

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

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1150 Buffalo Road
P.O. Box 24379
Rochester, NY 14624
716/328-4340
800/600-3628 outside Rochester

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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.

Taking a stand on Mass postures

To the editors:

I am responding to Father John Dietzen's column entitled "Question Corner," where an individual recently posed a question to him concerning the manner in which one should show reverence at the reception of Holy Communion. I am continually amazed at the lack of knowledge made available to the faithful even upon request. The encyclical of Pope John Paul II, entitled *Inaestimabile Donum*, (Instruction Concerning Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, April 17, 1980) clearly states: "With regard to the manner of going to Communion, the faithful can receive it either kneeling or standing... 'When the faithful communicate kneeling, no other sign of reverence towards the Blessed Sacrament is required, since kneeling is itself a sign of adoration. When they receive Communion standing, it is strongly recommended that, coming up in procession, they should make a sign of reverence before receiving the Sacrament...'"

Furthermore, concerning the use of extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, it is stated that those ministers "can distribute Communion only when there is no priest, deacon or acolyte, when the priest is impeded by illness or advanced age, or when the number of the faithful going to Communion is so large as to make the celebration of the Mass excessively long. Accordingly, a reprehensible attitude is shown by those priests who, though present at the celebration, refrain from distributing Communion and leave this task to the laity" (*Inaestimabile Donum*, No. 10.)



Concerning the reception of Communion in the hand, "In some countries the practice of receiving Communion in the hand has been introduced... cases of a deplorable lack of respect toward the Eucharistic Species have been reported, cases which are imputable not only to individuals guilty of such behavior but also to the pastors of the church who have not been vigilant enough regarding the attitude of the faithful toward the Eucharist. It also happens, on occasion, that the free choice of those who prefer to continue the practice of receiving the Eucharist on the tongue is not taken into account in those

places where the distribution of Communion in the hand has been authorized..." (*Dominicae Cenae*, No. 11.)

It is sad to say that these expressed teachings of the Magisterium are not taught, enforced nor made "public" knowledge to the faithful. The confusion within the Roman Catholic Church could be quickly abolished if the teachings of the Church were made known and followed in the spirit of unity supposedly professed within our Church in this post Vatican II era.

Mary Ann Philpott
Admiral Place, Elmira

Reaching out is a weak sign of reverence

To the editors:

In the April 14 issue of the *Catholic Courier*, (in) Father John Dietzen's column, "Question Corner," a person related that a "member of our parish has it on good authority that when Communion is received standing, liturgical law requires that one genuflect before receiving."

Father Dietzen replied that he knew of no such liturgical law. As he said, the General Instruction on the Roman Missal says only that communicants should "make a suitable reverence" before responding "Amen" to the words "the body of Christ." This is fine but Father Dietzen said that he believes the most expressive act of reverence before Communion is the people holding out their hands to receive the host. Father related how outstretched hands are a common expression of our

desire and need for what the person has to give.

For those who choose to receive in the hand, I can't see outstretched hands as being an expressive act whatsoever; it is an act of necessity to obtain the Eucharist in one's possession. The Second Vatican Council document *Eucharisticum Mysterium* (Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery) states that communion may be received by the faithful either kneeling or standing according to the Episcopal Conference and that when the faithful communicate kneeling, no other sign of reverence toward the Blessed Sacrament is required, since kneeling is itself a sign of adoration. The document continues "When they receive communion standing, it is strongly recommended that, coming up in procession, they

should make a sign of reverence before receiving the blessed Sacrament." For those who chose to receive on the tongue, also permitted by church law, outstretched hands could not be perceived as anything since they are not outstretched.

The human race stretches its hands out countless times for trivialities and on occasions to receive something very important, but with the possible exception of prostration — not practical at Communion — the human race reserves kneeling and genuflecting as the ultimate form of "making a suitable reverence." It is obvious that the most intense act of reverence someone can make at communion is kneeling, genuflecting or for those physically unable, to bow.

Robert A. Martino Sr.
West Church Street, Elmira

Children can't see over standing at consecration

To the editors:

Some say that children should be seen but not heard. In our family-filled church, the liturgy of the Eucharist is now heard, but not seen, by most children. The congregation used to sit, stand and kneel at various times during the Offertory, Consecration and Communion. As an experiment, we no longer kneel. We stand throughout the Consecration until after the reception of Communion.

Even at a sparsely attended Mass, my young children see only the distracting backs of those who stand and fill a row in front of them. I see the talking head of the priest and the elevated Body and Blood of Christ — as long as no tall person blocks my line of vision. We no longer see the altar during the Consecration.

In medieval times, I have been told that people stood throughout the Eucharist as a sign of respect. In this pre-industrial age, the congregation had no pews or kneelers. "For worship, the people would either stand or bring their own seats" (Sefton, "Eerdman's Handbook To The History of Christianity," 1977; p. 40). I suspect only the wealthy or those who lived very close to the church were able to bring seats. The

congregation might track in mud and dung from the roads. Sitting and kneeling on a stone or dirt floor would be unsanitary and uncomfortable. No wonder people stood during the Eucharist!

Kneeling during the Consecration is also a sign of respect. It reminds us that we are servants of the Lord. When we rise from our knees to pray the Our Father together, our actions reflect the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Continuous standing diminishes the

kinesthetic richness of the Mass. It blinds children and many adults to the celebration of the Eucharist. It excludes those who can not stand from full participation in yet more parts of Mass. Might our experiment end with the realization that the former combination of sitting, standing and kneeling is a better way to include the entire congregation in the Sunday Eucharistic liturgy?

Mary H. Begley
South Street, Cato

Columnists failed to acknowledge Mary

To the editors:

In complete LOVE and HUMILITY I am writing in reply to Sister Schoelles and Sister McGivern columns May 1, 1997 on MAY being the month of St. Joseph the worker and no mention of Our Holy Mother Mary.

I always understood that the month of MAY was to honor Holy Mother Mary and each year I always looked forward to the month of May. I feel this Diocese would produce a better harvest

with a better understanding and devotion to the Mother of God "MARY." Many children today do not even know how to pray the Holy Rosary and understand that the Rosary prayers are all about the 33 years of Our Lord. HAIL HOLY QUEEN MOTHER OF GOD!!!!

Martha Van Savage
Jemison Road, Rochester
EDITORS' NOTE: Actually, Sister McGivern's column did refer to the Blessed Mother.