

# 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.

## Priest continues to build bridges

### To the editors:

The priest has received a lot of "bad publicity" lately. Some priests, it seems, have acted in an un priestly manner. As a result, the questions are often asked: "Why would one want to be a priest?" and "Why do you stay in the priesthood?" I suppose that these are really the same question.

There is no question that it is much more difficult today to be a priest. In days gone by, people looked up to the priest and were very trusting of him. Today, due in large part to many of the scandals caused by the actions of some priests, people look upon us with suspicion and with some lack of trust. This is not easy to take. We are not in a profession or vocation which is looked upon with the approval it once had. It is difficult to serve in an era when the climate where accusations of misconduct, some true and others untrue, are easily made and often accepted as true without much question. Two years ago the Archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, was falsely accused of sexual misconduct. Eventually his accuser confessed that he had made up the accusation — but not before the Cardinal had suffered much anguish and pain. When accusations prove to be true, every priest feels the pain of suspicion and distrust. So why do people enter the priesthood and why do they remain priests?

I can't answer for others but just for myself. I want to serve God and I want to serve my neighbors, my sisters and brothers in Christ. I know that I could do this in other ways and in other vocations — but I want to serve them as a PRIEST!

Our Holy Father the pope is often referred to as the "Pontiff," the "Supreme Pontiff." In Latin the title is "Pontifex Maximus" and the word pontifex means

"bridge-builder." The pope is the one who builds bridges between God and his people and between individual members of the human race — all children of God. The pope does this on a grand scale, for the whole human race. I see the individual priest also as a "pontifex," a bridge-builder but on a local scale.

My job, as a priest, is to build bridges between God and those of his people whom I serve. I do this through the Mass, through the other Sacraments, through preaching and teaching, through consoling, through kindness and concern for those people whose care has been entrusted to me. My task is to build bridges between them and God.

My job is also to build bridges between the people whose spiritual care has been entrusted to me — to link them to each other, to remind them that they are truly sisters and brothers and should have the care and concern for each other that siblings

traditionally have. I must introduce those who don't know each other, I must point out similarities which might link them to each other, I must promote an active spirit of connectedness arising from the common fatherhood of God and our gathering around the one table of the Lord, the Eucharist.

These are just some reasons why I remain a priest even in the face of a realization of my inadequacies, the low esteem in which priests are held these days by many, the suspicions many have about all priests based on the actions of a few. I want to BUILD BRIDGES, bridges between God and people and between people and other people!

**Father William J. Gordinier**  
St. Mary's Church  
Genesee

*EDITORS' NOTE: Father Gordinier asked that the Courier reprint this letter, which appeared in his parish bulletin May 3-4.*



## Preaching, penance require participation

### To the editors:

Under the heading "Stress on 'mother's charism' undercuts teaching of values," one of your readers complained: "The feminine virtues of mercy, gentleness and compassion are omnipresent and witnessed particularly in preaching and confessional roles."

Whew!! Since when do we limit such

virtues to women? My father was a manly type of person but the very soul of kindness and mercy and my mother was firm with us kids, the disciplinarian, but oh so kind and gentle and understanding.

The writer continued, "We have the Mass without the preaching of virtue." Where does this person go to celebrate the

Eucharistic liturgy? Doesn't she listen? To the Scripture readings? To the homily? I urge that your readers review the New Catechism of the Catholic Church with specific reference to virtue, and about faith, hope and charity in the same section — there is not enough room here to go into detail. The virtues are fully incorporated into the homilies that I hear, even though the word "virtue" may not be used!!

And, my heart aches for this woman who cries that she can see no effect in her life from the reception of the Sacrament of Penance, and that "the paltry penances do not instruct or admonish." If one gets nothing out of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, is it because one puts little into it? It is the penitent who comes forward to be reconciled, to express sorrow for his/her sins and failures, and to make a firm commitment to do better. The priest acts in Jesus' behalf, like the father who awaited the prodigal son. That father did not impose a severe penance on his son but celebrated a very return. It is not the severity of any penance that will turn us away from habitual sin but our own inward conversion. This demands effort on our part, in cooperation with God's grace. It's a two-way street!

**Grace B. Carnes**  
Eagle Ridge Circle, Rochester

## Bishop's comment bespoke faith that Jesus will sustain church, us

### To the editors:

My wife Ginny and I would like to share with you a beautiful and faith filled experience we had recently. A good friend, Sister Malita, invited us to attend a celebration of the Eucharist by Bishop Clark at the Nazareth Motherhouse on the college campus. It was to celebrate the feast day of St. Joseph but it turned out to be even more than that. In his homily the bishop said that he was recently asked "where will our church be in the year 2010?" His answer was "It will be where you want it to be..." A political side step? We think not. If indeed we are a part of the Body of Christ, we then ARE the church and we will be where we want it to be.

It's so very easy to be dragged down by the undertow of pessimism and disillusionment because of the lack of priests, school and church closings, more lay involvement, priest co-ops, etc., etc. We don't have answers but we do know that the fact that Jesus died for us is not the issue. The issue is — just what are we, as church, going to do about it?

We were fortunate that day to meet many of our friend's community. We felt the exuberance of dedication and love. Was this a taste of the unconditional faith where we, as church, want to be? We think so.

**Gerry and Ginny Sullivan**  
Medallion Drive, Rochester

## Blessed Mother provides model for church, faithful

### To the editors:

Since the month of May is devoted to Mary, I want to share some thoughts with your readers on the Blessed Virgin. One of the most significant actions of the Second Vatican Council was to place the Council's teaching on Mary in the Constitution on the Church. In doing so, the Council emphasized that Mary is the model for the Church and for all Christians. She who was totally open to God's will for her models the Church's desire for per-

fection. She whose life was without sin models the Church's desire to be the spotless Bride of Christ. And she is a Jewish woman of the first century, a human being, a wife, a mother.

Through the centuries — because of a theology which emphasized the divinity of Christ and God the all-powerful, God who suffers and dies, God the law-giver and judge — Mary has been made into some kind of goddess who manipulates favors from her Son and gets sinners into

the "back door" of heaven. During this century, she has become the spokesperson for all kinds of right-wing, rigid ideologies, especially at her alleged apparitions at Medjugorje. It is time to let Mary be herself and stop putting words into her mouth. She is Mother of God and our heavenly Mother. She lives in my heart and yours as well. And that is enough for me.

**Father Robert L. Collins**  
Washington Street, Livonia