

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.

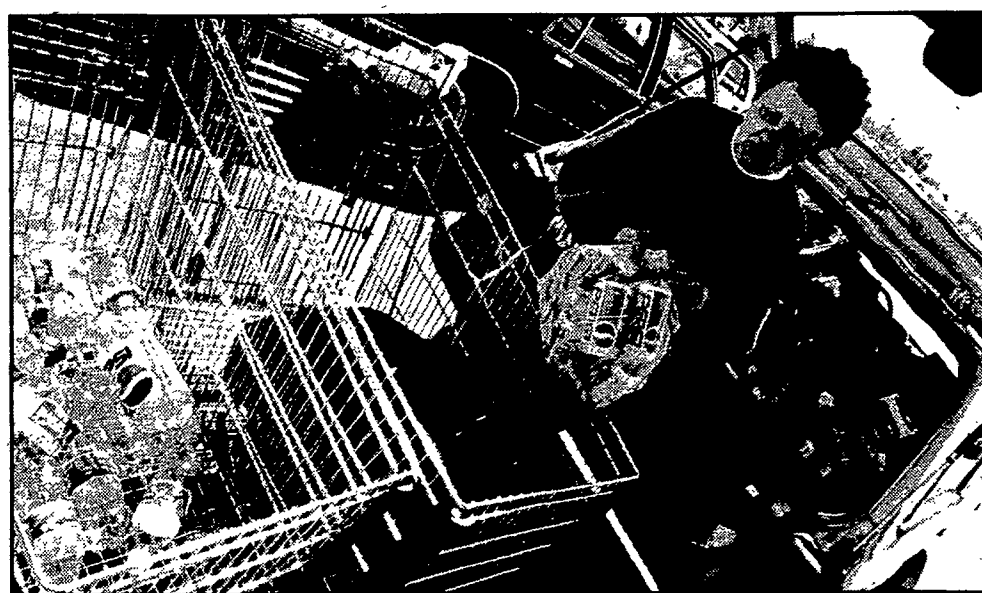
Mail letters to: Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for purposes of verification.

Glad that Miller still volunteers

To the editors:

We are very pleased that you gave high recognition to one of our local humanitarians, Miss Dorothy Miller (*Catholic Courier*, May 8: "Retiree 'recycles' more than \$76,000 for missions").

We lost contact with Dorothy since we moved to the Keuka Lake area, so we are glad to note she is still volunteering to help the less fortunate and the missions. There were a few early activities that were not mentioned in your article. Starting in the late 50s, Dorothy was available at any hour to set up an emergency prayer line or a Mass. She took older people to a weekly holy hour at the Holy Angels'



File photo

Chapel, and she ran a dollar-a-month club for the Holy Angels' Convent. Every nickel was accounted for in a written statement. While working at Kodak Park, these activities and those that you mentioned were accomplished at night, weekends

and on vacation days. We again are pleased that Dorothy is still doing the volunteering that she loves doing.

Paul and Anne Mutter

West Lake Road

Penn Yan

Failure to explain led to loss of faith

To the editors:

Sister Patricia Schoelles' May 15 column which asked, "How could Vatican II shake faith?" was informative but, I think, missed the mark. The inspiration for her column came from a conversation she had with a woman who said that her sister had left the Catholic Church because, "the very core of her faith' had been shaken because of all the changes brought about through the council."

Before Vatican II it was very difficult — and for some impossible — to differentiate between the core of their faith and the practice of their faith because the practice was stressed at Sunday Mass at least as much as the core of our faith. Congregations were regularly sermonized on the rules of the Catholic Church: weekly Mass, direct confession, fasting, Easter duty and of course, abstinence from meat on Fridays. Scripture was not ignored but week after week the congregation had to confront guilt and concern about following the rules.

After Vatican II, pronouncements started to come to the faithful from the pulpit announcing changes— but without explanation. Nothing more was heard about Easter duty and we were told that abstaining from meat on Fridays was no longer required. During this transition a friend asked me what was going to happen Fridays. Lines of people at confessionals on Saturdays became a thing of the past.

Clearly, the laity was confused and, in retrospect, I think that the clergy were, too. Many Catholics stopped coming to church. I was concerned and asked one of the priests in the parish where I then worshipped, to explain the changes that resulted from Vatican II to our congregation. He thought for a moment and replied that there were other, more serious things that he needed to preach about

in the short time allotted for a sermon. It became easier and easier to find a seat at Sunday Mass.

