

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

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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.

Where do we find future leaders?

By **Father Daniel Tormey**
Guest contributor

It was while riding on a Belgium train toward Brugge that I spotted an advertisement in an American Catholic magazine promoting a study program "in a family campus environment" with the title: "Leadership in the Future Church." I didn't try to stop the train, but I knew that at least I had the question for which I had been seeking an answer this past year.

After more than 40 years in priestly ministry I had come to Leuven this year to contribute my something to seminary education and formation. I believe these students of theology and candidates for ordination have to be leaders in the church but what does that word "leadership" imply now and in the future? And as to "future church," what will that look like in this changing world? Seminary formation in the pre-Vatican II days, plus years of ministry in the decades following may give some insights, but it does not guarantee the answers about "leadership in the future church."

Jesus' command to his disciples that they not lord it over the rest was never enough to prevent church leaders in the centuries since from doing precisely that. But what of the leadership of the presbyters in a church today where every baptized person shares in the priesthood of Christ? Is this leadership the type that Hans Kung refers to in *Why Priests?* as one ministry in the midst of a multiplicity of functions: a stimulating, coordinating, and integrating ministry to the whole congregation? And how does this relate to "service" and to "power" — the former we claim as our charism; the latter we hate to give up.

The essential note of service demands solidarity with and among our people. But for young men discerning the priesthood there



GUEST COMMENTARY

Is there to be a "future church," or is it only a matter of perspective? Does the Body of Christ change? Is the shortage of priests a passing phenomenon that will be corrected soon, or does it signal a permanent change in church ministry? To this expatriate living in Belgium the view is quite different depending whether you face south toward Africa and all the southern continents, face west toward America, or just worship at Sint Kwinten's here in Leuven. The answer is different depending whether there are women in the discussion. The answer depends on whether Vatican II is considered a challenging point of departure for theological study, and an invitation for theological reflection, or whether it constitutes a sort of "ring" beyond which we dare not go.

The church, today and tomorrow, must be a Spirit-filled community of faith. Such a community must have leadership in order to survive. It must be a eucharistic community as well. What would you tell the young men who study here about leadership in the future church if you were in my shoes?

Father Tormey, a priest of the Rochester Diocese, is spiritual director at the American Catholic University, Louvain College, in Leuven, Belgium.

Faithful should pray to God for vocations

To the editors:

In the past few years vocations to the priesthood have been a hot topic in both the Church and secular media. Nearly always the bottom line is that we need to involve the laity more and more. The laity should help and is helping. However, no one can take the place of the priest. It is the priest who steps into the shoes of Christ himself to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to His Heavenly Father. It is Christ in the person of the priest who changes bread and wine into His Body and Blood. "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my Blood, you shall not have life in you." It is the priest who takes the place of Christ in the confessional: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven." It is the priest who comes to the sick bed to give us the Sacrament to prepare us to meet God. So, let's do something about this very serious problem. Christ said, "Whatever you ask the Father in my name He will grant it to you."

Many churches pray for vocations during the intentions in the Mass, but not every day. I respectfully urge our Bishop to take matters into his own hands and do something about this. A few suggestions.

Encourage every priest to open his

church for Eucharistic Adoration at least once a week for one hour, specifically for vocations. Also, make people aware of the few churches that have Adoration everyday, all day.

Encourage priests to pray a special prayer for vocations everyday with his people, including Sunday.

Encourage priests to devote a homily asking men of any age to consider priesthood if their circumstances are such that they can. Remind men of the great gift of priesthood. Write about it in the *Courier*.

Offer a special Mass for vocations at the Cathedral and officiate personally. Invite people to attend. Advertise it in the Churches and the *Courier*.

Encourage priests to make an effort to get as many altar boys as there are girls. The ratio in many churches is about 4 to 1. Altar boys have always been a good source for vocations to the priesthood.

Make an effort to obtain a few priests for the short run from places where there is not a shortage. There are such places in our country and other countries if only someone would seek them out.

The point is to keep this serious matter in the mind of the people as much as possible. Much can be done. So let's not be

pessimistic. Let's stop predicting how desperate things are going to be in the year 2020. God can do anything. Christ said, "Ask and you shall receive, Knock and it will be opened to you." If we, with the leadership of our Bishop, make the effort; vocations will come. Let's act, act, act, pray, pray, pray and God will do the rest!

Dorothy Prinzi
Nile Drive, Rochester

Church must set aside day to recognize clerics' labors

To the editors:

This week the Monthly Prayer Request for Priests caught my attention as I was reading the *Catholic Courier*.

Praying for our priests is extremely important. Yet isn't it time we gave our priests some encouragement. It would appear that recently people are quick to criticize and slow to praise anyone who is in the public eye. Unfortunately this attitude has also been directed against some of our priests.

Our priests are human and not always perfect. Yet for the most part they are good men striving to serve the Lord. I suspect they are sometimes lonely and discouraged.

There is no day set aside to recognize our Clergy. Let's take a moment this week to somehow acknowledge the positive things our priests do for us. Let them know that their efforts are appreciated and provide some encouragement.

My own Pastor spends considerable time each week to make the Homily relevant to our daily lives while spreading the Scripture message. He does a marvelous job.

Mary A. Lynch
Dickinson Road
Webster

Nothing bad in 'Nothing Sacred'

To the editors:

Last week's edition of the *Catholic Courier* (Sept. 25) featured on the front page the new television series "Nothing Sacred" (Thursday, 8 PM, ABC). The article described controversy concerning the series, noting that while some Catholics, including priests, praise its presentation of the life of an inner-city Catholic parish, others are concerned that it might be anti-Catholic and demeaning to priests. Based upon the first two episodes, I find that there is nothing anti-Catholic about this program. "Nothing Sacred" examines the life of an urban Catholic community with realism, insight, sensitivity, balance and sympathy. In the first episode, the hospital scene (in which the pastor visited a teen-ager who had attempted suicide) powerfully showed the richness of

Catholic sacraments. The second episode grittily depicted the parish soup kitchen as an extension of Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and fish. The priests and sister who serve this parish are presented as real human beings, with both fine, even heroic, qualities, and with doubts, flaws and limitations. Above all, they have dedication in ministry and passion for all God's people. It is this combination of passion and realism that could make this series an inspiration for young people contemplating a vocation to ministry and for those of us already in ministry. As a Roman Catholic priest, I did not feel that the writers were attacking me. Rather, I felt understood.

Father Gary Tyman
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