

OPINIONS

Attempts to open dialogue reveal true courage

To the editors:

It distresses me deeply to see some of my fellow Roman Catholics marching in protest denigrating our Bishop, Matthew Clark. I am sure they are acting with good intentions and are following their consciences, which the Church commands us to do always. Their intentions however are misguided. The Bishop's attempt to open up dialogue with those fellow human beings who were created by God and have a homosexual orientation, was an act of courage, knowing full well he would find opposition from

some in his flock. I am also sure that the Bishop was following his conscience, and used as his criteria "What would Christ do if he were here today?"

The Church also teaches us that in order to follow our consciences, we must be sure we are well-informed, and that we form that conscience by obtaining knowledge and educating ourselves to the fullest extent possible about the issue at hand. Without that knowledge, we have within our conscience voids of ignorance. Ignorance breeds fear; fear breeds hatred. It has been interpreted by my non-Catholic

friends, who have asked with curiosity about these recent events, that the protests of my fellow Catholics border on hatred. I am saddened that these actions by protesters have brought such scandal to the Church. Have my fellow Catholics forgotten the message of Christ, repeated over and over again through St. John, "Love one another?"

For our well-intentioned friends to publicly ask their fellow Catholics to demonstrate their displeasure with the Bishop by not giving to the Thanksgiving Appeal this year does nothing less than bring

even further scandal. The funds from that drive help feed the poor, give shelter to the homeless, and help the elderly in need. The logic of depriving fellow needy human beings of those benefits because the Bishop has taken an action with which they disagree seems to be seriously flawed. Perhaps some of us have forgotten that a major criteria we shall be judged upon was expressed by Jesus: "Whatsoever you do to the least of my people, that you do unto me."

Leonard J. Szumiloski
Clover Drive, Webster

Offer prayers, not judgment

To the editors:

As a married heterosexual with children I can not claim to understand the inner needs or lifestyle of a homosexual person. However, as a Christian I do understand it is not for me to judge others. In John 8:7 Jesus says "Let the man among you who has no sin be the first to cast a stone at her." It is my duty to pray for others, not because they are "sinners" (we all are), but because they are fellow Christians with their own life challenges.

While reflecting on the life of Jesus as revealed through Holy Scripture I have asked myself "If Jesus was ministering on the streets of Rochester where would He have been when Bishop Clark celebrated Mass for the gay and lesbian community?"

Bishop Clark is called to be Jesus' presence here in our local church and he was at the proper place that day.

If heaven gives out a "Do the Right Thing Award" I believe Bishop Clark has earned it.

Bernadette Miller
Gause Road, Bloomfield

Boycott targets the most needy

To the editors:

The out pouring of venom and self-righteousness over Bishop Clark's willingness to follow his conscience and administer to ALL people is distasteful at best.

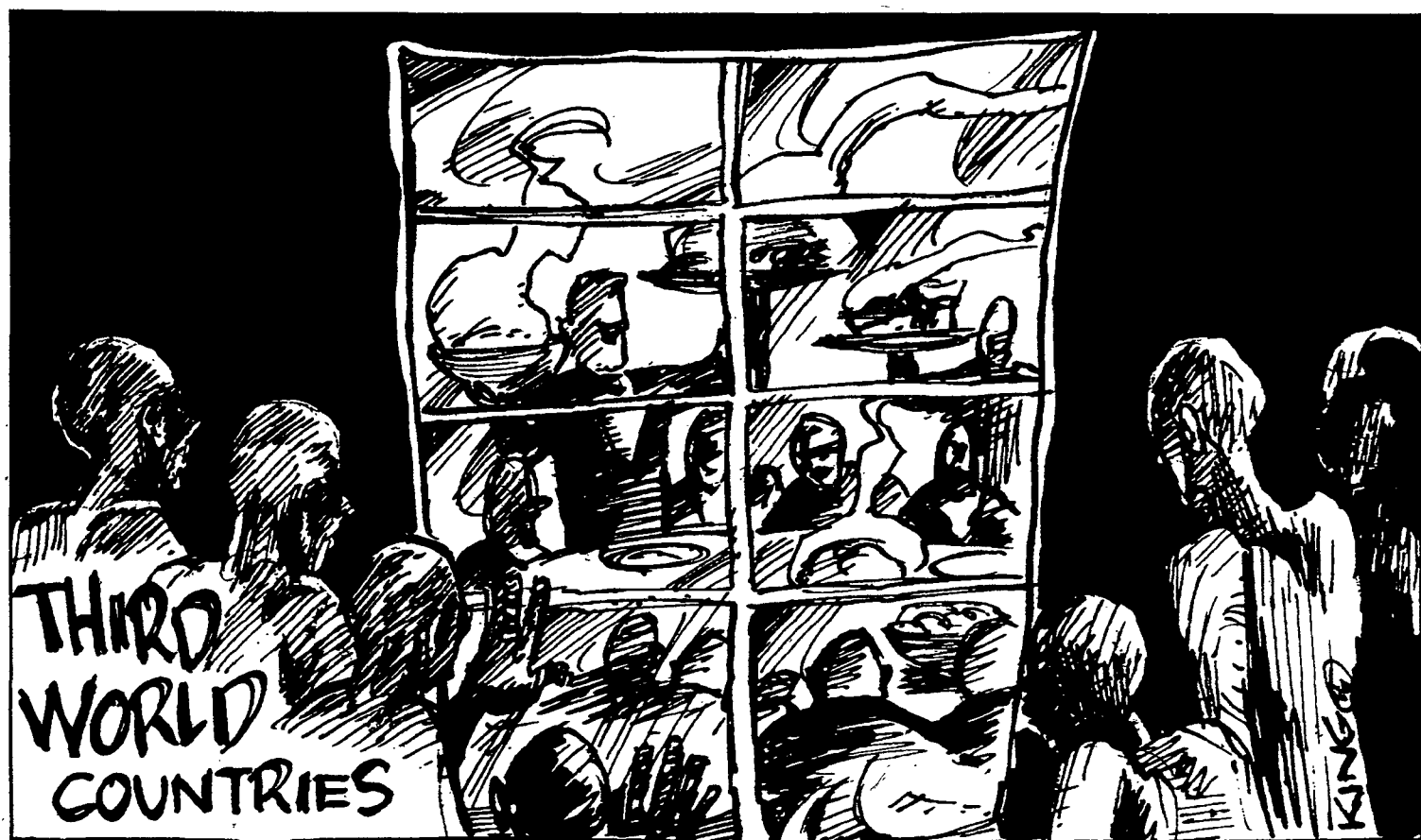
When these same people run to the public media with the threat of boycotting the Thanksgiving Appeal you wonder are they really on the side of Christ.

