

# OPINIONS

## What is a leader?

To the editors:

What is a leader? I believe Bishop Matthew Clark exemplified this by his willingness to take the unpopular stance of celebrating Mass for gays and lesbians and their families while staying connected to others in the church.

The judgmental stance taken by the demonstrators against the Bishop and Mass attendees does not fully represent most Catholics and thankfully so.

If the protesters feel so strongly about gay and lesbian issues why not also protest against the adulterers, fornicators, murderers. I think you get my point.

Why just pick and choose your causes, why not pick all sinners. I believe the words Jesus spoke to the "criminal" hanging beside him, "today you will be with me in paradise" applies to all of us. Jesus didn't say I died only for the saved, He died for the damned and outcasts of society also.

Sharon Looney  
Werner Park, Rochester

## A matter of intent

To the editors:

On March 1 Mass was celebrated at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester for the Gay and Lesbian Community.

Questions: if people define themselves as Gay and Lesbian doesn't it follow that they are committed to this sexual lifestyle?

And if they are committed to this sexual lifestyle are they not committing sacrilege by receiving Holy Communion?

While a healing Mass can be beneficial for all manner of sinful behavior, the condition for healing requires the firm desire to avoid sin.

Hopefully this was the intention of all those attending the Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Robert Bart  
PO Box 594, Ithaca

## Go and sin no more

To the editors:

Thank you for publishing the letter from Michael A. Gallagher of Fairport (March 6: "Debate shows need for teaching") He very eloquently expressed what the vast number of "silent" Catholics feel about our diocese. The last paragraph of his letter should be taken to heart by our Bishop and Priests. If teaching and guiding the faithful in regard to what is sinful and what is not, as taught by the Church, alienates anyone, it is not the fault of the teacher but of those who refuse to hear and accept the truth. Jesus forgave sinners out of love for them but always with the admonition, "go and sin no more." Can we do less?

Ramon G. Becker  
Rouge Road, Rochester

## Key is in our hearts

To the editors:

My husband and I were privileged to attend Bishop Matthew Clark's Mass at the Cathedral for lesbians and gays, and their families and friends.

A husband and wife sat behind us with their two young daughters. One of the girls was asking her dad about the protesters outside. His answer to her put everything that day, I think, into perspective.

He told her that the divisions people cause, and which side we're on, are not important in the eyes of God. What's important is what's in our hearts. Amen!

Joan Keebler  
Highview Trail, Pittsford

## Bishop was 'Christ with us' at Mass

To the editors:

On Saturday, March 1, glory and praise were given to God at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Bishop Clark invited all in the diocese, but especially gay and lesbian people, their families and friends — and the people responded and many came to worship. Many who could not attend sent well wishes. Some were ill, some were away or had previous commitments, and some stayed away out of fear, because they heard that there may be a contingent of people outside the cathedral who would come to harass them into not attending the Mass.

What happened at this particular Mass that upset people? I am not sure, but I will recount what I observed. The cathedral was packed to standing room only, and the congregation was alive with anticipation, laughter, excitement, camaraderie, and I do believe, the Holy Spirit. Joyful song was heard and sung — at the top of everyone's lungs! Bishop Clark greeted the people

and the people greeted Bishop Clark. The reading, psalm, and Gospel of the day were read and Bishop Clark offered a homily.

He spoke of the fact that God's embrace is not one of confinement and constriction, but it is an embrace of love, freedom, passion and compassion. After the homily, we prayed for people everywhere and people close by, but mostly for healing. The gifts of bread and wine were brought to the altar. All watched and prayed as we witnessed, again, the miracle of the Eucharist. We prayed as Jesus taught us to pray and embraced all of our friends, old and new, in a sign of peace. We then received the miracle — the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Praise and thanks were given again to God, and Bishop Clark sent the people on their way as the people bid their own farewells to Bishop Clark. There was more joyful and exuberant song — and dance! — as people left the cathedral.

I am proud that Bishop Clark chooses to LIVE the Gospel of Jesus Christ — the teachings of the church. It was Christ who taught by His very example to go directly to the people wherever they were. It was Christ who dictated a new law, a law of love. It was Christ who gave example after example of the lengths God goes to be with the people — how God is like a woman who lost a coin and does not stop searching until she finds her treasure. It was Christ who taught us that God's embrace is tender and immense enough to cradle both the "prodigal" son and the "reliable" son. It was Christ who sat by the well with the rejected Samaritan woman and whose heart leapt and whose spirit was replenished at being able to share God's word with her.

Thank you, Bishop Clark, for being Christ with us.

Jim Buckheit  
Enterprise Street, Rochester

## Unchanging truth comes only from God

To the editors:

I've read with interest the letters ... from readers regarding both the Mass being offered by Bishop Clark for the homosexual community and the Call to Action organization.

It appears that many readers in this diocese disagree with Bishop Clark on both of these highly charged issues. This is Rochester and not Vatican City and this is our bishop and not the bishop of Rome. Were it otherwise, these same readers would either, I assume, blindly and obediently accept whatever Matthew H. Clark taught or go along with it silently — not because of

the truth or value in the teachings, but because of the temporal position the man who taught them held.

