

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

©1997, Rochester Catholic Press Association.

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

President

Bishop Matthew H. Clark

General Manager/Editor

Karen M. Franz

Editorial Department

Associate Editor

Lee Strong

Copy Editor/Staff Writer

Kathleen Schwar

Finger Lakes

Staff Writers

Rob Cullivan

Genesee Valley

Mike Latona

Southern Tier

Staff Photographer

Greg Francis

Photography Intern

Kerry Huller

Business Department

Circulation Manager

Jeanne A. Mooney

Office Manager

Mary DiPonzio

Secretary/Receptionist

Donna Stubbings

Advertising Department

Advertising Director

Jodiann Marcello

Account Executives

Loretta Lowans

Nora Maxin

Production Department

Graphics Manager

Kim Parks

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.

Ballot measures merit informed vote

EDITORIAL

With no compelling local or national campaigns this year, political pundits are already predicting low voter turnout next Tuesday.

It would be a shame if such is the case. A number of elections for town, city and county offices could affect local government for years to come.

Moreover, two initiatives on the New York ballot have potentially important long-term consequences for the state's people.

One proposal is a bond act that would allow the state to borrow \$2.4 billion for school repair and renovation.

Proponents say the money is needed the state school system encompasses a significant number of deteriorating buildings — some with potentially hazardous conditions. The money would also pay for improvements to some schools' electrical wiring so that computers could be installed.

But foes of the bond act say the proposal does not detail how the money would be spent and who would get it. This, they say, creates the possibility that some districts that don't really need the money will end up with most of it, while other districts desperate for aid will get little or none. Further, opponents contend that — with interest — the bond would ultimately cost New Yorkers more than \$5 billion.

Even more controversial is a proposal to hold a state constitutional convention in 1999.

Fueling the popular desire to revise the constitution are such currently popular concepts as term limits for state officials and sanctions against elected officials when the state budget is late.

But a variety of groups also are lobbying for constitutional changes that may be less palatable to some of the people of New

York, especially Catholics.

There is talk, for example, of eliminating the current constitutional requirement that the state take care of the poor — a change that could affect Catholic Charities and other social-service providers.

And some fear that abortion advocates will attempt to codify abortion as a constitutional right, thus making it harder to pass legislation requiring parental notification or limiting state funding for abortion.

Groups across the state have come out for and against the convention measure. Among them is the New York State Catholic Conference. In an Oct. 17 statement, the conference — which represents New York's eight Catholic bishops — declared its opposition to a constitutional convention.

Conference officials argue that the convention could waste significant sums of taxpayer money. They note that the last convention, held in 1967, cost \$10 million and that voters ultimately rejected each of the measures it put forth. The conference also points out that a process already exists to change the state constitution without a convention, as has happened 46 times since the 1967 convention.

Arguments on both sides of the issue demonstrate that the convention proposal is an important issue. It clearly warrants careful study and deserves voters' participation — as do the school bond act and the many candidates running for office.

As the United States Catholic Conference noted in its 1996 statement, "Political Responsibility," "In the Catholic tradition, citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is an obligation."

Readers split over 'respectful divergence'

C. S. Lewis might label it 'verbicide'

To the editors:

Bishop Clark states that he is "simply not a branch manager of the office of the Pope" (*Courier* Aug. 26 - Respectful Divergence) — a curious statement considering the nature and structure of the hierarchical church.

Were he an administrator of any other organization he would be subject to suspension, or at least admonition for subtle insubordination and advancement of dissension detrimental to the proper functioning and purpose of the organization. (The magnanimity of the Holy Father is unbounded.)

While the bishop quotes article No. 13 of Lumen Gentium to support his position — somewhat inexplicable since it includes the phrases "without prejudice to the Chair of Peter" and "differences do not hinder unity but rather contribute to it" — one would consider Christus Dominus (Decrees on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church) a more pertinent standard or measure for the subject matter. Consider article 4 — "Together with their head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him, they have supreme and full authority over the universal Church, but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff." Further, article 8a — "Bishops ... enjoy ... special power ... but always without prejudice to the power which the Roman Pontiff possesses, by virtue of his office ..."

Respectful divergence??? That would meet C. S. Lewis' definition of 'verbicide' — the murder and redefining of a word — in this case, dissent.

A. J. Annunziata
Holiday Drive, Horseheads

Send us your views by e-mail.

Use the form on our web site

or send directly to:

cathcour@frontiernet.net



Doctrinal teachings arise from God's revealed truth

To the editors:

It was a pleasure to contribute a few ideas on behalf of Catholics United for the Faith that were used in Mike Latona's recent article, "Respectful divergence: Can Catholics disagree with pope?" (*Catholic Courier*, August 28, 1997).

There is one point that I feel needs to be clarified in connection with my comments. At no point did I attempt to drive a wedge between the teaching authority of the Church's Magisterium and the legitimate authority of a bishop to govern a local church.

Rather, I was only stressing the response of the individual Catholic to God's revealed truth. Vatican II's document on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) teaches that we must believe all that God has revealed to the Church. Further, "the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God ... has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone," whose authority "is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ" (see *Dei Verbum*, no. 10).

Even more to the point, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no. 2088) teaches that anyone who "disregards or refuses to hold as true what God has revealed and

the church proposes for belief" is "sinning against faith." That is not to say that anyone who struggles privately — and perhaps even heroically — with difficulties concerning the Catholic Faith is sinning, but the conscious decision to give into the difficulties and publicly dissent from the teachings of Christ is a tragic one.

Church disciplines or practices, such as who can be an altar server or whether the faithful may eat meat on Friday, are legitimate expressions of church law and should be followed but, like all man-made laws, they can and should be changed to meet the needs of changing time and cultures.

But matters of doctrine are a different story. When the church teaches what we are to believe and how we are to act, we are no longer dealing with merely human laws, but with God's own revealed truth. Vatican II and the Catechism remind us that this includes the church's teaching in matters of sexual morality.

Any "disagreement" then, is not with the Pope, or with "Rome", but with Christ Himself, who Vatican II says is "both the mediator and sum total of Revelation."

Leon J. Suprenant, Jr.
Steubenville, Ohio