

# 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.

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.

## Don't seek quick fixes to shortage

### To the editors:

The July 11, 1996 article "Is Sunday Mass a thing of the past?" seemed to be addressing a problem that exists in our local Church by attempting to relieve the symptoms without really getting to the root cause of the problem.

If you were to look at our Church as a Universal Church — as we should — you would see that there is nowhere near the shortage of priestly vocations that we are experiencing in the U.S.A. So what we really have is a misallocation of resources.

The Diocese of Rochester is not an island unto itself but rather a part of that Universal Church. When vocations were once numerous in our area, we sent out missionaries to bring the Word of God and the Sacraments to those who needed it. We are now in a position where we are, or soon may be, sorely in need of good priests and, as part of the Universal Church, we have recourse to the vocations

that are occurring throughout the world. We can, and should, call on the other parts of the Body of Christ to support us during this time of spiritual famine. We are obligated to consider this option first before we begin depriving the faithful in this Diocese of what the Church wishes us to have and what we have a right to — that is, the proper celebration of the Eucharist.

Bringing in priests from other countries would be a temporary relief of the symptoms in one sense, but it would allow us to continue to celebrate the Eucharist as the Church wishes us to while we begin to carefully address the issues that are at the root of this problem.

There are numerous Dioceses throughout the country that have an overabundance of vocations: Peoria, Ill., Alexandria, Va., and Lincoln, Neb., to name a few. We could begin to address our problem by asking ourselves why those Dioceses are so successful in producing voca-

tions to the priesthood! Are we as parents and teachers encouraging our young men to consider the priesthood by supplementing their spiritual development at home and school? Or are we tying up all their free time in sports and extracurricular activities so that they don't have time to hear the call of the Holy Spirit? Shouldn't the Diocese be looking into these types of questions instead of encouraging the laity to assume the role of the priest at the Eucharistic celebrations?

We have become a society that looks for quick fixes to our problems. Let's not make the same mistake in the Church. We need to seriously search for the cause of the shortage of priests in our own Diocese so that we can begin working toward a true renewal in vocations that other countries and Dioceses are now experiencing.

**Michael A. Gallagher**  
West Church Street, Fairport

## Solutions may be unpleasant

### To the editors:

The contrast between the articles on pages 1 and 3 of the July 11 edition of the *Courier* has prompted this letter. Most disturbing were the statements attributed to Father Daniel Tormey about not planning a quiet retirement and being "...open to whatever happened in the next phase of my life..." Anyone reading between the lines would probably think, as I did, that Father Tormey might not have retired voluntarily from his post at St. Mary of the Assumption Church. The possibility that this situation might exist provides an answer to the problem outlined in the page 1 article, "Is Sunday Mass a thing of the past?"

The lead article outlines the difficulties of parish staffing and raises the specter of "circuit-rider priests." This article, along with remarks I have heard from priests in our Diocese, brought several things to mind. First is the mention in the same article of our Diocese having what amounts to a pool of up to 105 priests who are "retired, sick or absent." ... (H)ow many of the retired and sick priests would be available for limited duties in otherwise unstaffed parishes? They could be relieved of the day-to-day administrative responsibilities, but be available for the Sunday and daily Masses, and parish visits.

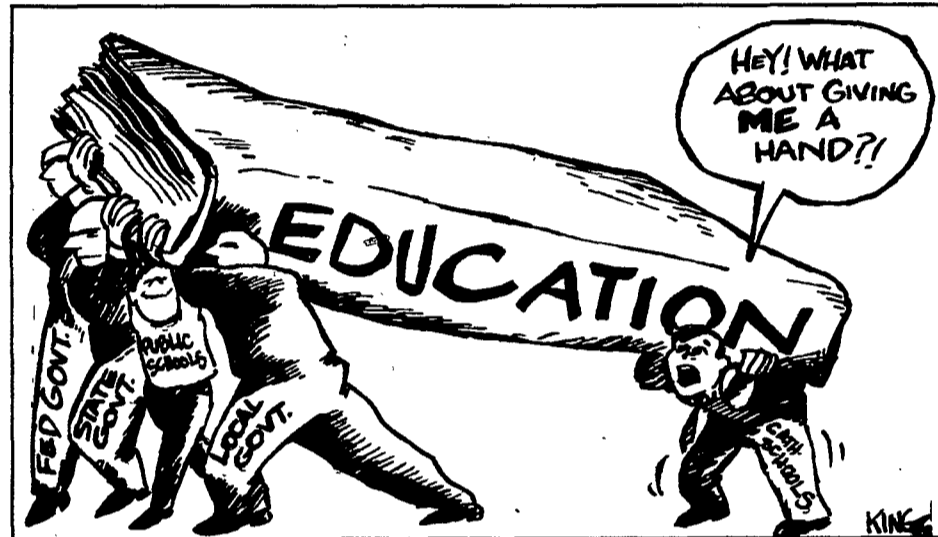
Secondly, in other Dioceses even in New York, it is common for a parish in one town to have a "mission Church" in a neighboring town. In Alexandria Bay, for instance, St. Cyril's Church has a mission at Redwood, seven miles away. I have never heard the pastor at St. Cyril's referred to as a "circuit-rider priest."

