

# OPINIONS

## 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  
e-mail: cathcour@frontiernet.net

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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.

## Challenges inclusiveness' historical base

### To the editors:

The Diocese may be laying the groundwork for altering God's Word. In early 1997 at St. Margaret's, in Apalachin, during Mass, the Lord's Prayer was read as "Our Father, Our Mother who are in heaven..." In Fall 1995 documents were presented to at least one parish council meeting rendering God in Hebrews 11:11 as She/He. The Diocesan "All God's People" contains a prayer formally addressing God as Mother.

Adherents of such inclusive language seem to operate with a sub-Christian attitude toward the authority of God's Word. Call to mind Proverbs 30:5-6 "Every word of God is tested; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Add nothing to his words, lest he reprove you, and you be exposed as a deceiver."

The Word of God says God is Father. God is described as motherly but never as Mother. Nowhere in Scripture is God ever referred to personally, directly as Mother. Jesus describes God as a vineyard owner, an employer, a nursing mother. However, as the author William Oddie notes, "Jesus uses Father at least 170 times and, ... always uses this as a form of address and no other." To Jesus God is not like a Father but God is Father. The context in which Jesus uses the word "Abba" does not allow "Abba" to be placed in the same category as "vineyard owner," "nursing mother." I suspect this distinction will be purposely blurred.

Was the language of the Word of God driven by patriarchal societies? As another author Julie Wiley wrote, "It is not that the idea of a mother God was not culturally available. It seems that, given the prominence of priestesses and goddesses in Israel's neighbors" — including the Semitic people Israel originated from — "the Judeo-Christian avoidance of 'God the Mother' and insistence on 'God the Father' was not a matter of cultural conditioning at all. It went against the conditioning. It was countercultural. It was as if 'God the Mother' imagery was specifically considered and rejected."

The pre-existing/co-existing religious cultures — though not political, military, economic — were quite familiar with male/female images. If God wanted to reveal Himself as Father/Mother, why didn't He make use of the pre-existing religious mindset of male/female imagery by clearly using the Mother/She title in revelation to the emergent Israel?

Whatever we say about God is limited by our human nature, but God chose the Father title in His revealed Word; the Holy Spirit is doing the "limiting." Descriptions are adequate if inspired by the Holy Spirit. Father is how He asked to be addressed; we are not authorized to add Mother to Father. When altering Scriptural lines like the Lord's Prayer in the Liturgy, "progressives" argue they are not changing the Bible, but the Liturgy. This is reminiscent of an argument a Pharisee would make. It's also not hard to believe this position to be only temporary with the eventual changing of the Bible a long term goal.

**James A. Urda**  
Strawhill Road, Barton

## Asserts taste in TV programs reveals priests' view of selves

### To the editors:

The priests portrayed in "Nothing Sacred" are unhappy, out of touch with God and the Faithful.

When our ordained priests admire or like the show, they give us a very clear self image.

**Michael F. Brennan**  
Webster



## Agency can help with crises

### To the editors:

We are responding to the recent television show, "Nothing Sacred" (October 9), about a young woman facing hard decisions about a pregnancy she had not planned.

We are familiar with the issues of an unplanned pregnancy and the struggles these prospective parents face. They are facing decisions that will last a lifetime and there is a need to think things out clearly and thoroughly.

Some of the immediate concerns are reactions of family and friends, the societal influences, the future of the child and parent and the financial impact of parenthood. The decision for adoption or raising the child is not an easy one to make. There may be regrets regardless of the decision. The prospective parents need to be able to come to a place where they can make the best decision for their baby and themselves at this particular point in their lives.

Catholic Family Center provides free

pregnancy counseling to expectant parents in situations of an unplanned pregnancy. We work with them to develop a support system for whatever decision they make. A variety of services are offered to expectant mothers and fathers such as pre- and postnatal counseling, counseling to other family members affected by the pregnancy, assistance with finding living accommodations for mother and child, an opportunity to select an adoptive family, referral services for mothers who choose to raise their children, advocacy for school, medical and legal issues, post-abortion counseling and adoption and post-adoption counseling.

If you would like further information about Catholic Family Center's Pregnancy Counseling Program, you can call 262-7145/7146.

**Jennifer L. Metzler, CSW**  
**Mary Sample-Smith, MSW**  
Pregnancy Counseling Staff  
Catholic Family Center  
Rochester

## 'Messy' program isn't for everyone

### To the editors:

I believe there are several kinds of people who would not enjoy watching "Nothing Sacred."

1) Senior Citizens whose sight, hearing and thought processes have slowed down a bit. This show is typically fast paced. I would like to have turned the "pace" dial to "slower" — but so far it's not invented.

2) Children. Children need a very clear idea of the good guys and the bad guys; Red Riding Hood and the Wolf; the OK and the not OK. Don't confuse them with the shades of gray until they have learned the black and white.

3) Adults whose ideas of God and religion have retained the simplicity and beauty of their childhood years. For them it will be shocking to see priests and nuns who have human faults.

In this show the main characters do not have that aura of Godlike goodness that we'd come to expect in our priests and nuns, but rather the emphasis is on the struggle sometimes messy, of living their vocations. That's the top layer. The layer underlying all is the motivation of their struggle — the following of Christ's message to love one another.

I have seen only two segments. Perhaps it's too soon to judge. I am looking forward to seeing future problems encountered by this fictional parish, struggled with and resolved — messy or not — following Christ's dictum of love. The messiness of the struggle, the lack of a saintly aura surrounding the characters, are reminders that we're all in this together. God bless us all.

**Josephine Lavin**  
South West Street, Geneva

## Put faith in moral absolutes, merciful God

### To the editors:

In Sr. Patricia Schoelles' column on moral teachings, ("Moral teachings respond to change," *Catholic Courier*, Sept. 18) she used the example of the Vatican's changing position on the death penalty to validate the concept of moral change and development. It seems to me that the church in this case has simply recognized more fully the absolute nature of the ancient commandment "Thou shalt not kill."

I agree that we must continue to evaluate moral teachings, but with the thought of keeping them in harmony with moral absolutes. Insofar as we are prone to muddying the waters, we must continue to measure theosophy against Scriptural truth, conforming the former more perfectly to the latter.

I don't know many people who equate oral teachings with fact. They are historically very much the same character as sci-

ence, being regulated by contemporary thinking and hindered by an incomplete picture of things. Once-prevalent views on alcoholism and mental illness spring to mind as examples, though even these retain some interesting unanswered questions.

Moral absolutes, on the other hand, are given to us by a God who orchestrates the Grand Unfolding from a timeless perspective. His inspired Word doesn't change, and despite our age-old dance around the truth of it, the center holds.

We've no need to be fearful or anxious about the uncompromising purity of moral absolutes. We serve a merciful God, we've the utter relief of Christ's grace, and the Holy Spirit's strong forming in our weak vessels. We are free to stretch towards holiness.

**Sandra Dunn**  
Mattie Street, Auburn