

OPINIONS

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.

Does Dr. Kevorkian offer 'liberty'?

EDITORIAL

Few of the facts are clear at this point.

Judith Curren, a 42-year-old mother of two daughters (ages 8 and 10), and her husband, Dr. Franklin Curren, traveled from their home in Pembroke, Mass., to Michigan. There, on Aug. 15, Mrs. Curren committed suicide with the help of Dr. Jack Kevorkian.

After that, facts fade into claims and allegations.

Dr. Curren claims his wife suffered for 20 years from a combination of the painful muscle disorder fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, depression, and an unspecified immune-system dysfunction. He says she had endured severe pain in recent years, and that her ailments had left her paralyzed and bedridden.

But no one has asserted any of these alleged problems threatened her life. In fact, Dr. Ljubisa Dragovic, the forensic pathologist who performed the autopsy on Judith Curren, said he found no indications of any potentially fatal conditions.

Meanwhile, police documents from Pembroke show several reports of domestic disputes and two arrests of Dr. Curren during the couple's 12-year marriage. As recently as July 26, Dr. Curren was arrested on charges of domestic assault and battery against his wife.

The day after the suicide, news reports said Kevorkian learned about the Currens' domestic problems after the fact, and that he was having second thoughts. But Kevorkian and his lawyer later discounted those stories.

So why did two young children lose their mother?

And how far will this case push the legal limits on physician-assisted suicide?

Initially, Kevorkian and other proponents had argued that physician-assisted suicide be permitted for people with terminal

illnesses. In this case, however, Kevorkian helped end a life because of pain and depression — two highly subjective, non-terminal conditions.

How long will it be before we see the assisted suicide of someone who has severe arthritis? Is grieving over the loss of a loved one? Depressed over the inability to find a spouse? Simply bored?

Are such questions absurd? Not if the history of another life issue offers any indication.

Recall that during the early 1970s, the Supreme Court acted to permit abortions throughout nine months of pregnancy for reasons including the mother's health. Since that time, courts have interpreted "health" to include a broad range of problems, including, for example, depression over an unplanned pregnancy.

This line of reasoning was extended further by the court's 1992 *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania vs. Casey* decision concerning state limits on abortion. In that decision, justices wrote, "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe and of the mystery of human life."

Those words broaden the ruling's societal implications well beyond abortion. And they could readily be applied to the Curren situation.

In light of *Casey*, it could be argued that Judith Curren had a right to define her own "concept of existence" and "mystery of human life." If that definition included ending her life, then the *Casey* decision would see the act as her right and prohibit the government from imposing undue limits on her enjoyment of that right.

So don't be surprised if this death becomes a precedent, opening the door to more legal suicides of non-terminally ill people, all under the guise of "liberty."

Shift to the right

To the editors:

"Informal church attire mirrors shift in society," the headline reads. Is this a shift to be condoned and proud of? One that has nurtured a devaluation of life, a decline in morality, degradation of clean speech, glorification of liars, cheats and crime in general and last but not least, irreverence and indifference toward God our Father who gave us the Ten Commandments, Sacraments, and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Maybe God doesn't care how we dress for Mass attendance, however, we should care how we present ourselves to Him. I'm sure the golfers, after a round of golf, would allow ample time to dress appropriately for a formal wedding or dinner dance. Doesn't God deserve the same at best?

Casual, slovenly attire has spawned a circus/ball park atmosphere at Mass: loud chatter, laughter, gum chewing, eating. This is hardly an atmosphere conducive to prayer, meditation, or just plain listening to God speak to us.

Is it too difficult to give our best and undivided attention to Jesus one hour a week? It's time for the pendulum to swing to the right. Lord help us and be merciful.

Mary Gilardo

Colton Avenue, Newark

Focus on selves

To the editors:

I just wanted to share my input on church attire. Many of us were raised with the notion that you should dress up for church. However it is not an important factor to being a good Christian.