Thirdly, I am afraid that Roman Catholics have been spoiled by our own system of rigid parish boundaries. Our brethren in other Christian sects, in the various Orthodox Churches, and even in synagogues, routinely travel across town, city and even county lines... Even parishes in Rochester ... have parishioners from a wide area. Perhaps we should forget the concept of "neighborhood churches" with fixed boundaries. Neighboring churches could coordinate Mass schedules on Sundays as well as on weekdays.

It may turn out that solutions to the vocation shortage may be inconvenient to some, but they exist. We may have to look at retirement age of priests, or attending Mass at a different time, or location; but we can find solutions. "Downsizing" may be a dirty word, but it may also be unavoidable.

**Harold J. Driscoll Jr.**  
Dikeman Road, Pittsford

*EDITORS' NOTE: Father Tormey retired voluntarily. The retirement norm for U.S. pastors would have permitted him to continue for another three years.*



## Church must consider alternatives

### To the editors:

Rob Cullivan's July 11, 1996 feature article poses the question, "Is Sunday Mass a thing of the past?" The answer of course is, "Probably not but ..."

A better question might be, "How will the Catholic Church serve the people of God when there are not enough servants?" While we Catholics must continue to pray for vocations, encouraging young men to listen to and accept the message of vocation that God may be whispering in their ears, the problem of a severe shortage of priests must be addressed in the present.

The pope is driving the Catholic Church toward alternative solutions because he is determined not to yield in his insistence on a celibate priesthood; therefore we are probably years away from the more logical solution of having married priests.

A practical solution was proposed by Msgr. William H. Shannon in his 1994 article for *America* magazine, "No Circuit-Rider Priests Please," as reported in Cullivan's article. (Msgr. Shannon's proposal

is to authorize persons — other than ordained priests — to preside at Mass.

The long held philosophy of the Catholic Church — and rightly so — is that the Parish church is the center of a community of faith. It follows therefore, that the solution to the problem of the shortage of priests must be one that keeps the people within their parish — their Christian Community. The idea of having other than consecrated priests celebrate Mass would assure that continuity.

Although it is encouraging that there has been so much discussion on the subject of the shortage of priests, I believe that it is time to face the reality that since — in the foreseeable future — we will not have enough priests, other persons must be authorized under well defined conditions to celebrate Mass. This course of action must be authorized and prepared for implementation before the fabric and concept of parish communities is nullified by the lack of celibate priests.

**Richard B. Blankfield**  
Nichols Street, Spencerport

## Competitiveness, not love, key to business

### To the editors:

Mr. Augustine's (letter on corporate) downsizing in the June 27 *Courier* is severely flawed.

First, he uses the terms conservative and liberal in the context of the outlook of persons making business decisions. Of course, he makes conservatives the "bad guys." There is neither a conservative or liberal influence. These decisions should be based on the corporation's need to remain competitive.

Secondly, the question about whether to love or make a profit is somewhat irrelevant as it applies to corporations. If a corporation is not profitable, it ceases to exist and everyone is out of work, stockholders — not all of whom are "rich conservatives" — lose

their investment and competition, which helps keep prices down, is blunted.

Compassion, justice, loyalty and love sometimes cause pain for the Christian manager who has to make hard decisions for economic reasons but he or she still has to make the decisions.

It does appear that many companies have downsized when there has been no need. It may be that management wants to impress the stockholders. I think that such action is unconscionable. But, when it is a business necessity conservatism or liberalism have no status; nor do love, compassion, justice or loyalty. Survival drives the hard decisions.

**Michael T. Brady**  
Princess Drive, Rochester