

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.

Standing for all stands for nothing

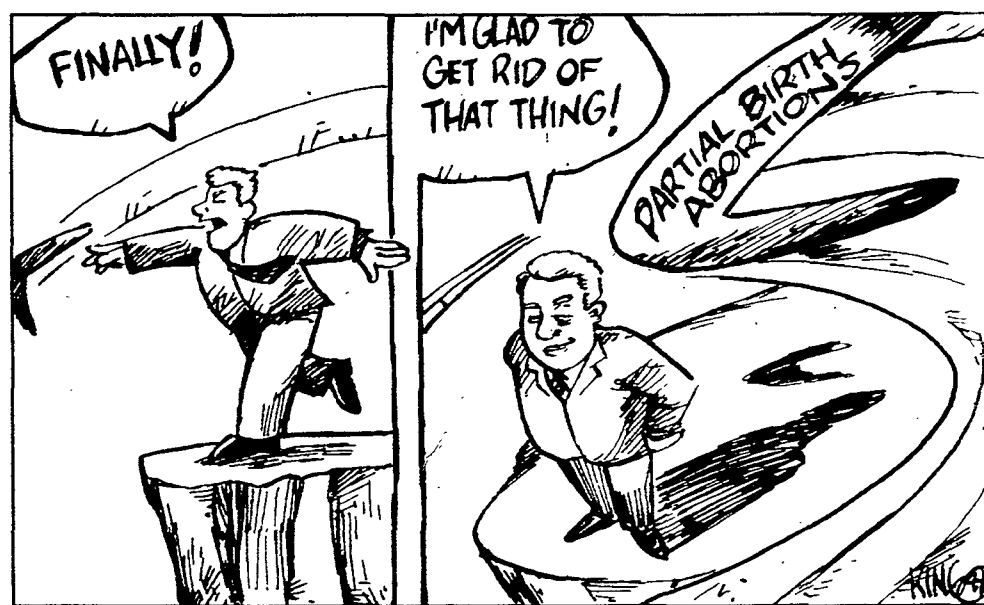
To the editors:

All adult Catholics are voluntary members, held together by common observances and traditions which prevent us from fragmenting into many pieces. The Church has been given a divine commission to pass on these beliefs and if she fails to insist on conformity, she loses her reason for existence.

Father McBrien is upset in his Jan. 30 and Feb. 6 articles over the recent excommunication of Sri Lankan theologian, Father Tissa Balasuriya, claiming the priest was only trying to make the Christian faith more intelligible and attractive to non-Christians by articulating a more inclusive type of salvation.

A closer look at the facts is needed. Father Balasuriya denied Jesus was God and other beliefs like the motherhood, virginity and Assumption of Mary, baptism, original sin and the teaching authority of the pope and bishops and repeatedly ignored the Holy See's requests to stop teaching his personal beliefs as authentic Catholic Faith. In espousing his ideas he appeared to be doing more than making the faith understandable to non-Christians. He was attempting to change the faith according to his own personal beliefs and then proclaim them as official Church teaching.

Anyone who admires Jesus as merely a human leader has ceased to be a Christian in any meaningful sense. When Father Balasuriya voluntarily dissociated himself from these Christian beliefs, he effectively excommunicated himself from the Church. What is remarkable is the pa-



tiency exhibited by the Holy See in repeatedly asking Father Balasuriya to either conform his teaching principles or to cease as an instructor in the faith.

Dissent can have grave implications for the spiritual life of the individual and can harm the community. ...The Church's purpose was not to show Father Balasuriya a lack of mercy as was claimed by Father McBrien but to protect the innocent who may have been misled by his taking the law into his own hands.

Throughout history, people like St. Gregory the Great have admonished religious leaders who kept silent instead of opposing error to keep from losing favor with the people. He compares them to mercenary shepherds who flee when they

see the wolf approaching the flock. Isn't such silence or worse, an espousal of personal belief against the church teaching, equivalent to abandoning the flock? ... It is necessary to have a healthy respect for diversity but an absolute openness to anything, on the other hand, places us on a fast track to chaos and personal, moral and institutional disintegration. In short, to stand for everything is to stand for nothing. We cannot stay united unless we consent to order and tradition. Let us profess, without equivocation "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all and through all, and in all."

