

# 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.

## Mary vital in keeping near God

### To the editors:

I am writing on behalf of the Legion of Mary in response to Fr. Collins letter to the editor (*Catholic Courier*, May 8, 1997, "Blessed Mother provides model for church, faithful").

In his letter Fr. Collins states that "Mary has been made into some kind of goddess who manipulates favors from her Son & gets sinners into the 'back door' of heaven. During the century she has become the spokesperson for all kinds of right-wing rigid theologies especially at her alleged apparitions at Medjugorje."

Pope John Paul II does not disapprove Medjugorje. A papal response in June 1986, "Twelve Italian Bishops at a papal audience addressed this question to Pope John Paul II, "Holy Father, what should we advise about pilgrimages to Medjugorje? Many of our people are traveling to Medjugorje and returning to their parishes, praying, fasting and doing penance." The Holy Father's response to the Bishops was "Let the people go to Medjugorje, if they convert, pray, confess, do penance and fast."

The apparitions at Medjugorje will not be approved by the church until the apparitions cease. Our Blessed Mother leads her children *directly* to her Son, who leads



us into the front gates of heaven. No need to use the *back door!*

The Second Vatican Council continues the Church's ancient practice of invoking Mary under the title that bespeaks Mary's role as intercessory helper for the People of God in times of peril. Mary intercedes to God the Father through the Son and by the Holy Spirit on behalf of humanity.

In the book of John Paul II *Redemptoris Mater* "Mary is the spokeswoman of her Son's will, and She knows ... she can point out to her Son the needs of mankind, and in fact, she has the right to do so."

Vatican Council II *Lumen Gentium* states "Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men originates not in any inner necessity but in the disposition of God. It flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rest on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it. It does not

hinder in any way the immediate union of the faithful with Christ but on the contrary fosters it."

Fr. Maximilian Kolbe explains that "The path of grace is always the same: action: from the Father through the Son and by the Holy Spirit (and through) the Immaculata: then the inverse reaction: from creatures through the Immaculata (by) the Holy Spirit and (to) Christ back to the Father."

In conclusion I like to quote from the book *The Secret of Mary* by St. Louis Marie de Monfort "St. Thomas teaches that in the order of grace, established by Divine Wisdom, God ordinarily communicates himself to men, only through Mary. Therefore, if we would go up to Him and be united with Him, we must use the same means He used to come down to us, to be made man and to impart His graces to us. That means is a true devotion to Our Blessed Lady."

Jane Stalica, Legion of Mary  
St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads

## Medjugorje pilgrim's agenda is prayerful

### To the editors:

What prompted my writing to the *Catholic Courier* regarding Father Collins' May 8, 1997, (letter) on the Blessed Mother, was his mentioning of the "alleged apparitions at Medjugorje."

If I may, I would like to review his last paragraph.

Since I do not know church history, I cannot comment on Father Collins' characterization of the concept of Mary through the centuries as "a goddess who manipulates favors and gets sinners in the back door of heaven." I accept what he says is true.

I do not understand his comments regarding her spokespersonship for "right wing, rigid theologies, especially at Medjugorje." If I may read "through the lines," (please forgive me if I am wrong) what he is saying is that Our Blessed Mother is being used by conservatives in the church to promote their own agenda. Father Collins sees this as a negative outcome of the "alleged apparitions at Medjugorje." In order for him to make this judgment, he must obviously have a thorough knowledge of conservatives and Medjugorje. So in deference to Father Collins, what he is saying must be

true.

What also is true is that I went to Medjugorje twice. I do not have a conservative agenda, nor a liberal one. If I may characterize my agenda, it is a prayerful one. What is also true is that there are exceptions to Father Collins' judgment regarding Medjugorje. I humbly submit myself as one exception.

Lastly, as is the case with Father Collins, Our Blessed Mother lives in my heart as well "and that is enough for me."

Alfred J. Bello  
130 Kirkstone Pass  
Rochester

## Where is Satan of the Scriptures in article on hell?

### To the editors:

Thank you for the *Courier* article on Hell and purgatory ("Hell, purgatory flow from choices," May 15, 1997). Father Joseph Hart's observations were solid and satisfying, but Peter Kreeft seems to allow his philosophical bent to take precedence over the information Scripture provides on the subject. For instance, he speculates that "the damned are in the same place as the saved ... But they hate it; it is their Hell." Luke 16:26 describes the parable of

Lazarus and the rich man, in which Abraham, speaking to the rich man in Hell, says "Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing ..." It appears that Heaven and Hell are not in the same place at all.

Now, I'll admit my spiritual perspective is stuck somewhere between the 1st and 12th centuries, but I found it a bit odd that in the whole of this piece on Hell, not one mention was made of Satan and his cohorts. Has he disappeared, then? We know

he tempted Jesus in the desert; we know Jesus saw him fall like lightning from the sky; we know he can appear as an angel of light, and that he was after doing all kinds of evil in the days up 'til now. So where was mention of him in the descriptions of how a person might end up in Hell?

We are given free will surely, and are responsible for our choices. But the struggle is not so entirely intrinsic to ourselves as it may seem. We are tempted, we are deceived, we are led astray by one whose chief strength at present is the fact that few believe in him or recognize his works.

Satan is not a metaphor. We are warned many times in Scripture to be on our guard against him, to put on the full armor of Christ against his evil. If he is hungry for the damaged souls of the unsaved, how much more does he crave the healed, wholesome souls of Christ's sheep?

He roars in violence, he devours with worldliness, yet to growing numbers he is little more than superstition. How can this be?

Sandra Dunn  
Mattie Street, Auburn

EDITORS' NOTE: The article in question was limited to hell and purgatory in order to keep it to a manageable size. Satan by himself might prove a worthy - or "unworthy" - subject of an article in the future. Coincidentally, in the sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church dealing specifically with hell, there is no mention of Satan or devils.

## Coverage delights, dismays newcomer

### To the editors:

Week after week since I've been receiving the *Courier*, I have felt moved to write but hesitated to do so because I am a newcomer to the Diocese. The issue of May 15 which I read today has finally made me decide to write.

To start on a positive note, the cover article on Purgatory and Hell made me want to cheer. We need more instructions like this from our Catholic press. Much of what I hear today is a mixture of secular humanisms and a form of piety - well-meant but too bland. Vatican II is constantly being quoted but its instruction on the real meaning of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is sadly neglected.

Unfortunately, my next comment is negative and has to do with the news item on page 3 about Bishop Gumbleton's re-

marks to a group in Pittsford May 7. ("Bishop's stances knocked, praised") I quote (from the article): "... some homosexuals may be better off living in stable, committed relationships rather than engaging in promiscuity" because some of them feel they cannot lead "the celibate lives to which the church calls them." The church equally calls heterosexuals to the same celibacy outside marriage. For both homosexuals and heterosexuals, Christ's command is clear: Take up your cross *daily* if you would be my disciple.

As G.K. Chesterton said: "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and has not been tried."

Margaret Vincent  
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Caledonia