

# 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.

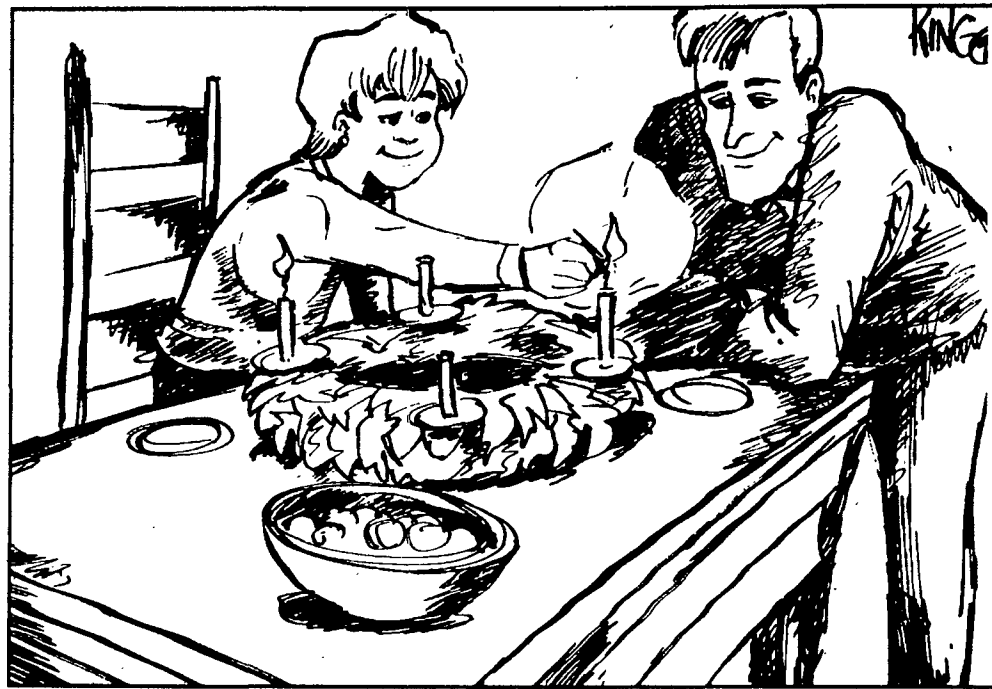
## Missionary work here in diocese

### To the editors:

It seems in many ways ironic, after observing World Mission Sunday (Oct. 19, 1997) and now starting the Thanks Giving Appeal, that parishes in our Diocese are undertaking a Pastoral Planning process that could see parishes merge, consolidate or close.

First, many urban parishes encompass impoverished neighborhoods. Operating food cupboards and social ministry programs through volunteers who live Christ's calling, they aid neighbors in need. Frequently, those ministered to are non-Catholics. Missionary work around the world is important Church work, but we need look no further than our inner-city neighborhoods to find people in need. Instead of consolidating parishes and retrenching, as a Diocese we should propagate our urban parishes who perform this important work in our own backyard.

Second, a key Pastoral Planning "vitality indicator" is each parish's independent financial health. Money in the bank and operating profits mean "vitality." Little or no savings and operating deficits means no financial vitality. If that measure were used by the universal Church, we would have no missions. Granted, deficits should be reduced as much as possible. However, it is unreasonable to expect inner-city parishes comprised largely of retirees on fixed incomes and single-parent families to achieve financial independence like suburban parishes. Aren't financially stressed parishes worthy of sustained as-



sistance from the Diocese and financially "vital" parishes? Aren't we all part of One Holy, Roman, Catholic Church?

Third, some suggest that even if a church closes, its social ministries may continue as satellites of another parish. Thus, a successful food cupboard could continue serving one area, while parishioners go elsewhere for Mass. What are we telling our neighbors and the greater community when Catholics stop coming together to celebrate the Eucharist in areas unable to independently support a parish? It seems to say Catholics may engage in charity in poorer neighborhoods; but, when it comes to celebrating the Eucharist — the central part of our lives as Catholics — we gather elsewhere.

Fourth, if Pastoral Planning is driven by our Diocese's priest shortage then we should actively recruit ordained priests from the universal Church. The Diocese of Syracuse already recruits priests from throughout the country and world. What distinguishes Syracuse that they can look to the universal Church for help, while our

Diocese cannot? Using parish mergers, consolidations or closures to address a priest shortage does a grave disservice to our present and future Catholics.