Michael R. Aiello, M.D.
Warren Street, Fayetteville

Seminarian lauds positive vocations effort

To the editors:

As a seminarian, in far off Belgium, I would like to publicly acknowledge my personal gratitude for the action of Mrs. Van Durme in regard to her concern for the vocations that we do have in the diocese (*Catholic Courier*, Jan. 23: "Seminarian's mother seeks parish assistance to encourage students with prayer, packages"). I have been in Belgium for several months and it is refreshing to hear a positive affirmation about the vocations, in contrast to the negative focus that has been pre-

sent in the past.

I wonder if we realize that this action, in itself, can be seen as promoting vocations. When I began this process with the diocese of Rochester I believed that it was between the diocese and myself because no one else seemed to be interested. Mrs. Van Durme has extinguished that concern. Since the publication of her article I have received several letters from a seventh-grade class from the Church of the Transfiguration in Pittsford and a letter from a family in Clyde. Thank you all for

sharing in my journey. The response thus far, has been incredible. These people, who are writing to me, are simply sharing their lives with me and are asking that I do the same.

One of the reasons, and there are many, why I decided to answer this call from God was because I wanted to share my faith experience with other people, specifically the people of Rochester. These people who are writing to me are enabling me to begin my ministry right now. It is through the sharing of our faith experiences that we are able to build up the Body of Christ and make Him present in the world and in turn make the world a better place.

This is the call of all Christians, it is not just for me or the priests or our Bishop, it is for everyone. This is a positive action and it will bear fruit and it will edify the Church. I strongly urge people to accept this invitation into my life and the lives of the other seminarians. For a consequence of it is that I will be invested in you and you will be invested in me. I pray that we will no longer focus our energy on the negative but rather pour our lives into the wonderful things that our diocese is doing.

Once again I would like to thank Mrs. Mary Flessner, Amy, Brianna, Amanda and Jeff, the seventh grade class from the Church of the Transfiguration; Mr. and Mrs. Albrecht; and Mrs. Van Durme. You will be hearing from me soon.

Joseph Marcoux
Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium
via e-mail

Bishop's letter on Eucharist focuses on key question for next generations

To the editors:

We should all be very grateful to Bishop Clark for his pastoral letter on the Eucharist, requesting us to think about the importance of the Mass in our lives. That is the crucial, critical question of the future of the Church in the United States.

For practicing Catholics, old and young, men and women, liberal and conservative, attending Mass is at the heart of our Faith. The Mass — which has three main parts, Scripture, Consecration and Communion — gathers people from the country lanes, streets and avenues, and brings them together. The Mass provides centrality of place and purpose. The Mass inspires us to be better people. The Mass leads us to the center of ourselves.

Why is this the crucial question for our church? Because in the year 2027, we must wonder where my grandchildren's children will be going to Mass in Rochester? With few male celibate priests, perhaps the faithful will be going to Frontier Field, Dome Arena, War Memorial or Eastman Theatre for Mass. Then in parish clusters there will be Communion services but no Consecration, no Mass.

I am even more worried about Catholics in rural areas who will have no priest very, very shortly.

With the greatest respect and admiration for Pope John Paul, the Bishops of

the entire United States must tell him what the situation is here and now. He does not live here. How can he know that many parishes are not able to have Mass, but only Communion services, unless lay people urge the Bishops to plead with the Holy Father.

If ordination had been available 29 years ago to married men and all women, we would not now be worried about closing or clustering parishes. Each small community would have the full Mass to help them celebrate weddings, grieve with loved ones at Funerals and to fill them with the energy to help one another.

We have no time to wait to prepare for 2027. The time is now.

Margaret M. Joynt
Sandpiper Lane, Pittsford

Non-traditional fields may yield ample vocations

To the editors:

Our high schools are no longer Catholic high schools, the once religious fields the Church harvested young students for religious life. They are now good athletic scholarship schools for college offered to all local students.

In our large diocese a field can now be found in mature widowers, annulled cou-

ples and single adults by showing them they are wanted and needed; offering them a new type of life with God with the Church. Encouraging by mail, meetings and many articles in the *Catholic Courier*, you are planting the seeds. I do not qualify because of age, over 80 years.

Henry T. Compertore
Indian Trail, Fairport