

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.

No need to import for diocese

To the editors:

Michael Gallagher makes the point in his letter to the editor of August 8 ("Don't seek quick fixes to shortage") that the priests shortage in Rochester could be alleviated by importing "surplus" priests from Peoria, Ill., Alexandria, Va., and Lincoln, Neb. I question, first of all, whether Rochester needs to import priests. It seems to me that there are many parishes in this diocese once served by several priests, now served by one priest and an adequate staff of religious and lay ministers where the church is thriving. We do not have a crisis in priestly vocations. We have a challenge to re-define the ministry of priests and to foster lay ministry vocations.

We have come a long way in this diocese from the days where priests did everything — or thought they did; the Sisters did most of the important work — and the laity received ministry from them. Today's Rochester priests are becoming more and more aware that their true ministry is spiritual leadership and sacramental service, empowering the laity to fulfill their baptismal vocation by placing their talents and skills at the service of the faith community.

Priests in this diocese are not expected to celebrate more than three Eucharists on a Sunday and one daily Eucharist. To insist on this policy may result in the cancellation of some Eucharists and temporary inconvenience for some people, but the ultimate result will be richer and more prayerful Eucharists.

Mr. Gallagher mentions three of the most conservative dioceses in the United States, dioceses which forbid altar girls, excommunicate those Catholics who call for change, and I am told ordain anyone who is pious, obedient, and does not ask too many questions. Do we really wish to import priests from such dioceses? I think not. I think we need to continue to encourage young men and women to Church vocations and trust that the Lord will continue to give us just enough truly holy, moderate, balanced, and generous priests to continue quality ministry to the people of our diocese.

Father Robert L. Collins

St. Thomas More Church, Rochester

Petitions chancellor to make final ruling on wear of T-shirts

To the editors:

Bad timing! In the very issue of the *Catholic Courier* (July 25) featuring the wearing of informal dress in church appears the picture of me proudly wearing my new *Catholic Courier* T-shirt.

I await the attack of two angry groups of letter writers.

One group will fault me for daring to wear a T-shirt at the very front door of Our Mother of Sorrows Church. I would point out, but presume to no avail, that under it I am wearing my clerical shirt and collar.

The other group, dyed-in-the-wool — or cotton — T-shirters will take exception to my wearing a clerical shirt and collar under the shirt. To them I respond that, having worn that collar for well over 61 years, my conscience will not permit me to doff it.

To further placate both groups I am appealing to the Diocesan Chancellor for his official ruling and will abide by same in the future.

Father Raymond G. Heisel

Mt. Read Boulevard, Rochester



Incident spoke of real fame

To the editors:

One afternoon, as I was sitting in a repair shop waiting for the muffler on my car to be replaced, a cab driver started a conversation with me. We discussed our philosophies on life and why we thought we had been born.

After a few moments, he stood up and said to me, "Are you famous?" As I turned around and looked behind me, thinking he was speaking to someone else, I realized that he was asking me his question. I thought for a second and replied, "What does being famous mean to you?" He continued by saying, "Well, being famous means that a person is a celebrity who is popular and whose opinions are well-regarded."

I smirked a bit and shrugged my shoulders assuring him that my perceptions were my own and that I was sure no one considered me famous. I then said, "Did you know that you are famous?" He had quite a puzzled look on his face and he crossed his arms almost as a defense mechanism. I said, "At the time of conception, everyone becomes famous." By this time, he was staring right through me as he bent forward to hear more.

"You see, there is not a person on Earth who could not claim fame if he or she

wanted to," I said. "Every living being created by Our Father has the potential for distinction if he or she chooses to follow his or her free will with good intentions learned from God's Word."

The deep lines in his face became more evident as he frowned. I explained, "There are people we never hear about, who are silently famous. These people spend their lives taking care of others and providing man and woman kind with solace. They may never make the news or have their name up in lights; but, truly, these sensitive people are the famous ones."

He began to tell me stories about his taxi days. The man did not even realize all the times he had helped passengers in his own cab. As I listened to his tales, the allure of the old fellow became obvious. His hat had perspiration marks on it and his clothes were raggedy. But, the light that shone in his eyes was beguiling. As the repair person called the cab driver's name, he paid his bill and thanked me for my wistful conversation.

He got into his cab and poked his head out of the window as he said, "I wish I could talk with you, some more." He waved briskly, as he drove away.

M. Cathy Helmes
Dakota Street, Rochester

Abortion not one of healing arts

To the editors:

"Does it really say *physicians who do abortions?* my 11 year old asked in amazement. "It sounds like *Alice in Wonderland*; when Alice walks toward the Queen it says she walks away from her."

Language becomes absurd when it begins to deny reality. Webster's dictionary says a physician is a "healer." In an abortion, it is certainly not the child in the womb who is healed.

Pregnancy defines natural maternity. A pregnant woman is a *mother*; and a woman who has had an abortion is the *mother* of a child who has died. So, it is difficult to see how the mother can be "healed" by an abortion.

At best, she may gain some temporary relief from her personal dilemma. However, she may suffer short term complications from the abortion, such as; post-operative hemorrhage, infection, and pelvic inflammatory disease. Long-term post-

abortion trauma may include; infection related hysterectomy, sterility, increased risk of breast cancer, depression, and self-destructive behavior.

It is my personal belief that no woman who has had an abortion is exempt from the tragic consequences of a violent alteration in her maternal state. Motherhood is too deeply rooted in our physical and spiritual being for such an event to pass like the extraction of a bad tooth. Happily, our God is merciful and ready to forgive all.

We are not asked to judge the abortionist (Mt. 7:1). We pray for them in our home and hope to meet them and all who have been affected by the tragedy of abortion in heaven someday. In the meantime, we hope and pray that they will return to the healing profession to which they have been called.

Patricia M. Wheeler
River Road, Piffard

Why not publish lists of lay appointments?

To the editors:

The Diocesan decision to create a five year plan for parishes (*Catholic Courier*, Aug. 1: "Consultants counsel diocese in gauging parishes' viability") makes good sense and will probably do much to reduce tension and anxiety in parishes that will eventually face reconfiguration. Planning causes secure feelings and is empowering. It allows for the process of change and acceptance of new beginnings.

In the same issue the "Diocesan Appointments" were listed. If it is true that the "awakening of laypeople to their responsibility to their baptismal call" is part of the impetus for the five-year plan, it is

curious then that only clergy appointments were listed. Wouldn't it be an encouragement to those considering or training for lay ministry, and logical as well, if laypeople are to be seen as important to the life of the Church, if lay appointments to parishes were also listed?

Diane Knittle

Parish Life Coordinator
St. Philip Neri, Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: We do publish lay appointments when — as with the clergy — those appointments are to lead parishes, i.e., lay parish administrators. We simply do not have the space to publish listings of appointments and hirings at all levels of parish responsibility.