

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.

Disputes doctor's linguistic views

To the editors:

It is sad to see ignorance again showing its face with regard to our gay brothers and sisters. In the September 11 issue of the *Courier*, Dr. Michael Aiello incorrectly states that the terms "gay" and "homosexual" mean different things. He has obviously failed to do even the most miniscule of research — opening his dictionary. Since reading his letter, I have looked in six different dictionaries that ranged in copyright date from 1969 to 1994. Each of them list the word "gay" as a slang word meaning the same thing as "homosexual." In asking people who are gay, something I wonder if Dr. Aiello did before making such a blanket and incorrect statement, I have found that the terms are used as synonyms. They are used interchangeably. The only distinction in terms related to this is that the term "gay" often refers to homosexual men, while the term "lesbian" refers to homosexual women. Neither term is used to denote if a person is active politically, or active in church, or active sexually, or active in any other fashion. They are used the same way people use the terms "heterosexual" and "straight." In this case as before, the slang word "straight" does not

mean any form of heterosexual "activism" neither does it pertain to any heterosexual "ideology," nor does it suggest if a straight person is sexually active or not.

The church teaches that gay people, as do all human beings, have the free will to choose which ideologies they will live by. There is not single homosexual ideology just as there is no single homosexual ideology. Gay people, the (Catechism of the Catholic Church) states in paragraph 2358, "do not choose their homosexual condition." They, as all people, do choose how they treat their sexuality. The church teaches us all to honor and respect our sexuality and to behave in ways that reflect the sanctity and grace with which God gave us the gift of sexuality.

In paragraph 2358 of the catechism it states, "Every sign of unjust discrimination in (homosexual person's) regard should be avoided." It is discrimination to assume that all gay people — or any gay people — are sinners based only on their being gay. By "coming out" (the slang for admitting to being gay) a person gives no clue as to whether they are virgins or not virgins, whether they are Christian or Jewish or Hindu, or even whether they are a hair

dresser or a steel worker — they are only saying that they have a homosexual orientation.

I urge all people in the diocese to educate themselves, and NOT to rely on the hearsay of the media, of editorials such as this, or even solely on what they may hear in their doctor's office, to determine what "gay" means. I believe that the diocesan office has materials and/or representatives who can help in the process of getting information that can clear up many of the misunderstandings and falsehoods that abound and hurt so many of our parents, children, brothers, and sisters. Ignorance is never bliss.

Jim Buckheit
Enterprise Street
Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: Around the time Mr. Buckheit was writing this letter, the Vatican announced changes in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. (Catholic Courier, Sept. 11, "Revisions alter death penalty, homosexuality views") The part of paragraph 2358 that once read "They do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial," has been changed to read, "This inclination, intrinsically disordered, is a trial for most of them."

Saints who lived normal lives are interesting, too

To the editors:

I very much enjoyed the "Saints and Sanity" article in the September 4 issue of the *Courier*. I would add to your list St. Rose of Lima who was so much on fire with love of the Lord that she had to pour cold water on her chest. Then there was St. Jerome who lived in a cave in Bethlehem and disliked women.

I would really enjoy, however, an article about saints who were normal. So many of the teenage saints come across to me as being rather dull and wimpy characters. Give me a teenage saint who did not always get along with his/her parents, who had some sexual tensions to overcome, who was friendly and enthusiastic about God.

The few saints who were married men — with the exception of St. Peter — come across to me as being rather passive individuals. Give me married men saints who enjoyed a beer or two with friends, who used colorful language on occasion, who loved God and their family and their world passionately.

The few saints who were married women were either queens who died after having 12 children, church ladies like St. Monica, or mothers who became nuns after raising a family. Give me married women saints who think for themselves, who balance job and children with grace and an occasional eruption, who love their God, their children, their world passionately. Do I have any nominees?

Let me close by being one of the first to acclaim Saint Teresa of Calcutta.

Rev. Robert L. Collins
St. Joseph/St. William Church,
Livonia

EDITORS' NOTE: Father Collins sent this letter just after Mother Teresa's death and just prior to his hospitalization for bone-marrow treatment.



Mass is more than a meal

To the editors:

To call the Mass "a community celebration of Our Lord's last meal with His friends" as George Roy does in his letter in the Sept. 18th issue of the *Courier* is a little like celebrating Holy Week without Good Friday. The Mass represents in an unbloody manner "the one and only sacrifice of Christ ... in bloody immolation accomplished on the cross" (Documents of Vatican II on concelebration Ecclesiae Semper 7 March 1965). The Mass is, indeed a public prayer but its efficacy does not stem from the presence or absence of a congregation. Its efficacy comes from the sole merits of Christ praying to His Father. As St. Augustine says it is an offering of the "whole Christ" — Head and mystical body. That is why it is the perfect prayer. It is not just a communal get-together for a shared meal. It is a prayer of petition, adoration, reparation and

Thanksgiving.

The Catechism of the Summa of St. Thomas Aquinas says of the Mass: "The Sacrifice of the Mass is the same as the sacrifice of the cross ... it is not a reproduction of the sacrifice, but the sacrifice itself." (Part III Ch. 36) We sadly need more instruction on the Mass today. Its ineffable mystery is neither communicated or enlarged by thinking of it as merely a communal meal (Luther's interpretation).

In a not unrelated topic, a good antidote to Fr. McBrien's column on the Tridentine Mass in the same issue of the *Courier* is "Looking at the Liturgy" by Aidan Nichols, O.P. published by the Ignatius Press. A temperate and scholarly look at what's happened to worship in the past 30 years.

Margaret Vincent
North Street, Caledonia

Procreation comes first, doesn't it?

To the editors:

In reading Father McBrien's article in the recent issue of your paper (*Catholic Courier*, Sept. 11: "Temperance transcends selfish interests"), I guess I must have missed something in my 14 years of Catholic education. (Father) McBrien states in his column:

"Similarly, we enter into relationships that may lead eventually to sexual intimacy. But we do so not simply to perpetuate the human race. Sexual intimacy is also a

human and humanizing activity. It is a sacrament of a couple's mutual love. Under certain conditions, it may also involve a participation in God's creative activity."

I thought I heard my religious instructors say sexual activity was first and foremost for the purpose of pro-creation and thus artificial birth control was out. Now either I have it reversed or Father McBrien does. Who is right?

Richard I. Mulvey
North Aurora Street, Ithaca

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