

# OPINIONS

## Not convinced by history of celibacy

### 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.

#### To the editors:

Priestly Celibacy continues to be a hot button subject in the Diocese as plans are being developed and implemented to deal with the shortage of priests and priestly vocations. My interest in this subject was piqued when I read Rob Cullivan's article in the July 11, 1996, issue of the *Courier*. I was particularly interested in what Monsignor William H. Shannon, reportedly, had to say about the possibility of authorizing persons — other than ordained priests — to preside at Mass.

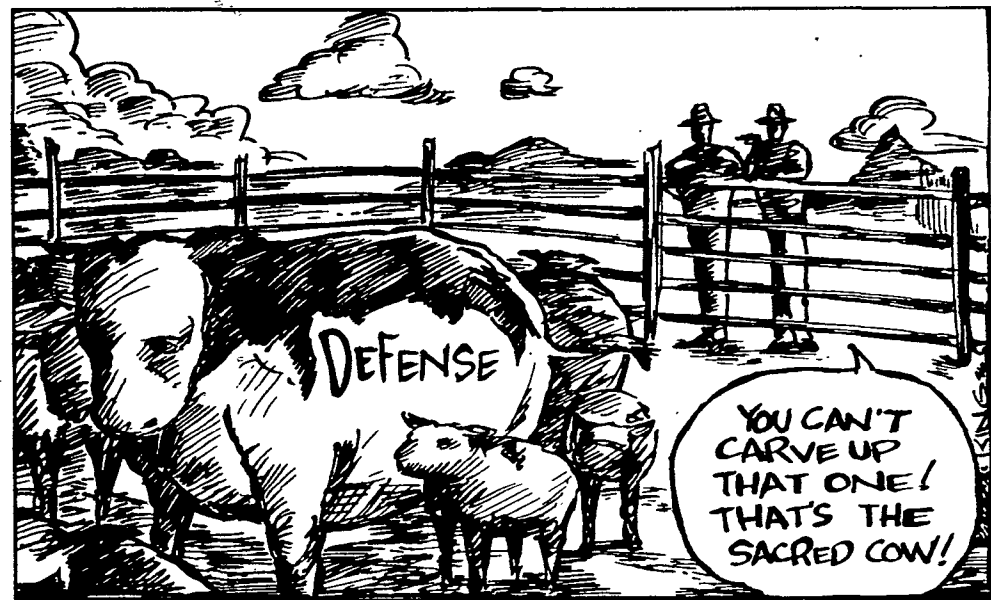
I was encouraged by Monsignor Shannon's opinion and expressed my concern for the continuity of Diocesan Parish life in my letter that the *Courier* printed in early August, 1996. Father Robert F. McNamara, in his responding letter in the Sept. 19, 1996, issue, took exception to Monsignor Shannon's proposal by providing a short history lesson on how the church addressed the issue of clerical celibacy during its second millennium.

I am not convinced.

1. Can, or should, the socio-economic conditions in the 12th century be ignored when we read that the Second Lateran council (1139) stated that Holy Orders is an invalidating impediment to marriage? Is it right to ignore the vastly different socio-economic conditions of the 20th century?

2. I have been told that some of the early disciples were married men. I don't know if any of the Apostles were. If this is so, were they or their works invalidated because of their married state? Priestly functions were also performed by married men during the period of persecutions of the clergy during the 1940s.

3. A celibate Priesthood is not biblical — an interesting oversight if it was really God's will.



4. Are the Church's celibacy rules really set in concrete? Have no other Church Council's pronouncements been reversed?

5. Clerical celibacy is a rule of the Church. I believe that what the Church could do in the environment of the 12th century that same Church can un-do in the 20th or 21st century environment.

As an aside: I can't help remembering that ours is the church that persecuted Galileo in the 17th century for declaring that the earth was not the center of the universe and later — much later — forgave him for telling the truth.

The purpose of this letter is not to argue the issue; rather, it is to suggest that the *Courier* cause the subject to be historically researched by some objective and qualified person — in or out of the Diocese — and that the results of that study be published in the *Courier*.

I'm not naive enough to believe that the

conclusions of the printed report would be universally accepted by the faithful; but I do believe that its facts and inferences would be a very valuable source of information for the faithful — and others — who are interested in this issue as the Church in the United States faces a growing crisis because of the shortage of priests.