The Authority to which I bend my knee and submit my life is seated on the throne of Grace. My Lord held no position here; he sat on no throne.... He chose a life of abject poverty and service. His servant Peter went to Rome as a shepherd of God's people, not a prince; Peter never sat on the throne named for him. Thankfully, my Lord's apostles were willing to open their hearts and minds to the Spirit of God present in Jesus. They were afraid, but still willing to risk everything for the sake of Jesus'

Gospel — a Gospel totally at odds with the authority of the world — because they allowed the truth to speak to their hearts and minds.

I would remind your readers that Bishop Clark is a part of the authority of the Church. Too kind to remind you himself, we should all remember that he is our appointed local leader. Because of his commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he chooses to walk among us, to empower and encourage us to grow in Christian love, teaching us by example, rather than sitting aloof from us on his throne; it is easy to forget because he chooses not to remind us, but he has one, too.

Truth is not the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Galileo was excommunicated because he dared to teach that the sun did not revolve around the earth. Serfdom was accepted by the Church until the Industrial Revolution. A most recent example of truth changing has been John Paul II stating that the theory of evolution holds an undetermined element of truth; previously, it was high heresy! Only divine truth is unchanging; divine truth comes only from God.

It's a sign of health within the Church that there is diversity of thought and an environment open to sharing of ideas; it is not something to be feared. Don't be puzzled that we remain Catholic; just think of us as some of those outcasts that Jesus loved enough to die for.

Lisa P. Marcelletti  
Daniel Drive, Rochester

## Bishop's embrace lacked discipline

To the editors:

With genuine excitement, I attended the Sacred Heart Cathedral liturgy on March 1. Where the Bishop is, there is Jesus Christ's Catholic Church and I wanted to be there! The gathering was magnificent. The welcome was sincerely gracious. How happy I was to see so many people I know and love. I came to the Mass hungering for peace, justice and the pastoral care we all need. By the time our beloved Bishop finished his homily, however, I knew the congregation did not receive all of what we deserve.

With sadness in my heart and confusion in my mind, I recall a Vatican letter to Bishops written on The Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons. It states in part, "de-

parture from the Church's teaching, or silence about it, in an effort to provide pastoral care is neither caring or pastoral. The neglect of the Church's positions prevents homosexual men and women from receiving the care they need and deserve."

Although I always strive to follow Bishop Clark in grace and truth, I can't help feeling that without clearly stating homosexual sex is objectively immoral, our Bishop served us a shiny stone instead of wholesome bread. Yes, the father's embrace in the movie *Shine* can smother and stifle, but in the March 1 embrace offered by Bishop Clark we are in danger of either being dropped or plucked out of his hand.

Dominick A. Zarcone, SFO  
Mohawk Street, Rochester

## Church must respond to needs of all its members

To the editors:

It was with great interest that I read your Feb. 27 coverage of Bishop Clark's liturgy welcoming gay and lesbian Catholics and their families and friends. In the Diocese of Rochester as well as in the Diocese of Monterey — where I share your ministry — and in other local churches throughout our land, we need to respond to the needs of

all Catholics regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race, socio-economic status, age or whatever. It is not always an easy or comfortable task, but it is certainly in the spirit of the compassionate Christ who welcomed all.

Thank you, Bishop Clark, for your forthright and clear statement of the issue of Christian hospitality and your compas-

sionate and understanding pastoral column. I have followed your column with some regularity in the inter-diocesan exchange of the Catholic press. Your message consistently reflects the Jesus of the Gospels after whom all believers need to model their lives. May the church be blessed with more understanding shepherds like yourself.

We Catholics need to get beyond our "holier than thou" attitude and welcome all who share faith and baptism with us. Where would the church be without the giftedness of our gay brothers and lesbian sisters in all facets of church life and ministry? To deny participation in the life of the church to persons because of sexual orientation — or whatever else renders them unacceptable to us — is to deny the wholeness and holiness of the Body of Christ. May we not only welcome those who have been marginalized or alienated from our family of faith, may we also recognize and embrace the very presence of Jesus within them.

Father Edward Kaminski, CSC, Editor  
The Observer, Monterey, Calif.

## We must pray for compassion, open minds

To the editors:

In the last session of (my parish's Lenten) retreat our speaker talked about graces for growth, necessary for good relationships: a compassionate heart; an open mind, and an imaginative spirit...

(T)his called to mind the wonderful, wonderful experience of being present when our good — and saintly — Bishop Matthew Clark presided at the Eucharistic liturgy for our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters, their parents and friends! The Cathedral was filled to overflowing. There was absolutely no doubt of God's loving presence among us, and I was proud to be

there. Our Bishop is truly "graced" by God with a compassionate heart, an open mind, and imaginative spirit!!

Quote from the Vatican II (document) *Gaudium et Spes*: "The Church ... seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ Himself ... to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not be served." We must not sit in judgment of gays and lesbians; nor of our Bishop; and we must pray for the graces of compassion, open minds and imaginative spirits for ourselves.

Grace B. Carnes  
Eagle Ridge Circle, Rochester