

OPINIONS

Models of compassion

Catholic Courier

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

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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.

Throughout much of last week, the eyes of the world focused on the life and death of Princess Diana.

Although she did have problems — media reports made obligatory mention of her marital woes, eating disorders, love affairs and thoughts of suicide — she was correctly and universally lauded for her compassion and honesty.

She raised millions of dollars for charity, promoted awareness of illnesses such as AIDS and helped to fight against land mines.

She willingly reached out and touched people. By week's end, she was being made into some sort of a secular saint.

Then Mother Teresa of Calcutta died.

Although it isn't quite fair to compare the two women — who had, incidentally, become friends — it's hard not to make some comparisons about their lives.

Mother Teresa was not a fragile "candle in the wind." She was a steady flame shedding light on the face of God in the world: the least of our brothers and sisters.

She was not a trend setter when it came to hairstyle or fashions. Her simple blue and white sari was a consistent symbol of modesty, humility and true priorities.

She did not make appearances at hospitals and fundraising events and in other sorts of "charity work." Rather, charity was



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her ministry and her life.

Those inclined toward criticism found few targets in the exemplary life of Mother Teresa — except, as some media felt obliged to mention, for her "conservative" Catholic views, especially her steadfast opposition to abortion.

She did not die at 36 after a high-speed chase through the streets of Paris after an evening on the town. She died at 87, her heart finally giving out after years of hard work.

It's hard not to mention the word "saint" when speaking of her.

Princess Diana likely would have been the first

to admit that Mother Teresa was of a different order than herself. Diana likely would have downplayed efforts to make herself into something more than she was.

Alas, the media that hounded Princess Diana in life continue to exploit her in death for ratings and newsstand sales.

And too many people are obsessed by an image, rather than seeing the woman who showed that wealth and aristocratic blood do not guarantee happiness — nor preclude reaching out to others.

Two compassionate women died last week. The world is a better place thanks to some of the things they did.

As we remember them, hopefully we will try to emulate what was truly holy about each of them.

Disputes letter's interchange of terminology

To the editors:

A letter to the editor in the July 17 *Courier* concerning homosexuality stated that "announcing that one is gay is precisely the same as announcing that one is homosexually orientated." This interchange of terms is objectionable because the two terms, gay and homosexual, are not similar.

"Gay" is a social/political identity and "homosexual" merely describes a person's sexual orientation. Although this sounds technical, it is an important distinction because there are many people who are homosexual, trying to live a chaste life until marriage and do not identify with gay ideology. Gay activists would have us believe that all people with homosexual feelings are identified with gay ideology. This does an injustice to the many individuals who are struggling and winning the battle against their homosexual orientation.

It is true the catechism states every man and woman should acknowledge and accept their sexual identity but the reference in the catechism pertains to marriage between man and woman and not people of homosexual orientation. In the same reference, man and woman are directed to love and procreate (#2331, 2332, 2333, 2393). It is apparent the reference to Bishop Gumbleton's statement was taken out of context because homosexuals cannot procreate.

The work of the groups Courage and The National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuality is enabling thousands of homosexuals to change their sexual orientation and lead healthy and fulfilling lives. They offer hope to parents who up to now have had

little means to cope with the sexual orientation of their homosexual children. It is hoped Courage will be established in the Diocese of Rochester.

For more information on Courage call 212/421-0426. For more information on

The National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuality call 818/789-4440.

Michael R. Aiello, M.D.
Warren Street, Fayetteville

Discussion of Shroud would have improved article on images, culture

To the editors:

I think your article ("Culture colors images of Jesus," July 3) would have been more thorough if it had focused on the image of the Shroud of Turin in more detail. Granted the Shroud of Turin's authenticity is still being debated in the scientific community. However the image that it contains has been an object of veneration in the church for hundreds of years.

St. Theresa, "The Little Flower," had a great devotion to the Shroud's face of Christ and wrote a beautiful prayer wherein she describes "recognizing Christ's infinite love under His disfigured features." In viewing the Shroud's image, one can't help but be struck by the brutal beating and crucifixion that the man of the Shroud endured. The Shroud's image also creates a fascinating mystery of how the image was created. Even the best imaging experts in the world — many of them here in Rochester — cannot fully explain how this image was created.

The image of the man of the Shroud represents the greatest mysteries of our faith in that it simultaneously affirms Christ's great suffering and death for the love of each of us and also the Resurrec-

tion of Christ's body from the dead. The Shroud's image therefore embodies a wonderful representation of the true nature of Jesus by showing us his great love for us and also his divinity. It is truly a great gift to His Church today!

We have an expert on the Shroud of Turin in our Diocese! Father Fred Brinkmann, Director of the Notre Dame Retreat House is also the Director of the Holy Shroud Guild, an organization devoted to the promotion of the Shroud of Turin. He recently gave an excellent talk at our parish on the Shroud. He also sponsors a Shroud of Turin Retreat every year at the Notre Dame Retreat House.

John Maurer
Washington Avenue, Rochester

Do wealthy parishes consider the plight of poorer relations?

To the editors:

Years ago my husband and I gave an OX-FAM dinner... As the guests arrived they were given a number. The two #1s dined on beef stroganoff and wine. The four #2s ate meatless spaghetti, bread and salad. The 10 #3s sat on the floor and were given a bowl of rice and a cup of water.

I read the St. Michael's bulletin of July 27. It seems this city parish is eating rice and drinking water. In order to continue serving St. Michael's their dedicated pastoral associate is taking a 20 percent pay cut and their two hard-working priests, each a 50 percent pay cut. In addition, the parish visitor position has been eliminated, as well as the positions of their religious formation coordinators. One "part-time" religious formation administrator will be hired for each of the three parishes in the "Community of Hope." All the while parishes dining on stroganoff and spaghetti are renovating, redecorating, building and landscaping. Justice? Preferential option for the poor? I wonder.

Diane Knittle
Clifford Avenue, Rochester

Grades paper as 'much improved'

To the editors:

A few years ago, either the editor or associate editor appeared and gave a short talk at St. Mary's Our Mother Church in Horseheads and invited those attending to talk to her after Mass, if they so wished. I did and told her that I could read the *Catholic Courier* in 10 minutes. I told her that that I had read, for a number of years, either the *Catholic New York* (Archdiocese of New York) or the *Criterion* (Archdiocese of Indianapolis). She indicated that she did not have the resources available to her that those newspapers had.

Now, I wish to convey to the same person that the *Catholic Courier* has improved considerably, in my opinion, over these past years. It is a more informative news-

paper, as compared to an entertainment newspaper. It is my opinion that there is no need for a sport section in this kind of newspaper. For most of us, the *Catholic Courier* is our sole source of Catholic news and I would like to see more national Catholic news.

I have not moved, but have changed my affiliation to St. Benedict's (Odessa) in Schuyler County.

Thomas F. Good

Grand Central Avenue, Horseheads
EDITORS' NOTE: If our collective memory serves, Circulation Manager Jeanne Mooney did the presentation at St. Mary Our Mother in Bath. We all certainly appreciate the improved review, especially since our financial resources have not increased in the interim.