

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.

Decries vitriol of letters in Courier

To the editors:

I am writing because I am concerned about the numerous acrimonious letters to the editor that have been published recently.

I belong to a few news groups and mailing lists on the Internet, all of which have editorial policies regarding what is known as "flaming" — a blatant, unintelligent and vitriolic attack on another person's character or opinion. The reason "flaming" is prohibited is to foster a space where intelligent and civil discussion can occur on what are, sometimes, emotionally charged issues. It has been the experience of those who run these news groups and mail listings that "flaming" promotes more "flaming." On a mailing list with no editorial controls, dialogue quickly devolves to the point where the intelligent and rational cancel their subscriptions.

Since I have been receiving the *Courier* I have seen more "flaming" in the editorial page than I have ever seen on-line. Truth be known, I don't belong to any Catholic or Christian news groups or mail listings. However, even these secular news group conversations are much more civil and intelligent — let alone Christian — than those published in the *Courier*. I fear that without more stringent editorial control the *Courier's* editorial page will become more of a venue for empty vitriol than a space for readers to thoughtfully express their concerns.

Although there are many good examples of "flaming" on any given editorial page, I will focus on a letter published the week of Feb. 20 titled "Name change due?" Not much needs to be argued here. The author of this letter does not even express an identifiable opinion. This is simple grade-school name calling, which

Range, depth make paper 'remarkable'

To the editors:

I am writing to express my most heartfelt, continued and undivided support for you and your outstanding well-rounded publication. It occurred to me recently, that the letters to the editor, are often written expressing negative points of view. I am writing to express my heartfelt support and commendations.

The *Catholic Courier*, in my opinion, is a leader in Diocesan newspapers. Rochester is TRULY BLESSED to have such a remarkable publication. Your cover stories are current, valuable, insightful and are often "on the cutting edge." Your selection of regular columnist is well-rounded. They are professional, discerning and spiritual. They offer us contrasting opinions and points of views. What a tremendous opportunity for all of us! This process allows us, through the Spirit, our life experience, and our conscience, to discern and formulate our own opinions and points of view. This process is such an essential aspect of our faith.

I am also impressed by the range of articles, topics and stories that you cover and the manner in which they are written. If only all diocesan papers could be so well-rounded! It is truly Refreshing.

All of us are Blessed in many ways and have a great deal to be thankful for. Bishop Clark, the contributing columnists, the *Catholic Courier* and its staff are certainly included in this roster of blessings. I applaud Bishop Clark for his leadership, his Faith and his commitment to proclaiming Catholic and Christian values. He is a gift! My Prayers and Support remain with you all always.

Dale R. Szczech
Wildwood Drive, Rochester

does not warrant an audience in a publication such as the *Courier*. Publishing this kind of empty emoting promotes the evacuation of our public discussion of theological issues.

Additionally, the publication on the editorial page of defamatory comments relating to your columnists is offensive. People who write such letters should be encouraged to rewrite their letters taking issue with the ideas of the author while eschewing rancorous personal attacks. If these people find themselves incapable of controlling their antagonism, then the editors would do us all a favor by not abusing us with their rantings.

Finally, from the perspective of someone who holds a Ph.D. in Moral Theology, the tenor of the discussions — if hostile attacks can be named such — in the editorial page leads to the dumbing down of the average Catholic. More importantly, I believe hostility also leads us all to a hardening of the heart. It trains us to react rather than listen to what others have to say. We, therefore, become deaf to any opinion other than our own, forfeiting the possibility of being challenged by a fellow Christian, or even hearing God's prophetic Word.

It is an indictment of the current state of affairs in the Catholic community that secular news groups on the Internet can create a space for civil and intelligent conversation, while our Catholic publications strain to find reasonable and charitable voices from which to choose.

Thomas O'Brien
Sanford Street
Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: "More stringent editorial control" of published letters has been discussed many times — on this page as well as in *Courier* staff and board meetings. Deciding which letters to print is a highly subjective process, and the extremely negative tenor of letters we reject may make others falsely seem tame by comparison. Moreover, we deliberately try to be more tolerant of criticism directed at this newspaper and/or its writers than at others; letters are the only concrete means short of subscription cancellations that readers have to express dissatisfaction.

Mr. O'Brien's final paragraph makes a good point: Although we know — or at least steadfastly hope — that the majority of our readers are happy with the diocese and its newspaper, our mail definitely indicates otherwise. So, if you'd like to see more positive letters on this page, consider writing some!



'He has been raised;
He is not here.'

Mark 16:6

Encourages practice of adoration

To the editors:

Many Catholics do not know that we have "Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration" in our area (Elmira) where God the Son is adored day and night continually throughout the year. Come and bring your joys and sufferings to the Lord. Join us as we celebrate the fifth year since the opening of our chapel and sit before His Altar and give thanks, for He is truly with us.

In reference to the Pastoral Planning for the New Millennium for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester's Synod Goals:

"...Roman Catholics will participate fully and actively in the Sacramental life which is integral to their faith... we need to remain centered on the Eucharist... joyfully embrace our baptismal call to worship God, to preach the good news... as pilgrims nourished by the Eucharist to our journey of faith, we work with other

churches and with all who seek harmony within the human family to advance the reign of God..."

We invite you to deepen your faith as you deepen your love for the "True Presence" of Jesus in the Eucharist. Jesus said "Could you not wait one hour with me?" Come and spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament at our "Divine Mercy" Chapel which is located on the lower level of St. Casimir's Church; 1004 Davis St., Elmira, N.Y.

We have a mission children of God, to turn to Jesus Christ the King and give Him praise and glory!

For further information contact one of the following Divisional Leaders: Ange Sgro, 607/733-0533; Rose Marie McLaughlin, 607/734-8691; Machell Bailey, 607/734-0840; or Ann Pariso, 607/732-6820.

Machell Bailey
Magnolia Street, Elmira

Notice to Readers

In response to Bishop Matthew H. Clark's March 1 Mass for the gay and lesbian community, family and friends, we have received enough letters to fill three or more newspaper pages.

Since we consider it inappropriate either to spread out publication of these letters over several is-

sues or to restrict publication to a small handful of letters, we are delaying their publication until we can allocate at least two adjacent "Opinion" pages.

Thus, we would ask both the letter writers and the general readership to be patient with us as we attempt to resolve this backlog.