

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.



Hopes next Christmas will focus more on faith

To the editors:

Please consider my commentary on my reflections of the Advent/Christmas season, which ended (recently).

I find it sad that many Catholics experience such a subdued celebration of the wondrous mysteries of our faith. In particular, I cite Easter, Christmas, and Pentecost — our three holiest feasts. The liturgical year is highlighted by the Advent/Christmas season and the Lent/Easter season which culminates in Pentecost, the Spirit-filled birth and sustenance of the Church — the people.

As I reflect on this past Advent and Christmas, two thoughts come to mind. First, as we all experience the hustle and bustle of the Christmas preparation, we feel stressed and strained. However, it is still the Christmas spirit that pervades our culture and drives us to send cards with warm thoughts to special friends, bake cookies to share, festively decorate our homes, and joyfully look for the right gift for that special someone.

The second observation is that we prepare well liturgically in Advent with penance to overcome the darkness of our lives and the gradual increase of light as symbolized by the Advent Wreath; but like the rest of society, we are often too exhausted from all the activities to spiritually enjoy Christmas and embrace the

Light.

I believe it is up to our Church — in our dioceses and parishes — to lift our spirits to fully appreciate the season and its meaning. The Christmas season spans many celebrations: Christmas Eve and Day, the Feast of the Holy Family, the Feast of Mary as Queen of Peace, the Epiphany, and the Baptism of the Lord — this year, ending on January 12.

I cannot think of a better way to chase away the post-holiday fatigue and let-down than with the peaceful and holy presence of the Lord in our lives through a continued celebration of God's revelation to his people. The Church must pray for strength to effectively minister to the people during this time through enriched celebrations of the Mass as we receive the Eucharist — which means Thanksgiving, sing joyfully because of God's Incarnation, and reflectively listen to stirring homilies.

Only then, can we make a difference in our corner of the world as we "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord" — our last instruction at Mass. If our spirits are not fed, it is like seeing those bare Christmas trees cast aside on our front yards a few days after Christmas.

Michael R. Mazzochetti
Pinewood Knoll
Rochester

Ethnic customs offer model

To the editors:

Whether we like to admit it or not, the Christmas Season has now become to most Christians the most important shopping season of the year and Christmas day is not remembered for the birth of Christ but for Santa Claus and a frenzy of opening gifts. For those who would like at least for a few hours to welcome the birth of Jesus Christ, I would invite them to discover and participate in the Christmas Eve tradition of the Polish, Slovak and Lithuanian Catholics.

On Christmas Eve, our family of

Lithuanian descent, still puts on their "Sunday best" clothes, share the Christmas wafer and a simple but symbolic dinner, and reflect on the coming birth of Jesus Christ. We usually go to midnight Mass afterward and leave Christmas day to ripping open those gifts under the Christmas tree. In a small way this tradition of our ancestors gives us respite for a few hours from the rampaging current of materialism that tries to sweep us away from God.

Ray Liutkus
Hardwood Lane, Webster

Is it time for the church to give up celibacy?

To the editors:

Jan. 2 was the feast of St. Gregory of Nazianzus, a bishop and doctor of the Church who lived in the fourth century (329-389). He was the son of the bishop of Nazianzus and eventually became his father's auxiliary bishop.

On the occasion of remembering his feast, it is salutary to listen to the words of one who is arguably the most prominent Catholic theologian of the 20th century, the late Karl Rahner. In an interview giv-

en on Sept. 22, 1968, Rahner said: "If the Church does not find a sufficient number of diocesan priests without giving up celibacy, she would in that case (not yet demonstrated) have to give it up."

What was "not yet demonstrated" in 1968 has surely been demonstrated in 1996. Today we can, I think, remove the parentheses in Rahner's statement.

Msgr. William H. Shannon
East Avenue
Rochester

'Worst' choice

To the editors:

I am writing to you about the letter from Father Robert L. Collins that appeared in the Dec. 12 issue of the *Courier* ("Election season was the best, worst"). The first paragraph was OK, but the second paragraph and the conclusion were scandalous. The admission by Father Collins that he voted for Clinton might have been seen as a confession, but I rather think it was a boast. It tells me a lot about the degree of moral bankruptcy existing in the leadership of the Diocese of Rochester.

Father Collins seems to think that "America is becoming a more civilized nation," but it would be difficult to convince me such is the case. What kind of a civilization kills 1.5 million of its babies each year for economic reasons, or turns a blind eye to the partial-birth abortion procedure which Clinton vetoed, where viable babies are killed as they are being born? What kind of a civilization finds newborn babies abandoned in rest rooms and dumpsters, many still alive? And what kind of a civilization sees its honest, law-abiding citizens locked in their homes while the predators roam free, and there is no more room in the prisons? Some might plead that we must help the poor and disadvantaged but where has 40 years of Liberal chicanery called the "welfare system" gotten us? It has doomed people to an endless cycle of dependence and despair, robbing them of their human dignity; there is a better way, as we are seeing already.

What ever happened to the biblical warning, where it would be better for a person to be attached to a millstone and cast into the sea than to give scandal?

John J. Long
Church Street, Victor

Clinton understood

To the editors:

Father Robert L. Collins, in his letter (published Dec. 12) gave us the Tale of Two Cities logo: It was the best of times, it was the worst of times and then he tragically revealed he voted for Bill Clinton.

The fact that President Clinton supports abortion and vetoed the Congressional ban on partial-birth abortion didn't cut any ice with Father Collins.

Evidently President Clinton understood that his support for abortion wouldn't stop Catholics from helping his reelection. In fact, more than 50 percent of people who consider themselves Catholic voted for Clinton.

As Catholics we need to return to our roots. A return to the confessional would be a good start.

Robert Bart
Ithaca

New confessor?

To the editors:

Father Robert Collins' letter which appeared in the Dec. 12, issue of the *Catholic Courier* concerning his vote for Clinton in the recent elections was interesting, if not confusing. After reading it a couple of times, I thought maybe he flipped a coin as to who to vote for and he lost. In any event, it seems to me he should take a refresher course in logic and criteriology.

Since Collins tells us he voted for Clinton, I think maybe I'll have him hear my confession. When I get through maybe he will think I am a saint, since Clinton's morals seem to be of so little concern to him. Hey! You never know!

Richard I. Mulvey
Ithaca