In Biblical times how would they have responded to Jesus working a miracle on the Sabbath or mingling with tax collectors and prostitutes? The Thanksgiving Appeal provides nothing for the Bishop but non support deprives those Jesus loves most, the poor, the hungry, the troubled, the destitute.

Bishop Clark is our Shepherd by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Catering to his flock in these troubled times in a hostile world is an awesome responsibility. Since all of us are sinners perhaps if we lend a little help we can lighten the burden and become more Christ-like in the process.

John T. Geherin
Rockingham Road, Auburn

Send your letters to the editor electronically by visiting our website @ www.catholiccourier.com



Do not presume escape from retribution

To the editors:

Many of us deliberately disobey both God's laws and Church laws with impunity. But we need to stop and take stock of our lives, for God will not be mocked. Whether we are a Bishop in the Church, or a busdriver on vacation, God's laws are relevant. Bishop Clark has asked how people like me dare to question his actions vis-a-vis homosexuality, and other topics when Rome has not. Because the Bishop considers dissent to be normal, I consider his actions scandalous and ask the Bishop in turn whether he considers himself above God's justice.

None of us should presume that because retribution is not instantaneous, we

will escape it forever. "Do you presume on His kindness and forbearance? Do you not know that God's kindness is an invitation to you to repent?" (Romans 2:4)

If we repent of our sins we will receive glory, honor, peace (Rom 2:10), and eternal life (Rom 2:7). If, however, our hearts are impenitent (Rom 2:5), if we "selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness" (Rom 2:8), we will receive "wrath and fury" (Rom 2:8), "affliction and anguish" (Rom 2:9) at the final judgment of God.

"Those who have done right shall rise to live; the evildoers shall rise to be damned" (Jn 5:29). At the end of the world, Jesus "will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom

all scandals and those who work iniquity, and cast them into the furnace of fire, where they will wail and grind their teeth. Then the saints will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom. Let everyone heed what he hears!" (Mt 13:42-43).

God's love is so great, it is terrifying (see Heb 10:31). God's love presents us with an awesome, ultimately irreversible decision with everlasting consequences. And all of us are subject to His love, whether prince of the Church, pauper on the dole, or parent struggling to make ends meet. The time for repentance is now: live for Jesus.

Jan Fredericks
Birr Street, Rochester

Moved to decry letters' consistent negative tones

To the editors:

For several years I have read Mr. Richard V. Hussar's numerous letters to the Editor in both the *Democrat and Chronicle* and the *Rochester Catholic Courier* newspapers. Their tone has consistently been critical and negative. Today's letter, (D & C 10-15-97) added a new and profound level of personal attack on Matthew Clark, the Bishop of Rochester. I cannot let Mr. Hussar's latest attack go unchallenged.

I don't know what motivates Mr. Hussar? Perhaps he sees himself and his like minded associates as the final bastions of truth and justice, for the Catholic Church. If my speculation has any validity, I would simply say to them, "The Holy Spirit has things well in hand."

Bishop Clark was ordained as the Bishop of Rochester by Pope John Paul II. Further, he has been confirmed in that role by the Holy Spirit. In the light of those references and authority Mr. Hussar's endorsement, or the lack thereof, seems to be rather inconsequential. Given the choice between the Holy Spirit and Mr.

Hussar, I guess I have to say, "Sorry Mr. Hussar."

The ongoing lack of Charity in Mr. Hussar's statements are in strong contrast to the ever present Charity in Bishop Clark's words and actions. I admire Bishop Clark's patience and grace in dealing with these attacks. I don't believe that he could do this without the strong presence of the Holy Spirit, in his life. He doesn't deserve what he is getting from Mr. Hus-

sar and others. But then Jesus didn't deserve what he got either.

"Sorry again Mr. Hussar."

Take every opportunity to let Bishop Clark know of your support for him. Stand up to those who slander his name and his work.

Tell them, "Sorry, I stand with my Bishop."

Jerry Norton
Buttonwood Circle, Fairport

Diocese can boast of widely-respected leader

To the editors:

I have a deep concern with regard to the "anti-Clark" faction. When a group of people, however small, become as verbal and visible as this group has, it can appear to others as though they are great in number, and even, perhaps, right. Unfortunately, those of us who are not only comfortable but pleased and proud of our Bishop don't seem to have the same amount of drive to proclaim to everyone both in the church and the wider com-

munity how the goodness and truth of what our bishop says and does resonates wonderfully within us.

Our bishop is well-loved. I know from my own experience and that of others that this respect extends far beyond the Rochester Diocese. People often say how lucky we are to have Bishop Clark. Thank you, Bishop, for being willing to speak out, no matter what the cost to yourself.

Margaret Deegan, RSM
Highland Avenue, Rochester