

# 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.

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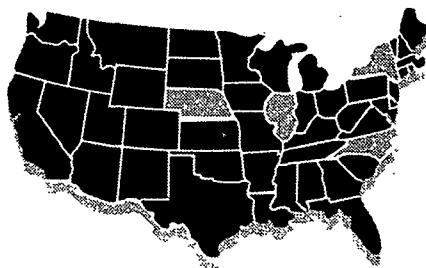
## Seeks answers on vocations queries

### To the editors:

I read Michael Gallagher's letter (*Catholic Courier*, Aug. 8: "Don't seek quick fixes to shortage") and was surprised to learn there are dioceses in the United States with sufficient priestly vocations. I was under the impression that the shortage in such vocations was without exception in all U. S. dioceses. Then I read Father Robert Collins' response to Michael Gallagher's letter (Sept. 12: "No need to import for diocese"). This prompted questions on my part, and I invite responses from the community to enlighten and re-educate my pre-Vatican II mindset.

Father Collins makes the point that "Rochester priests are becoming more and more aware that their true ministry is spiritual leadership and sacramental service." As far back as I can remember, it was always my understanding that our parish priest was the one who provided spiritual direction and consecrated the bread into the Body of Christ.

However, we are faced with the dilemma of the further erosion of vocations, and the remaining pool of priests has to be stretched to cover the same number of parishes. With attrition and the drop off in vocations, this pool will continue to



shrink. I believe this is what prompted Mr. Gallagher's letter. He felt we should reallocate our resources so that priests who are numerous in one area could be transferred to areas where there is a shortage.

While we are blessed with an involved and dedicated laity, the empowerment of this laity will not be sufficient nor will they be qualified by virtue of their lack of ordination, to fulfill the role of the ordained ministry, that of sacramental service. In Mr. Gallagher's letter, as I recall it, he calls for a look into the reason why the dioceses of Peoria, Illinois; Alexandria, Virginia; and Lincoln, Nebraska have sufficient numbers of young men entering the priesthood. Father Collins responds to this by saying these are "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."

Can we make an assumption that in those dioceses where the church has remained traditional, the faithful are willing and able to produce a sufficient number of priestly vocations? And my follow-up question is, are those priests somehow unable to provide appropriate spiritual leadership and sacramental service? Just what is the criteria for young men entering the priesthood in the Rochester diocese. How does it differ?

I've been told all my life that the Roman Catholic Church was universal in its beliefs and practices. However, I am troubled to find there is wide variance among dioceses in the United States interpreting those beliefs and practices. I have welcomed and I'm willing to comply with the changes that have occurred in the church since John XXIII opened the doors and windows, but my concern is that when these doors and windows opened, a hurricane blew in instead of a breeze.

**Helen K. Dobesh**

**Pinon Drive, West Henrietta**

**EDITORS' NOTE: We hope this week's cover story will clarify some of these questions.**

## Lay vocations don't replace religious lives

### To the editors:

In response to Sister Patricia Schoelles' column "All the faithful have a vocation" (Sept. 19) I would say that I am in agreement. It is taught by the Church as emphasized by the Second Vatican Council that all the people by virtue of our baptism have a ministry to uphold because we are a prophetic, kingly, and priestly people. However, it is important not to trivialize the great need for and role of those who have answered the call to religious vocations.

We are all called to promote the Gospel message in our words and ways we lead our daily lives — be it at work, in the family, at play, in the neighborhood. What needs to occur to effectively live the Gospel is nurturing and guidance to allow the seed of faith implanted at baptism to grow and prosper. We — as Church — need to be transformed into a prophetic, kingly, and priestly people. The priests

and religious need to be present to lead and assist this transformation.

Today's demands on our time in a fast-paced life — with its worldly allurements and many distractions — crowd our ability to become nurtured and transformed. As heralded as Vatican II is to the advancement of the kingdom of God for modern times, it has also been criticized for its lack of effective implementation tools to instruct and teach the people with respect to some of its sweeping changes. Consequently, we are often a confused people with a lukewarm commitment to live our faith in a secular world. Even those committed to prayer and serving God struggle in their faith to live out their baptism — I know that I do.

