

# 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.



## Agrees on hostile letters

### To the editors:

Many thanks to Thomas O'Brien for his thoughtful letter in the March 27 *Courier* ("Decries vitriol of letters in *Courier*") in which he expresses his concern "about the numerous acrimonious letters to the editor that have been published recently." I agree wholeheartedly with him that "hostility leads us all to a hardening of the heart" — and to a diminishment of our ability to enter into intelligent discussion with those with whom we disagree.

In my opinion, this hostility also discourages many of us from writing you about our satisfaction with the *Courier* and about our gratitude for the gift of Bishop Clark's ministry among us. It is not fear which causes the reluctance — I speak as one who has himself been silent too long; it is a wearied feeling of hopelessness that overcomes us as we glance at the kind of letters Mr. O'Brien describes. What is the use of entering a discussion marked by self-righteous anger? I recall the lovely antiphon, *Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est* — "Where charity and love prevail, there God is found" — and I look hopefully elsewhere.

Still, I do not condone such reluctance, for it gives the false impression that a bad temper rules the diocese. I plan from now on to write you occasionally about your own excellent work. When or if I disagree,

I shall do so in charity, mindful of my own flaws and prejudices, and searching all things in the light of the Risen Lord.

George Dardess  
Rochester

*EDITORS' NOTE: A couple of readers have taken issue with the Editors' Note that accompanied Mr. O'Brien's letter. Perhaps that note — written with brevity in mind — was unclear and bears further explanation. Mr. O'Brien and others who would have us reject acrimonious letters assert that such letters — especially those "published recently" — discourage others from writing positive letters. Yet roughly 90 percent of all letters we have received throughout the past dozen years might fit Mr. O'Brien's rejection criteria. People are more inclined to write when they are upset about something than when they are pleased.*

*Complaints about negative letters generally come from people who could be termed "liberals," whereas most of the letters in question come from "conservatives" who already believe this newspaper has a liberal bias and censors conservative thought. Since we usually receive only one page's worth of letters each week, many issues would contain no letters at all if we applied Mr. O'Brien's criteria. We believe it would be difficult to justify omitting a letters page while subjectively rejecting 90 percent of the letters received. But we welcome further reader comment on this subject.*

## Passion derives from topics

### To the editors:

I may be the only one shameless enough to respond to Thomas O'Brien's perfectly reasonable letter on vitriol, but since he seems to respect other perspectives, I'm sure he won't mind.

Mr. O'Brien expressed concern about the level of passion in many *Courier* letters, and praised the Internet for its' cool-headed handling of such communications. I appreciate a thoughtful approach to divisive issues myself, but I also recognize that religion is the one arena where we are dealing with moral absolutes. It's all well and good to calmly debate worldly issues, which are truly more a matter of opinion than Truth. In such a situation,

compromise is always a possibility. But many of the "vitriolic" letters Mr. O'Brien decries were written by people who are outraged by an insidious watering-down of spiritual absolutes. They have not forfeited honest spiritual passion for a pale rationality that neutralizes conviction.

Mr. O'Brien, perhaps without realizing it, displayed his own brand of antagonism in his letter, grounded not in deeply-held beliefs but in a prideful self-righteousness. I don't have a Ph.D. in Moral Theology like Mr. O'Brien, but sure I recognize arrogance when I see it.

Sandra Dunn  
Mattie Street  
Auburn

## Praying for guidance on vocations

### To the editors:

I wish to respond to letters in your March 20 issue regarding the dire shortage of priests "in the entire United States." I listened with interest to a recent discussion on EWTN hosted by Father Michael Scanlon who heads the Franciscan University of Steubenville. His guest was Bishop John Myers from Peoria, Illinois, whose diocese has only 240,000 Catholics and yet 70 men have been ordained there in the last 10 years. Father

Scanlon said there are approximately 80 young men at his university who are interested in becoming priests. Perhaps the problem is not in the entire United States. I don't have answers for these difficult problems which are so divisive in our church. I will continue to pray, as I am sure our Holy Father is praying, that the Holy Spirit will guide and direct our church.

Jo Hallagan  
Norway Heights, Kendall

## Turn to prayer

### To the editors:

I'm writing in concern of the way things are going in the church and the world. As for the shortage of priests, we the people of the faith have to look at ourselves to see who is to blame. It's not celibacy that's the problem or because women aren't allowed to be priests, for if Christ wanted it different He would have made it so. It's because we the people tend to criticize instead of turning to prayer. We have put this world first. We aren't quiet when we are in the presence of our Lord. No we're more concerned about talking and listening to everyone else but God. When we're in His house, He should have our FULL ATTENTION. Protesting against the wrongs in our world should be done in a prayerful, quiet, and loving way. That's the way Christ did it and how can we believe we know a better way.

Let them who are sinless cast the first stone, literally or symbolically. We don't have to like what's happening but we are called to LOVE everyone. The best way we can change things is to go to the Lord in the sacraments, especially reconciliation and Communion. We should go as often as possible and pray with every breath that we, God's people, will do His will in all things and love each other as He did.

If we all did this the world would be like heaven on earth, just as we say each time we pray the "Our Father." Remember more things are brought about by prayer than this world dreams about.

Therese Hebding  
South Main Street, Rushville

## Story offset stereotypes

### To the editors:

Thank you for a very informative article (March 13, "I Like The Music They Sing") on how people with developmental disabilities can contribute to parish life. As a person who has worked with people with developmental disabilities for the past two years, I strongly feel that the article cut through many of the unfair old stereotypes still held by many. These people have the same wants and needs just like you or I. The only difference is the way they express their wants and needs.

I know it is scary at first to see a person who is somewhat different than us — has a wheelchair, is deaf, talks or walks differently, but once you get past these external differences there is usually a wonderful person to get to know.

Thanks again for a great article.  
Richard J. Kuehner  
Van Orden, Horseheads

## Wither obedience?

### To the editors:

I am the father of four children that are being raised Roman Catholic. They go to St. Michael's School in Newark. They range in age from 4 to 11. Three possibly future priests, and my beautiful little Nun.

I was raised a Catholic, my wife was not. I take issue with all this so called "coming out" of lifestyles that create divisions within our church. Have we not changed enough? Whatever happened to obedience to the church? And I might be wrong, but doesn't that start in what the Pope states is the path our church should follow?

It is tough enough raising our children in today's society, but to have so many questions raised about our religion, to me, fosters a spirit of disobedience.

Richard K. McQuown  
Whiskey Hill Road, Wolcott