

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.

'Faith' column hit nerve of readers

To the editors:

I was left with unsettled feelings after reading Sister Schoelles' Dec. 5 column. In her reflections on Catholic identity she fails to mention "Jesus" "salvation" and "grace"; instead she seems to indicate that today's Catholicism is primarily preoccupied with questioning papal authority and the formation of one's own "personal moral integrity." Where is Jesus in all this?

Sister Schoelles, there is Truth that is absolute and unchanging. Jesus tells us, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Truth is the revelation of God's great gift to the world — His Son Jesus Christ. Faith is our acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior through grace. His suffering, death and resurrection is the absolute crux of Catholicism. Truth has not changed. Faith has not changed. What is changing is the notion of Catholic spirituality.

Without absolute Truth, faith is empty dreaming and the Church is another fantasy factory for the spiritually deluded. Our Church was founded by Christ Him-

self to inform us, nourish us, and safeguard the precious gift of faith. If there is confusion about what truth is, perhaps the gospel is not being proclaimed clearly enough. Perhaps some in positions of leadership need to be more conscientious about keeping the focus on the Lord and our relationship with Him. None of us should be reluctant to acknowledge openly — especially to other Catholics — the glorious and beautiful Truth of the Word.

Whether we self-identify as staunch traditionalists, charismatic, or liberal Catholics, I wonder if Jesus doesn't somehow get submerged in all the discussions of changes within the Church. I wonder if we are really aware of what is at the core of these changes — is it our wants, our preferences, our personal agendas? Or are we allowing the Holy Spirit to move us closer to God's heart?

The divisions within the Church are obvious and painful. If we are the body of Christ, we are a broken body in need of healing. We need to balance any discussion of Catholicism and change by pro-

claiming the absolute Truth we hold — Jesus Christ, Savior of the World — this is our faith, our common bond, our hope, our source of strength. Lifting up the Truth is more important than all our debates on birth control, the women's movement, limitations of papal authority and divorce. Lifting up Jesus is more important than elevating our own consciences and being comfortable with our mature "personal moral integrity." Lifting up Jesus, Son of God, can bring us all closer together, as Our Lord Himself expressly prayed that we, "as a body, be completely one." (John 17:20-23)

Jesus was born in a stable because there was no room in the inn. Let us make ample room for Him in our dialogues about faith, truth, and the Catholic Church.

Nancy Gaspar
West King Road, Ithaca



Sister Patricia Schoelles, S.S.J.

Maryland subscriber lauds 'wonderful variety' of views

To the editors:

Two years ago I began receiving my subscription to the *Catholic Courier*. After reading the Rochester diocesan paper each time I visited my mother in Auburn, I decided I wanted to read it more regularly. I have looked forward to it each week and have not been disappointed. In fact, my only disappointment has been the very negative attitude in so many of the letters to the editors. Your paper is an excellent informative and teaching tool! I only wish our Archdiocesan newspaper was as good.

The recent column by Sister Schoelles (Dec. 5) was one of the best articles on faith I have read in some time. Many times I have wanted to comment on various issues and columns. Finally, this column encouraged me to express my positive response. Some of your readers may not agree with Sister's approach but I definitely agree that the changes in the Church have led to a deepening of my faith. Scripture has come alive for me in recent years. I don't recall Scripture being

a big part of my Catholic upbringing whereas the Baltimore Catechism was. Yes, I memorized all the questions and answers and can probably answer them today after many years away from it. But did all that deepen my faith or was it the familiarity of Scripture that I have learned in my later years?

There is such a wonderful variety of contributors to the *Courier* including both regulars and guest columnists like Father Eugene Hemrick who preaches regularly at my parish in Maryland. I have always felt fortunate to have his insight and guidance at our Sunday liturgies. Now you and your readers have the benefit of his knowledge.

I could go on for sometime and tell you how lucky your readers are to have so many talented and intelligent articles by such as Father McBrien, Bishop Clark, Father Shamon and Sister Schoelles but I will end with...keep up the good work.

Joan A. Beach
Rockville, Md.

Universal Catholic education would eliminate distinction among 'majority,' 'minority' groups

To the editors:

In reading Sister Schoelles' (Dec. 5), I believe she has confused word meanings.

Truth IS unchanging and is the basis of our traditions and practices. These are historically based but do not change over time — maybe minutely! Christ is "the Way, the TRUTH, and the Life." God IS, WAS, and ALWAYS WILL BE — therefore, Truth IS unchanging! Practices and traditions which Sister Schoelles seems to feel others rely on wrongly are merely ways to practice our faith in this Truth.

What needs to be done for ALL people is an education as to the "whys and wherefores" of Catholic teachings, past and present. Not an education based on

individual diocesan and/or parish thoughts, but an education based on universal Catholic teachings. Not only what the Church teaches but the reasons why She does. That is where we as Catholics have been so privileged to grow.

Through education there would not be a distinction between the Catholics like Sister Schoelles and the vocal group — which she refers to as a minority. One thing to keep in mind is that "they" may not be as few in numbers as she and others hope to believe. There are others who believe in the ultimate, unchanging TRUTH who continue to be silent.

Maureen J. Gallagher
West Church Street, Fairport

'Grotesque joke' turned out to be 'heresy'

To the editors:

Upon reading the Dec. 5 column by Sister Schoelles, this reader, at first, thought it to be a grotesque joke. After the shock faded, the possibility of some sort of insidious "test" seemed plausible. Could someone be "probing" to see how much or how far the family of God would allow its fringe scholars and so called theologians to go, before giving them, what was called during the Great Depression, their

"walking papers"? The arrogance of some of the higher educated is appalling. For some reason they assume the right to speak for "most of us" which they do NOT: To teach "Truth is a process" NOT SO! Truth is constant. To dictate "Faith MUST be interpreted for each era" NOT!!

There is no joke here — merely heresy — heresy at the top. Walking papers please!

Louise P. Jackson
Fallingwood Terrace, Rochester

No surprises in 'typical' column

To the editors:

Sister Patricia Schoelles writes in her column of Dec. 5 "that there are those who will read this column and shudder." Perhaps — but not those long time residents of this diocese and regular readers of the *Catholic Courier* who no longer "shudder" at the dissident direction the diocese has taken on the Catholic (?) content of certain presentations and columnists. Rather it is seen as a typical commentary pursuing an anti-Vatican agenda.

Sister Schoelles appreciates "that the two great sources of religious authority in Catholicism" are "Scriptures and tradition," and then subsequently diminishes their significance by their constant "yield to new interpretations based on experience and reflection in the light of faith." One presumes she is referring to the historico-critical Scripture revisionists — The Jesus Seminar comes to mind. Also one's understanding of tradition is that, it encompasses an inherited pattern of continuity of belief, thought and action as contrasted with argumentative change, particularly concerning major principles.

Sister Patricia's comments regarding the small increasingly vocal group should be interpreted as a reflection of any antagonism to the power laden factions of the chancery offices, institutes and committees who foster implementation of their anti-papal objectives over the impotent opposition of traditional Catholic laity. The obvious result is further polarization with an increased potential for schism.

Further, to characterize a Catholic group supportive of the Vatican as "equating religious authority with and pretty much limited to papal pronouncements" is not only condescending but also discounts the nature, purpose, need and intellectualism of such pronouncements — most effectively and responsibly promulgated by our present Pontiff — as evidenced by his numerous incisive and trenchant encyclicals on the most important problems of this area.

Finally, Sister, "personal moral integrity" inevitably leads to moral relativism and radical individualism.

A. J. Annunziata
Holiday Drive, Horseheads