What is needed to effect this transformation is a leadership whose singular dedication is to God and the advancement of the kingdom. We need recognizable leaders and heroes who can inspire

us and be a model for our behavior as Christians. We need enough of them around us as teachers of the Gospel to remind us and influence us in our many walks of life.

As a parent I do not ascribe to quality time with my children. I need to provide "quantity time" to be available when they need me and to see me in action. Likewise, we need to see a quantity of those in religious vocations, especially for our young people who are so devoid of this influence in their lives.

Yes, we all have in our lives as ministers of God's work in our own walks of life. We also need exemplary models who after listening to the call in the swirling affairs of the world commit to a religious life and singularly stand for the Catholic faith. Let us continue to pray for religious vocations as well as the vocations of the faithful.

**Michael R. Mazzochetti**

**Pinewood Knoll, Rochester**

## 'Ashamed' of parishioners' behavior toward priest

### To the editors:

Today as I sat in (St. Ambrose) church, I was saddened and disturbed to hear the news that our pastor of 15 months was leaving us. Though I had enjoyed our former pastor for many years, I found our recent pastor (Father Melvin Walczak) quite refreshing; and a perfect representative of the changing times.

My enthusiasm, however, was not shared by many in our faith community at St. Ambrose. Set in their ways and reluctant to change, our ultra-conservative parishioners could not find it in their hearts to accept our new leader or the necessary changes he had set into motion. Instead of all of us working together for the good of the parish, many of the parishioners chose to challenge Father Mel's authority on issues. Several parishioners even made the choice to leave St. Ambrose to join neighboring parishes.

Father Mel continued to work diligently toward the betterment of our parish, despite the many obstacles he encountered along the way. His weekly sermons reflected many of the issues the parishioners were struggling with. Father Mel's sermons were quite meaningful to those of us who chose to listen and understand them. There was always a lesson to be learned. Father Mel was quite articulate in his speech and very perceptive as to

what the needs were in our parish.

As a member of St. Ambrose parish for the 33 years of my life I am ashamed of the way our parish behaved in regards to Father Mel. Apparently many of us have forgotten the true meaning of Christianity: "To love our neighbor as ourselves!" "To treat each other with respect!" "Let he without sin cast the first stone!"

I am sickened by the lack of understanding shown by my fellow parishioners. I am proud to say that those of us

who took the time to get to know Father Mel know what we have lost today. He was a definite asset to our faith community and to our church. He will be sincerely missed! Yes, the people of St. Ambrose are truly at a loss. I wish Father Mel the best of luck in the future. May he someday find a parish that is truly worthy of his time and talents. God Bless You Father Mel!

**Mary Jane Maltese**

**Culver Parkway, Rochester**

## Clarifies comments on controversial priest

### To the editors:

This note is meant to correct a statement alleged to me regarding an article about Father Norman Weslin (*Catholic Courier*, Sept. 26: "The lamb that roars"). The statement was "I think he likes to get arrested."

I was talking over the phone and never meant to impugn the integrity or the praiseworthy zeal of Father Weslin in trying to stamp out of our nation the horrendous crime of abortion.

I have nothing but admiration for his strong stance against this blot on the escutcheon of the United States — killing babies a la Hitler.

Even though he may disobey an unjust

civil law, that is wholly within the command of God. Even William Seward, when speaking of slavery, said that there is a law higher than the Constitution. And we must obey God's law against murder, no matter the cost.

Let it be known that Father Weslin has my whole-hearted endorsement.

**Father Albert Shamon**

**South Marvine Avenue, Auburn**

**EDITORS' NOTE: In response to a follow-up inquiry from the Catholic Courier, Father Shamon acknowledged that quotations attributed to him in the Sept. 26 article were accurate. He said, however, that his comments had created a misimpression he had not intended.**