Personally, I do dress up often but there are times when I may not. There are a few factors that determine that. That is why I do not judge what others are wearing. We do not know the reasons for the way people dress, and can it really does not matter.

Does one pray the Mass better if they are in a dress? Does God answer your prayer more often if you are in a dress? If a blind person was at church, they obviously would not be concerned about this. Instead they would be concerned with the music, homily, readings and the way people in the parish relate to them. We need to keep our focus on ourselves.

I hope that these people that are so critical, go to judgment and God is in shorts. Do they think God will be wearing a suit coat and tie. It is our heart and soul that should be dressed for every occasion in

our life.

The church wonders why you can not get people to volunteer to be a Greeter, Eucharistic Minister, Usher, or Lector. Look how some people in the parish criticize you when you are up in front of the parish. Jennifer Neenan was volunteered to help and look what happened to her. What a terrible thing to do to a 14 year old who is in church at Mass. I hope this incident does not force her to shy away from volunteering again. I also hope she does not dress up to try to please the people, because you can never please people and I would not want her to go through life like that. Jennifer, you should wear what you want to church. If you feel like dressing up or not, God will still hear your prayer. Thanks for volunteering when no other adult that was dressed up would.

Diane Ferrucci

Penhurst Road, Rochester

Same sentiments

To the editors:

As I read the article from the lady in Ithaca on the subject of the shorts, my sentiments were like hers exactly!

I am offended when I see these girls and older women come parading down the aisle half undressed it makes me ashamed! Plus the added insult of some chewing gum, going to Communion, coming back masticating, just too much.

There are so many summery clothing to be had these days, no need to wear so much body exposure!

And its not only the young women and girls but us older, and should have more sense and be a good example not follow suit. My sentiments too!

Frances S. Attinasi

Hudson Avenue, Rochester

Use judgment

To the editors:

I found your article on attire for church interesting and thought provoking. It was good to get both sides of this issue and found good points to both points of view.

To be honest I usually dress casually for Mass. In fact if the Vatican ever set out a list of the 10 worst dressers in the church I'd probably be on it! I don't think however you can say that all people who dress casual are taking Mass lightly. I myself live far from the church I attend and usually take mass transit to get there. So I don't just roll out of bed, throw on whatever, and stumble into church.

I do however dress more formally if I'm a lector or sing in the choir. I wear a shirt and tie, a nice pair of slacks and shoes. I feel more comfortable dressed nicely facing the congregation.

In closing I'd like to say that I agree with Father Holland of St. Theodore's who lets his parishioners use "their own judgment" on what they wear on Sundays. I feel putting in a dress code will mainly turn off and keep those away who need the church the most.

Tony DiFabio

St. Paul Boulevard, Rochester

Missing picture

To the editors:

I have seen the picture and read with interest the article regarding Jennifer Neenan. I feel that the big picture is sadly being missed. What we have here is a 14-year-old young lady who volunteered as an usher. That translates to me that the adults assigned to this Mass to serve as ushers did not show up. These same adults failed to get substitutes to usher in their place. Or not enough adults volunteered to support this vital role.

Once again adults have taken the opportunity to criticize our youth instead of patting them on the back and thanking them for a job well done.

So Jennifer takes the opportunity to step forward and assist in a role for her parish that is the major source of paying bills.

I am sure that all these adults, disguised as Monday morning quarterbacks, who expressed concern about Jennifer's attire have immediately called their own parishes to express their availability to volunteer their time.

I applaud you Jennifer for stepping forward and serving your parish in the time of need. Please continue to support your parish.

Michael N. Gotham

Morville Drive, Rochester

For shame!

To the editors:

I was not disgusted by the lack of respect for the Lord's House, I was appalled one could go to church and serve in such apparel. ...

They don't go to banquets, weddings, etc., and numerous other functions with such lack of dress. Lack of respect and dignity for God and his house — for shame!

Marion Scowcroft

Bradford Road, Pittsford