. Makes you wonder altogether why we'd choose instead the rancor and divisions of scholarly debate.

Not only that, but my faith would be dry and empty were it not for my personal relationship with Christ. Sure it's hard to humble yourself and submit to His will no matter what, but on the other side of that humbling is a joy and freedom that pride can't imagine.

So what is it I'm trying to say? Perhaps those 70,000 Catholic men — and the rest of us out here of both sexes who feel the same — are sending an entirely different message than the one those bishops seem to be receiving. Please don't bless us with more social ministries; give us the unchanging Word of God and lead us, shepherds, to truly know our Lord.

Sandra Dunn  
Mattie Street, Auburn

## Wants to read more about Catholic alternatives to Promise Keepers

## To the editors:

After reading the article titled "Bishops' committee studies Promise Keepers," I realized that this committee wouldn't have to be so worried about what the Protestant evangelicals are doing if they would go ahead and promote Catholic resources already available out there. I learned about St. Joseph's Covenant Keepers when they came to WEWN Catholic Radio in February with the program "Successful Fathering in the 90s" with Steve Wood.

My husband and I listened to a very rel-

evant show on how to be a Christ-centered father in these turbulent times. I wrote Family Life Center International (P.O. Box 6060 Port Charlotte, FL 33949 phone number 1-800-705-6131). They sent me a packet of information which included their eight commitments for successful fathering in the 90s, a current 12 page newsletter and information regarding their upcoming men's conferences.

This information could be presented to new husbands after they get married in the church, or better still, present this material to fathers after the baptism of their

first child?

It would be very helpful if the *Catholic Courier* could explore and write about viable options to Promise Keepers, like St. Joseph's Covenant Keepers or other resources that already are out there.

I would like know from you if and when this is done. In the meantime my family will continue to listen to Steve Wood and Scott Hahn on our short wave radio to keep up on the latest topics related to fathering in the 1990s.

Kathleen M. DeRooy  
Genesee Park Boulevard, Rochester