

# OPINIONS

## Thank you, brother Joseph

### 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.

His last days said a great deal about Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago.

Even as he battled the cancer that would claim him before dawn on Nov. 14, he implored the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court to oppose legalizing physician-assisted suicide. Thus, one of his final acts was to uphold the consistent life ethic — the concept he first articulated during the 1980s and which in 1993 became one of the Diocese of Rochester's Synod goals.

And just days before he died, Cardinal Bernardin completed an address he had planned to deliver to the nation's bishops about restructuring the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the U.S. Catholic Conference. The cardinal had led the committee developing the proposal for the past five years. Archbishop Oscar H. Lipscomb of Mobile, Ala., delivered the address on Cardinal Bernardin's behalf on Nov. 13, less than 24 hours before the prelate died in his Chicago residence.

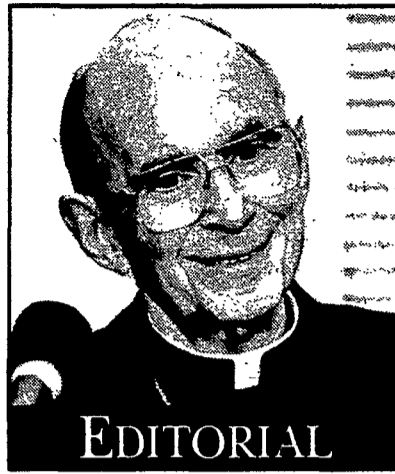
Cardinal Bernardin had spent most of his last few months advancing his Catholic Common Ground Project. He'd launched the project in August to encourage church dialogue rather than the seemingly constant bickering these days over such issues as the ordination of women and sexual ethics.

As these last acts illustrate, Cardinal Bernardin was a man of vision and deep spirituality; he also was a man who could handle the intricacies of church politics.

By all accounts, he always acted with quiet, gentle patience, humility and courage, charming all who met him. Indeed, although a cardinal of the church, a man who had won countless honors, he regularly referred to himself simply as "Joseph, your brother."

Despite his unassuming demeanor, he created a legacy few leaders of the Catholic Church in the United States — indeed, the church as a whole — can rival.

He had served as both general secretary and president of the NCCB and USCC when both organizations were formed and when the church faced implementation of the Second Vatican Council's reforms. In these offices, he showed the skills as a diplomat and a forger of com-



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promises for which he became widely known.

He led the pro-life efforts of the U.S. bishops as head of their Committee on Pro-Life Activities from 1983 to 1989. It was a time of sometimes violent confrontations over abortion.

He headed the committee that wrote the bishops' prophetic 1983 pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response."

In the 1980s, the cardinal conceived the consistent life ethic, linking such issues as war, abortion, euthanasia and poverty. That ethic has influenced church thinking and writings, including even the encyclicals of Pope John Paul II, and is likely to be the cardinal's greatest legacy to the church.

But beyond these procedural and theological matters, he also showed the ability to handle difficult human relations and personal situations.

After he was named archbishop of Chicago in 1982, he faced a scandal involving priests' sexual abuse of minors. He formed a blue-ribbon panel to study the issue and recommend policies; those policies later became the model for those formed in many other dioceses across the country.

In November 1993 Cardinal Bernardin himself was accused of sexual misconduct when a man with AIDS, Steven J. Cook, claimed that the cardinal, while archbishop of Cincinnati, had sexually abused him as a teenager.

Cardinal Bernardin maintained his innocence throughout that difficult time, and had only compassionate words for his accuser. Less than four months later, Cook retracted his claim, which had been based on so-called "recovered memories" supposedly uncovered during therapy with an unlicensed hypnotist. The cardinal met with Cook in December 1994, and the two became friends, remaining in touch until Cook's own death in September 1995.

It would be easy to go on and on, listing the cardinal's achievements and expressing admiration. But Cardinal Bernardin would probably be embarrassed by it all.

So instead, we'll simply say, "Thank you, brother Joseph."

### Spouses find aid in the 'little way'

#### To the editors:

Some of the best spiritual writing for married people comes from saints such as Therese of Lisieux. Her "little way" continues to move people of all vocations to greater unity with God in duty and in prayer. There are many ways to come close to God, but hers is becoming the most practical, especially for married people. Her hidden life does resemble, in many ways, life in our homes, so hidden often from the world, yet it is the church's nesting ground.

Therese's doctrines about serving God can lead us to serve our neighbor while at home or work, yet not being overcome by the world. No task is too small to please God, she would say. Being a father of two reminds me of Jesus' love for those who come to him in Therese's childlike way. Children are beautiful and sweet, yet when stained and soiled, parents must become true servants to do the proper cleaning from head to toe. Therese would say that this is what Christ does when he comes to us and washes us of sin. He comes close, like "a hen that gathers her young," because he sees our goodness and wants us to be renewed by him.

Father McBrien wrote that, "those who achieve sanctity outside of marriage are simply less compelling examples for the greater majority of us who are married." Ah, not for those who read Therese. We agree that what the church says of marriage will receive further development, for truth is endless. Prayer, reading good books, like those about Therese, and living the married life to its fullest will be how God will complete his work in us.

Even if there are few "married" saints so declared, many found in heaven will come from the married state. For they, like Therese, practiced their "little way" and carried their crosses, because of the love and mercy that Christ had shown them.

**Frank Netti**

Weedsport-Sennett Road, Weedsport



### Appreciated article on new book

#### To the editors:

Thank you for writing about "Extraordinary Preaching: Twenty Homilies by Roman Catholic Women" (*Catholic Courier*, Oct. 10: "Diocesan women publish selected sermons"). We have had a terrific response to the book. The interest and affirmations are most heartening.

Only some of the homilists were named in the article. Roslyn Karaban and I want to acknowledge all the authors of the book: Roni Antenucci; Sandy Arrington; Mary Britton; Nancy DeRycke, SSJ; Donna Ecker; ToINETTE Eugene; Nancy Giordano; Kay Heverin, SSJ; Sue Hoffman, SSJ; Yvonne Lucia; Barbara Moore, RSM; Martha Ann Sims; Joan Sobala, SSJ; Theresa Stanley; Mary Sullivan, RSM; Gloria Ulterino; and Mary Martin Quinn,

RSM; to whom the book is dedicated.

Some people ask, "Why isn't our Pastoral Associate's homily in the book?" Some homilists did not give us one when we asked every woman preacher we knew of, six years ago, to give us their favorite homily. Many are not written; maybe the next collection can be transcribed from tapes!

Walter Burghardt, SJ, who will be with the "Preaching the Just Word" retreat this January at Notre Dame Retreat Center praises the homilies in this collection for their "ability to link rich, at times profound, understanding of Scripture with current issues, cultural and individual... so as to hear God's message addressed to us today."

**Deni Mack**

Queensboro Road, Rochester

### Taken aback by fellow reader's perspective

#### To the editors:

I was taken aback by the letter to the editors, "Disagrees on favorite columnists," in the Oct. 31 issue of the *Catholic Courier*, written by Mr. Robert A. Martino.

Bishop Clark writes straight from the heart of the Holy Spirit. I find his column to be quite healing, with particular emphasis on sensitivity for people from all walks of life. Only a man of extreme grace

would share his innermost thoughts with the public, and not feel slighted by any negative comments. His behavior is indicative of the gentle strength of Christ's armor.

Whether a person agrees or disagrees with the content of a writer's column, if that person is a true believer, his or her devotion to God will not be thwarted.

**M. Cathy Helmes**

Dakota Street, Rochester