

OPINIONS

If the shoe fits ...

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.

On the evening of Feb. 4, television stations preempted scheduled programming for a major news story.

Pundits were summoned to offer predictions and expound on potential implications.

The next day, morning television news magazines and radio shows continued the discussion. People congregated at work to present their own views almost as soon as they walked in the door.

And the morning papers boldly announced:

"Jury: O.J. must pay."

Oh, and by the way, President Clinton delivered his State of the Union address the same night.

If you looked next to or below newspaper stories about the O.J. Simpson civil trial, you may have noticed smaller front page articles about the president's vision for the nation in the coming year — and into the next century.

But chances are, many readers barely noticed.

The case of O.J. Simpson has kept the nation mesmerized for the past 2½ years. The case has all the ingredients of a made-for-television melodrama: a charismatic sports and movie star; a beautiful wife; interracial marriage; alleged drug use and spouse abuse; the bloody murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman; a police chase; charges of racism and police misconduct; an acquittal in a controversial criminal trial; and a troubling, child-custody case.

President Clinton's address, meanwhile, had the drama of a Sunday sermon. He called for action and working together to address such concerns as education, campaign finances, welfare and foreign affairs.

The brutal deaths of two human beings are important news,

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as is the case's effect on race relations. But does a jury's decision in a civil case nearly three years after the deaths occurred outweigh the importance of a president's vision for all the people of this nation?

Apparently, that is what many media outlets are telling us. Apparently, too, that is what the American people believe. During the criminal trial, people set their videotape machines to record every detail of the proceedings for viewing after work. Readers snapped up book after book about the trial. Jurors from the criminal trial have been hot commodities on the talk-show circuit.

Indeed, most people are readily able to discuss in detail the intricacies of doctored photographs, police lab errors and Italian dress shoes.

Most of us, however, would be hard-pressed to discuss even in general terms what President Clinton had to say about welfare, education or balanced budgets.

This should be no surprise to readers of the *Catholic Courier*.

Over the past year, this newspaper has provided extensive reporting on such issues as physician-assisted suicide, Bishop Clark's pastoral on the Eucharist, partial-birth abortion, the 1996 elections, vocations and economic justice.

Yet a review of *Courier* opinion pages during the same period shows that, with the exception of abortion, the hottest topic for debate was appropriate church attire. And the furor arose not from an article but from a simple photograph of a young lady neatly clad in shorts taking up a Sunday collection.

Maybe President Clinton should consider wearing shorts — or Bruno Magli shoes — for his next State of the Union address.

Trouble with translations of papal text

To the editors:

It seems that many American newspapers neglected to check their sources in regards to the statement made by Pope John Paul II on evolution. Countless newspapers have taken the Holy Father's words out of context. He never said that it was time to recognize evolution as "more than a hypothesis" or that "evidence clearly supports the idea that the human species developed along an evolutionary line."

In his message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, the Pope's exact words, as printed in the October 30, 1996, edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, were, "Today, almost a half a century after the publication of the Encyclical *Humani generis*, new knowledge has led to the recognition of more than one hypothesis in the theory of evolution." This is a far cry from stating that evolution is more than a hypothesis.

(Of) *Humani generis*, the Holy Father says, Pope "Pius XII has already stated that there was no opposition between evolution and the doctrine of the faith about man and his vocation, on condition that one did not lose sight of several indisputable points. ...Pius XII added two methodological conditions: that this opinion should not be adopted as though it were a certain proven doctrine and as though one could totally prescind from Revelation with regard to the questions it raises. He also spelled out the condition on which this opinion would be compatible with the Christian faith..." Additionally, Pope John Paul II stated that "...rather than the theory of evolution, we should speak of several theories of evolution." And finally, he says, "...theories of evolution which, in accordance with the philosophies inspiring them, consider the (spirit) as emerging from the forces of living matter, or as a mere epiphenomenon of this matter, are incompatible with the truth about man. Nor are they able to ground the dignity of the person."

The Holy Father concludes his message to the Academy of Sciences by asking them to "call to mind a Gospel truth which can shed a higher light on the horizon of your research into the origins and



unfolding of living matter. The Bible in fact bears an extraordinary message of life. It gives us a wise version of life inasmuch as it describes the loftiest forms of existence. ...St. John's Gospel life refers to the divine light which Christ communicates to us. We are called to enter into eternal life, that is to say, into the eternity of divine beatitude."

I believe that the misinformation presented in so many American newspapers will only add confusion to an already confused Church, and shed doubt on such a loyal servant of God. Additionally, this has obviously caused many loyal Roman Catholics to become perplexed as to the true position of the Pope, and disheart-

ened at what they wrongfully perceive that he stated.

Charlotte Massey-Crouch

Berkshire

EDITORS' NOTE: The pope delivered the speech in French, and the phrase "dans la théorie de l'évolution plus qu'une hypothèse" is the source of difficulty. One might well translate "qu'une" as "than one." But the official English translation — republished by the documentary service Origins on Dec. 5 at the request of *L'Osservatore Romano* — clearly shows that the pope intended to say evolution is "more than a hypothesis," even though he later discussed several variations thereof. For more discussion of this issue, see Father Dietzen's column on Page 11.

Why squabble over varying beliefs?

To the editors:

The messages contained in many Holy Books do not offend people. It is the interpretation of these messages, and how the interpretations are recounted to others, that can cause many misunderstandings.

I find the way in which people sometimes repudiate each other quite brutal. I am not exempt from these findings, either. All of us have a tendency to condemn the actions and/or words of others; even people we have not met. Much of our condemnation stems from our dissatisfaction with our own lives. Some of our character assassinations are carried out because we want to change the world for the better so we attack others; trying to change their behaviors, rather than trying to change our own. There are people who pick on others because of envy and/or lack of tolerance.

There are clerics who use scare tactics to bring people into God's light. There are clerics who are gentle and who let us know that we always have a second chance, upon conviction. Some people never question any religious philosophy they are taught, and some people are incessant seekers of God's truths. Some people believe there isn't any God and there never will be.

Whether people believe they were created from microscopic organisms or by God, mutual respect are two words every person can fathom. It isn't always easy being loving and holy. But, if we really delve into the Gospels, we automatically know that from the moment we are procreated, our service to one another begins and continues until we are no longer a part of Earth.

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