The church initiated major changes in the way we were to practice our faith. We can now say that they were changes more in form than in substance and in method more than in faith. This was not clear 25 and 30 years ago, we were confused. The Church had failed to develop an effective

plan to introduce and explain the changes to the people. I cannot disassociate that failure, the decline in church membership, decline in vocations, and the closing of Catholic schools that followed.

Many people left the Church; but they didn't lose their faith. They had lost faith in their Church.

Richard B. Blankfield

Nichols Street, Spencerport

Teacher knows U.S. battles

To the editors:

As a retired teacher and long time acquaintance of Fathers Norton and Reinhardt I found your article (*Catholic Courier*, May 15, "Priests recall solemn history at Civil War sites") on some of our local clergy's fascination with Civil War battle sites both interesting and informative.

But it was one of Father Downs' observations that nudged me to write. Father commented that the Civil War was unusual in American history because our countrymen fought each other. True, it was unusual, but it was not unique. Almost a century earlier, from 1775 to 1781, Americans fought their first civil war. Most of us think of the American Revolution as a fight between Americans and British, but it was, in fact, also a civil war, with Americans fighting Americans. Almost a quarter of the troops facing Washington's army were Americans, officers and men of regiments such as the Royal Regiment of New York, Butler's Greens, The New York Volunteers, and The Roman Catholic Volunteers.

Upstate New York has many connections with these Loyalist soldiers. It was the setting for some of the bitterest fraternal conflict of the war. Loyalist

refugees from the Mohawk Valley, and their Mohawk and Seneca allies based at Fort Niagara raided the frontier settlements of New York and Pennsylvania which supplied food to Washington's army. The Sullivan expedition sent by Washington to put a stop to the raids fought the Loyalists and Indians near present-day Elmira and later burned a Seneca town near modern Canandaigua.

It is an interesting fact that one of these Loyalist regiments was composed mostly of Scottish Catholics who had been driven out of the Mohawk Valley because of their religion and their loyalty. Their parish priest, Father John McKenna, went with them and became the first Catholic Chaplain in the British army since the reformation.

I was reminded of this neglected bit of history last summer while attending the Shaw Festival's presentation of "The Devil's Disciple." Niagara-on-the-Lake, a town settled by Loyalist veterans from New York and the site of their burial ground, seemed an ironic setting for a play about American victories in revolutionary New York.

John J. Dealy

Laurelton Road, Rochester

Reader fears Catholic leaders forgot basic morality

To the editors:

At a time when the Diocese of Rochester is struggling through two separate sex scandals with priests, St. Bernard's Institute brings the controversial Bishop Thomas Gumbleton to town. Featured on the cover of *Catholic World Report* (Jan. 1997), Bishop Gumbleton is seen wearing a pink gay pride triangle directly over the Cross on his miter. He and Bishop Clark recently led the controversial *New Ways Ministry Conference* on gay and lesbian issues in Pittsburgh (see editors' note below). This ministry is under investigation by the Vatican (*Catholic Courier*, Nov. 7, 1996).

In Pittsburgh, Bishop Gumbleton, incredibly, told the audience: "I hope that within our church every gay person, every

lesbian person, every bisexual person or transgendered person will 'come out,' because that is how our church will truly change. I would say this especially to bishops and priests within our church." (*Catholic Courier*, March 20).

What in the world is a bishop doing telling other bishops and priests to publicly announce they are not simply homosexually oriented, but gay?! What ever happened to bishop and priest's vows of celibacy?! Has Bishop Gumbleton forgotten that only heterosexual activity between a married husband and wife is allowed by our church? Has he forgotten the official Catechism of the Catholic Church which clearly states: "Under no circumstances can homosexual acts be approved.?"

To actually have holy men of God publicly boast and not repent of any homosexual acts, would cause scandals beyond belief?! It's time St. Bernard's Institute starts giving talks on basic sexual morality and remind Catholics that sodomy is not a virtue! Bishop Gumbleton's radical Gay Theology is certainly not needed in our diocese!

Mary Melfi

Clintwood Center

Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: Our Nov. 17, 1996, story noted that the founders of *New Ways* are under investigation, not the ministry itself. The founders are, in fact, no longer affiliated with the ministry. In addition, Bishops Gumbleton and Clark only spoke at the *New Ways* conference; they did not lead it.