

# 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.

The Southern Baptist Convention voted overwhelmingly June 18 to recommend that the denomination's 15 million members boycott Walt Disney Co. products.

Boycott Disney?

No Mickey T-shirts, "Hercules" or "George of the Jungle" movies? No vacations at Disney World?

In urging the boycott, the Baptists objected specifically to Disney's alleged "gay-friendly" policies — including fringe benefits offered to the same-sex partners of Disney employees and unofficial "gay days" at Disney parks. The Baptists were also upset that Ellen Degeneres and her character "came out" as a lesbian in the Disney-owned ABC television program "Ellen."

Actually, the Baptists are not alone in expressing concern.

The National Association of Free Will Baptists (250,000 members) and the Assemblies of God (1.4 million) last year voted for boycotts, largely over the homosexual issue. The American Family Association, which has also urged a Disney boycott, estimates that congregations claiming 27 million adherents have called for Disney boycotts.

In September 1996, the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City sold all of its Disney stock in protest, citing the controversial 1995 movie "Priest" by Disney-owned Miramax Pictures. "Priest" also led the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights to urge a letter campaign targeting Disney.

Our *Sunday Visitor* last summer labeled Disney's "Hunchback of Notre Dame" as "NC — not for Catholics."

## EDITORIAL

Meanwhile, labor and church groups — including the Rochester Committee on Latin America — allege sweatshop conditions in Third-World factories that make Disney clothing items.

Of course, completely boycotting Disney products would be virtually impossible: The company owns a dizzying array of subsidiaries. Among them are the Disney, Buena Vista and Miramax film-production companies ("Pulp Fiction," "Kids," "The English Patient"); such television networks as ABC, ESPN, A&E and, of course, the Disney Channel; Hyperion Press (*Growing up Gay*); Disney theme parks; and the Anaheim Angels baseball and Mighty Ducks hockey teams.

Whatever their opinions of the boycott, Catholic parents might be wise at least to step back and consider their own Disney consumption — if for no other reasons than the company's shameless merchandising and the liberties it takes with stories in its movies, as it did with "Pocahontas."

Rather than plop the children in front of a movie or television screen to absorb more Disney fare, why not actually sit down with them and read the classic tales of Beauty and the Beast and the Little Mermaid, the true story of Pocahontas, or the Greek legends of Hercules?

And maybe even sneak in a few stories from the Bible or the lives of the saints.

Doing so might help dispel the notion that the Trinity consists of Mickey, Goofy and Donald Duck.

## Consumers can enforce advertising ethics

### To the editors:

The matter of truth and ethics in advertisements ("Advertising: Letter draws mixed responses," May 29) cannot be laid aside without looking at some ads that are technically true but of highly questionable ethics.

I am going to comment on some ads for which I have disguised the actual names to protect the not-all-that-innocent companies. I trust you'll recognize the products.

"More people drive Klunkers than any other car." Actually, that is true. "More people drive Roadrunners than any other car." That is also true. How can that be? This is a trick of English. The first claim really said that more people drive Klunkers than any other cars DRIVE KLUNKERS. Cars do not drive cars, I hope.

"More people cure their heartburn with Peppercorns." More people than what? It could be more people than kangaroos.

"This is the new and improved version

of Whatsitcalled." That tells us that the previous product wasn't all that good.

"If we promise Bladderwort will make your skin baby soft, it will. If we promise Bladderwort will destroy all aging wrinkles, it has to: We keep our promises." Was anything really promised? No. This ad is just a series of IF statements with no substance.

"3 out of 4 dentists surveyed recommend Norubber Gum for their patients who chew rubber." How many of those "dentists" really are dentists and how many work for the Norubber company?

"Marilyn Nobody's father is a dentist. While daddy picked me up at the airport and drove me home, he looked carefully into my mouth to be sure my teeth are white." I wonder what company insures a dentist that does a full oral examination while he is driving his daughter home from the airport.

"Nothing, but nothing, has been scientifically proven to be faster and stronger than Ourpills. That's scientific proof!"

This is really easy to say because science and medicine actually cannot prove anything at all.

I read an article published by the Science Teachers Association of New York State "Does Creation Science Really Exist? An 'Ascientific Creationism's Treatise' (1988). There is a similar article coming out this year in the *Journal of College Science Teaching*, "The Essence of a Theory." Both pieces demonstrate conclusively that science — including medical science — can't prove that scientists and physicians really exist.

There you have it. These are my clues for you to find out how advertisers tell a lie by telling the truth. They can't be prosecuted in a legal tribunal — just in the court of public opinion. And watchful consumers can put them out of business.

Oh, I almost forgot to mention that I am the author of both of those philosophy of science articles mentioned above.

**Thomas M. Fisher**  
Park Terrace, Horseheads

## Sorry writer found little reverence in reaching out

### To the editors:

How sad I felt when I read Robert Martino Sr.'s letter in the May 29 issue ("Reaching out is a weak sign of reverence"). He wrote that he could not "see outstretched hands as being an expressive act (of reverence) whatsoever." What a hostile gulf exists between us. Years back in St. Mary's, Canandaigua, Father Bob Kennedy ran a parish workshop on the Mass in which he explained the symbolism of the outstretched hands. Since then I've added my own reflections as I've walked up to Communion.

My hand are outstretched, left palm up supported by the right hand underneath, to make a throne for my Sovereign. As I lift my hands I offer God something — my life, joined a few minutes before with Jesus's sacrifice on the Cross. But my offering hands are empty. That's right.

That's all I have to offer, empty hands, a sign of life cleared — hopefully — of clutter, attachments to things, and the distractions of worldly pursuits. That's a powerful moment for me, when I see my outstretched hands and recognize my utter spiritual poverty before God, and the abundance I receive back.

For me then, joined, outstretched hands are an act of reverence. They help me to focus my thoughts at Communion

and to remember what's really happening. Mr. Martino does offer one additional reverence that I have seen used by the monks at the Abbey of the Genesee, and that's the simple bow. I want to add that to my approach to Communion. But kneeling or genuflection? Nah, not in a parish church with 250 communicants.

**Robert J. Hoffmann**  
West Main Street  
LeRoy

## Pleased Courier didn't accept ad

### To the editors:

I have before me an article published as a half page advertisement in the *Greece Post* by the St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild. This rambling collection of citations from six different sources is a sad at-

tempt to discredit Bishop Matthew Clark for his recent outreach to Gay and Lesbian Catholics and their families. As with many such legalistic approaches to our faith, the STMLG is unable to quote any teaching of Jesus from the Gospels. Perhaps it's because of the way He criticized the religious legalists of His time; but more to the point, I know of nothing in Jesus' teachings to support their position.

The guild made note of the fact that the *Courier* declined to publish their article or accept it as a paid advertisement. My congratulations to the editors and staff of the *Courier* for their stance. Balanced reporting does not mean giving support to this kind of divisive thinking; you have my whole-hearted support.

**George J. Pfeifer**  
Lynette Drive, Rochester

## Urges lobbying Congress on life legislation

### To the editors:

Hooray, Mary Rita Crowe, for your letter "Protesters followed God's law," in the May 22 issue of the *Catholic Courier*.

It inspired me to ask the readers to send a card to:

The Honorable Charles Canady  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2432 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

urging him to hold hearings on "The Right to Life Act" — H.R. 641. This bill will save the lives of millions of innocent, defenseless preborn babies.

For complete information on the bill, call American Life League: (540) 659-4171 or write: PO Box 1350, Stafford, VA 22555.

I agree, "an unjust law is no law at all."

**Helen A. Shultz**  
Main Street, Newfield