

# 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.

## Readers respond to Jesus images

### To the editors:

Regarding the article on cultural backgrounds "coloring" one's concept of the physical attributes of Jesus (*Catholic Courier*, July 3: "Culture colors images of Jesus"), we need to keep in mind and to acknowledge that Jesus was and IS the Messiah, the Savior of all of us. Those facts overshadow and make meaningless the matters of skin color, hair texture and even stock. Stock?

Scientifically and sociologically, race means national or regional origin of one's ancestors: Germanic, Nordic, Hispanic, Celtic, et cetera. But we shall use the more common meaning of the word "race."

What is the scientific basis of race? Is it skin color? The people of India are middle brown in color but they are whites. Members of an indigenous tribe on Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan, are darker black than a moonless and starless night, as black as Stygian darkness. But they're also whites. How come?

Race is determined by the distribution of inherited blood types within a population of all the common typing antigens (A-B-O and Rh) and also the additional and important antigen factors such as T-K and others. Most whites have T-antigen leukocytes (white blood cells). But I know a Caucasian American who has the K-antigen.

There are enough such blood typing groups that anyone on earth could be



blood typed differently from all others, except fortunately, for the workings of genetics. White Americans, India Indians, Hokkaido residents and many other Caucasoids are identified as whites on the distributions of blood types within the whole populations.

So, short of doing a comprehensive serological blood typing analysis on Jesus, we will never know his race. But that doesn't make any difference at all. Would Jesus be any less the Messiah if he was a black, a yellow, a whatever? Aside from some nationalistic race-affiliated pride,

who really cares?

Culturally speaking, here in America we have a Bible that goes by the everyday name of the "Black Jesus Bible." It is a biblical text with illustrations that depict the prophets and the Holy Family as extremely dark skinned.

Since there might be opposition to such ideas, the editors cite reasons for Jesus being a black. The Jews of Hebrew Scripture times were dark skinned. The Queen of Sheba was a black. Egyptians were dark skinned. The introduction to the Bible asks "Can anyone conceive of the problems in hiding a white Jesus, Mary and Joseph in black Egypt?"

African Americans, especially youths, can relate to this Bible. And that is entirely proper. Since white Europeans, using their white neighbors as models, painted a white Jesus, white Jews and white Egyptians, what's wrong with black Americans

painting black Biblical pictures? Nothing at all!

Since there are many parishes in the Diocese that serve the spiritual needs of African Americans, I suggest that each have at least one copy of "Black Jesus Bible." The official name is: "The Original African Heritage Study Bible" (James C. Winston Publishing Co.; Winston-Derek Publishers, Inc.; Nashville Tenn. 37209).

**Thomas M. Fisher**  
Park Terrace  
Horseheads

## Church history, Jesus' humanity foster hope

### To the editors:

Two comments, please:

1) To those who ask to go back to the "old days" in the Church and feel that we are "going to hell in a handbasket," whatever that means — it's an expression I heard as a child — I urge that you enroll in a class on Church history from the beginning up to the present day. You will see how the Church has changed in many, many ways, paralleling and even adopting the economic, social and political climate of each era. Actually, you who call yourselves "traditionalists" are "Nouveau traditionalists." The REAL traditionalist must go all of the way back to basics. Following Christ. Listening. Trusting. It's so simple! Why do we have to make it so complicated and wrangle about it?

2) I loved the article on the images of Jesus. Most know Him as all God but forget He was all human as well. Do you think He went around sad-faced all of the time, never cracked a joke or laughed? If so, you've missed a lot. This Man had charisma! Kids loved Him. People followed Him. God's love exuded from Him.

A picture of the Sacred Heart is on my living room wall, opposite my chair and

the artist has depicted Jesus in a familiar way, but with a hint of a smile on the lips and in the eyes. I swear I have seen Him wink at me, sometimes smirk and, yes, scold, too.

And, on my bedroom dresser there's a picture of a boyish Jesus, hair tussled from the wind, dark skin, and laughing. The other night, just before bed, I knocked over a glass of milk. Glass shattered. Milk splattered all over the kitchen floor. Me in my bare feet! UGH! "Jesus!" I called out,

"You and Martha come this instant and help me clean up this mess." Ha! He appeared in the doorway, threw His head back and roared. But He and Martha helped me clean it up in no time. And no cut fingers or toes!

So, come on, folks. Lighten up. We're in good hands. Nothing is going to harm our beloved Church.

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

## How can readers obtain painting of Jesus rejoicing in His victory?

### To the editors:

I noted with interest your article on the picture "I am the Resurrection."

From what I can tell from your printing of it, it represents a side of the Christian tradition that is emerging now.

Perhaps because we are leading longer lives in our part of the world, and medicine is reducing the physical pain we find in life, we can more readily see a more joy-

ous world, and need to be led to see the joy the Spirit brings.

Much of the First World pain is now psychological, and can be healed by finding a joyous Friend in the Lord. The picture seems to show Him rejoicing in His victory.

But we still well need the art that describes the other side, the pain He accepted to win the Resurrection.

The First World still has enough suffering to go around. And the Third World can justify art that people in deprivation and pain can identify with.

However, as a method of declaring my opinion and as a picture for my wall, where can I buy a copy, and if you happen to know, how much is it?

**Michael Myers**  
South Glen Avenue  
Watkins Glen

**EDITORS' NOTE:** Because of unpleasant calls she has received from people who object to her painting, artist Deborah Lynn Zeller asked us not to publish her phone number. She can be reached by mail, however, at 871 Glen Oak, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137.

## Images challenged reader to examine views

### To the editors:

I like the artist Deborah Zeller's painting "I am the Resurrection." Many, including myself, have stereotyped Jesus as Caucasian.

What really all should do; observe Christ-like features, regardless of race, creed or color.

**Rena B. Camblin**  
Meadow Drive  
Palmyra

**EDITORS' NOTE:** We should note that technical problems with the July 3 Courier

caused all six images of Christ to print much darker than the originals we reproduced. Poor reproduction may have caused readers to believe that all of the images depicted Jesus as black. In fact, the five images on that week's cover showed Jesus as a Caucasian, an Asian, a Native American, an African and a man of Middle Eastern origin. In a caption on Page 10, we noted that Ms. Zeller "had received criticism for her painting," which did depict Jesus as white. The criticism stemmed from the joyful exuberance Ms. Zeller ascribed to her subject.