And finally: Information is good, but action is better!! A formal prayer should be included in the celebration of every Mass requesting God's help to increase the number of men who hear and who will respond to the call of a priestly vocation. We have been told that Christ promised that anything we ask the Father for, in His name, will be granted. We have been negligent in taking Him up on His promise. We should be storming heaven with our prayers for vocations.

Richard B. Blankfield  
Nichols Street, Spencerport

## Men's organization fosters faith, fidelity

#### To the editors:

Some 25,000 men gathered at Rich Stadium this past June in an expression of love and honor for the Lord Jesus Christ. I was one of those men who experienced the joy of the Lord at the Promise Keepers Men's Conference.

Most Catholics do not know about PK. It is not "a Catholic organization," but rather a catholic organization; one having its foundation in the personal relationship with Jesus as Savior and Lord, one which exhorts men to seek accountability with one another. Yes, it is a men's organization, and because of this alone it has drawn fire from others even within the Church, yet I saw hundreds of women in support as volunteers, and knew of many who encouraged their husbands and significant others to attend.

The thrust of the June PK Conference was to call men into relationship with the Lord and with each other. Numerous speakers gave testimony to how a living God can break the bonds of racism, impurity, sexism, and adultery, if men will only stay accountable to God, their families, and one another.

The men were admonished throughout the conference to respect not only their wives but women in general. As an outward sign of his commitment, Dr. Gary Rosberg, a psychologist in marriage and family counseling, humbly expressed his shameless commitment to serve his family when, in front of everyone, he washed the feet of his wife and two daughters. Needless to say, many tears, including my own, were offered in reconciliation to the Lord at that conference.

On October 4, at the Mall in Washington, D.C., a diverse multitude of men, from every race, color, and denomination, are called to kneel and confess collective sin before God, heeding the prophet Ezekiel's call to "stand in the gap" and seek repentance for their na-

tion. There were many Catholics, including myself, in attendance in Buffalo; there will be many in Washington as well. If you are interested in attending *Stand in the Gap: A Sacred Assembly of Men*, to ask God's healing upon our land, please contact (716) 392-7413. You may also visit the PK

website at [www.promisekeepers.org](http://www.promisekeepers.org). to learn more.

Richard D. Stoffel

Silkwood Circle, Spencerport

EDITORS' NOTE: We received this letter in mid-August, but a backlog of letters to the editors prevented us from publishing it sooner.

## Assigns label to picnickers' topic

#### To the editors:

Sister Schoelles article "Picnickers debate what drives the world" (Aug. 21) led me to my pen to write this response. I thought I might add to her definition of "freeing us" on the interpersonal level.

She says freedom comes from a mutuality rather than a dependency on social, political, and economic levels of the say of things that affect us. What sister fails to mention is that she defined the Theology of Liberation, a post WWII theology developed by Jesuits with a simple core principle. The whole and only meaning of Christianity, according to this Liberation Theology comes down to one achievement, which is the liberation of men and women by armed and violent

resolution if necessary, from economic, social, and political slavery imposed on them by U.S. Capitalism. This is to be followed by the establishment of "democratic socialism." Liberation theology was the perfect blueprint for the Sandinistas. It incorporated the very aim of Marxist Leninism. It presumed the classic Marxist "struggle of the masses" to be free from all capitalistic dominion.

Since Dr. Schoelles stated that "she usually is pretty sure that she is right anyway" on matters such as these, I thought by finishing the definition of Liberation theology perhaps at the next picnic, she might be better informed.

Michael P. Valerio  
Malin Lane, Penfield

## Urges support of prayer ministry for priests

#### To the editors:

Readers of the *Catholic Courier*: Will you help the Monthly Prayer Request for Priests keep going? This wonderful ministry of prayers for a priest each day is in real danger of being discontinued due to a lack of funds.

The problem is this: It costs \$250.80 a month to have the prayer calendar printed in the *Catholic Courier* once a month. A generous benefactor has moved away and normal donations do not cover the cost.

Our social ministry committee and those of several parishes in the Elmi-

ra/Corning area have made recent contributions to help.

We pray that people and parishes across the diocese will pitch in and ensure that this spiritual work of mercy continues. Our beloved priests need our support and prayers so much. Please make checks payable to: The Monthly Prayer Request for Priests and send to: Mrs. Mary M. Reilich, MPRP, 70-A Green Knolls Drive, Rochester, NY 14620-4746.

Rose MacFeiggan  
Chair, Social Ministry Committee  
Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Elmira