

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

©1996, Rochester Catholic Press Association.

1150 Buffalo Road
P.O. Box 24379
Rochester, NY 14624
716/328-4340
800/600-3628 outside Rochester

President

Bishop Matthew H. Clark

General Manager/Editor

Karen M. Franz

Editorial Department

Associate Editor

Lee Strong

Copy editor/Staff writer

Kathleen Schwar

Finger Lakes

Staff writers

Rob Cullivan

Genesee Valley

Mike Latona

Southern Tier

Staff Photographer

Matthew Scott

Business Department

Circulation Manager

Jeanne A. Mooney

Telemarketing Manager

Lenna Hurley

Office Manager

Mary DiPonzio

Secretary/Receptionist

Donna Stubbings

Advertising Department

Advertising Director

Ray Frey

Account Executive

Laura J. O'Loughlin

Production Department

Graphic Designers

Kim Parks

Amy Sundstrom

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.

Faith demands concern for others

EDITORIAL

On Sept. 10, the U.S. Senate approved the Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman, and would allow states to ignore same-sex marriages sanctioned in other states.

Following a report about the Senate vote, a Rochester television station conducted a citizen-on-the-street poll. Respondents raised various ethical arguments on both sides of the issue, but one woman's answer stood out.

"It doesn't affect me," she declared — twice.

Sadly, the woman's response was all too typical of current public attitudes about significant public issues.

Many Americans seem to consider welfare reform, business practices, immigration laws and other concerns not in terms of how they affect other individuals, society or the nation, but rather, by how they affect ME.

According to several news reports, for example, executives at tobacco companies knew since the 1960s or earlier about the harmful effects of smoking, but have continued to conceal and deny that information. Meanwhile, national medical costs have risen as hospitals treat conditions linked to smoking.

The June 17, 1996, edition of *U.S. News and World Report* noted that the compensation packages of chief executive officers at the nations' 500 largest firms have risen 16 percent since 1994. In the same period, employees' salaries had risen just 2.8 percent, and several of those 500 firms were laying off workers to increase profitability.

Lest anyone think the onus falls on business executives alone, it should be noted that school districts across the country are struggling to provide enough classrooms to accommodate a record 51.7 million students enrolled in public and private schools.

In New York City, for example, classes are being conducted in gyms, storage rooms and even hallways. And in Florida,

districts have set up classrooms in trailers on school grounds.

Analysts point to voters' decisions over their own pockets — and cash in their own pockets — as one of the reasons school districts have not been able to add enough classrooms for the boomlet of offspring from the baby-boom generation.

Our decisions affect the people around us. Other peoples' decisions and actions affect each of us.

Making decisions for selfish reasons is not a new phenomenon. From the Fall on, the Bible recounts numerous tales of individuals acting in their own self-interest.

Moreover, many people today do base their actions on sincere and altruistic motives.

But the volume of sheer selfishness seems to be growing, despite the church's efforts to oppose the trend.

Over and over, church leaders have taught that we must base our actions and decisions on how they affect others, not just on what we might gain.

The guidelines on political responsibility released by the United States Catholic Conference for the 1996 elections are rooted in this principle. The bishops declared that our faith compels us to be actively involved in the political process and to weigh carefully how our decisions affect the sick, the elderly, refugees, welfare recipients, criminals, the environment, workers, the unborn and so on.

Ultimately our faith is based on the idea that an individual's actions — good and bad, public and private — ripple out across the universe. After all, the central event of Christianity is the death and resurrection of Jesus. One man's death opened the gates of heaven for the rest of us.

Living by such a generous spirit may not make us typical Americans these days. But it does identify us as followers of Jesus.

Show respect for Jesus, fellow worshipers

To the editors:

Remember when the tabernacle was in the center of the Sanctuary, in the place of high honor? Remember when RESPECT was something we had for the Church and all those who belonged to it?

One of the plagues engulfing the Catholic Church today is a lack of respect for the Eucharistic Presence of Jesus Christ in the tabernacle. We were taught at a very early age that He is present in every tabernacle of the world.

There are still many people who go to church early enough before Mass to pray. God is everywhere, but what more fitting place to honor and speak to Him than in His own house? We should be going there to see Him and hear His Word proclaimed by His representative in our parish, the priest.

Talking in church is something that shows the lack of respect for the Eucharistic Presence as well as for those trying to pray. In many instances, those there with us are from another parish and may have to come to "Compare Notes" on how things are done in another parish. Most people who find it necessary to talk in Our Lord's Presence don't even have the common courtesy to whisper what is so vitally important to pass along. For some reason, those who are the most active in the parish seem to consider themselves exempt from silence. What a great example to visitors, the children and those looking up to them! Most churches have a gathering area that, admittedly, is not a part of the Sanctuary, but is in close enough proximity to the congregation that prayer is not possible when everybody gets socializing.

Let's get back to the basics we learned many years ago. The church is a place of prayer and solemnity. It is the place where Christ is present and where the Sacraments are received. Do the talking, laughing, plan-making, weather forecasting and health updates outside. Before the Church starts teaching our children how important it is to be "a part of the community," we need to teach everyone that it starts with respect for others and, more importantly, respect for Our Lord. Let's teach everyone not to talk in Church.

John J. Niziurski, Jr.
Sherwood Drive
Hilton



Keep minds on eternal salvation

To the editors:

Every week, I sit down with the current issue of the *Courier* and turn to the "Letters" section. I then read with amazement how often we Catholics disagree with each other. If it weren't for my faith in Jesus Christ and my great love for His Church, I would become disheartened.

When I speak of my great love for His Church, I am speaking of all of you who are reading this and all of you who aren't. I am speaking to those of you I disagree with and those of you who disagree with me. I am speaking to you who wear shorts to Mass and to you who wear your Sunday best. I am speaking to all of you.

We are all one body in Christ — what a statement of love that is. Our differences seem to cloud that love — we fail to recognize Jesus's love for us in each other and through our Holy Church by her teachings. And we fail to recognize our oneness with Jesus and His Church.

Jesus Christ has given us the ultimate gift of Love: Himself in the Blessed Sacrament. At every moment, in every tabernacle throughout the world, Jesus is there, really present in the Blessed Sacrament calling each of us to spend time with Him, to love Him and to allow Him to love us. To quote St. Peter Julian Eymard, "Jesus is there, go to Him!" Kneel before Him, pour out your heart to Him, love Him and in the silence of your soul, be aware of His Presence, rest in His loving arms and listen to Him. You will come to realize just how caught up we all are in unimportant mat-

ters and forget what's really important — our eternal salvation as children of God.

I thank God for our one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church and I thank Him for all of you, the many members of the one Body, my brothers and sisters in Christ. I cherish my Catholic faith and all of you — pearls from the hand of Our Lord.

Ann B. Fogarty
Crabapple Drive, Canandaigua

Suffering has a value

To the editors:

We've been raised as Catholics to pray for a "Happy Death." Several of my relatives passed away in a hospital setting surrounded by caring professionals. Family and spiritual support were an integral part of their care.

There are those who applaud Dr. Kevorkian but I wonder when his time comes will it be natural or suicide?

Pain and suffering are our inheritance as descendants of Adam and Eve. There are friends and family and caring professionals who can be there if we need and want them.

My experience as a former nurses' aide has again reiterated family and spiritual support. The age difference didn't matter. They say age is only a "state of mind." God giveth, "God taketh away." Blessed be His Name.

Mary Tychan
Lexington Parkway, Chili