Finally, some say our problem is a shortage of worshipers, not priests. While urban parishioners are aging, moving away and declining in numbers, usually someone else moves into the homes they vacate. Urban demographic studies suggest those new residents typically are non-Catholics. Are missions and faith conversions reserved for Third World countries?

As a Diocese we should increase the Church's presence — especially celebration of the Eucharist — throughout our area. We should support parishes and parishioners already working as untitled missionaries in our Diocese, rather than consolidating and retrenching.

While promoting world missions and sending support money abroad, it's ironic that our actions locally may make the Eucharist less available to our own people.

**Ross P. Lanzafame**  
Eagle Rock Drive, Rochester

## Feminists refusing to yield to Holy Spirit

### To the editors:

I find it a bit ironic that Sr. Patricia would preface her remarks on feminism in the Church with a discussion on polarization, when feminism has itself been a direct contributor to such division ("Catholics, feminists can learn from each other," *Catholic Courier*, Nov. 6, 1997).

Christianity is an all-or-nothing proposition. "If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." Jesus requires a radical shift in focus from the world and its sorrows to the promise of His Kingdom. He never meant for His Church to be an instrument of political change, nor did He intend it as an arena for debate on these issues. The Church is an instrument of salvation, giving the afflicted the strength to endure, the angry the wisdom to understand, and the powerless the promise of eternal power in Christ. Do you want change? Evangelize! Turn the hearts of the people to Christ, and society will be transformed from the inside out.

The social justice of Christianity is rooted in our personal behavior, in how our actions reflect the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It's the difference between working in a soup kitchen and lobbying for political change under the guise of religion. It's wrong for organizations

like the Christian Coalition to use the political system in an attempt to bring about moral change, and it's wrong for political activists to use the Church to bring about social change. Our support for such things as the dignity of all persons and unity depend not on the adoption of feminist values but on the basic precepts of Christianity, independent of the polarizing influence of political agendas or social movements.

Speaking purely for myself, it's not feminist issues I object to, it's using the Church to promote them. Given our obvious propensity toward polarization on social issues, it doesn't make spiritual sense to further fragmentize the unity of the Church by attempting to fuse political or secular ideals with spiritual principles that have been in operation for 2,000 years, outlasting the sweeping changes

that have occurred during that time.

Sure the conditions in society affect us all, and if we are unable to adhere to Christ's admonition to "turn the other cheek" there are civil avenues to address our concerns. Those issues which are intrinsically Church-related, such as the ordination of women, must bow to the authority of the Church and God's Word.

I've seen first-hand the malevolent twisting of truth that occurs when Christ's Church is used for political purposes, and also how humble submission to His Word unifies and heals. Feminism is a political movement that refuses to yield itself to the authority of Holy Scripture, and that being so, it will continue to face opposition toward its influence in the Church.

**Sandra Dunn**  
Mattie Street, Auburn

## It's not wrong to defend yourself

### To the editors:

I must respond to the convoluted logic of Mr. Scibilia-Carver ("Equal stances should apply decrying war and abortion," *Catholic Courier* 11/6/97). It is, in fact, consistent for a war to be justified while abortion is not. World War 2 is a good example. A war to defend yourself is a "just" war. Of course war is terrible and should

be avoided if possible, but it is not evil or sinful to protect yourself. Many brave Catholic soldiers and sailors died for our country, and to say that they were participants in "state sponsored killing" is an insult to them and their families. Mr. Scibilia-Carver should be ashamed.

**Joseph Smith**  
Walworth

## Serious sins should be confessed before receiving Eucharist.

### To the editors:

Many people write letters praising Bishop Clark's Mass to welcome homosexuals back to church.

I don't think any sincere Catholic sees anything wrong with this.

However many Catholics are upset that all were invited to receive Communion without explaining the need to confess

any serious sin before receiving communion.

This is a requirement for all Catholics not just homosexuals.

Fornication, adultery, abortion, any abuse, any serious sin we have committed, we must be sorry and confess before receiving Communion. To receive with serious sin causes us to commit a sacrilege.

Not explaining this does not help but only confuses all.

We have to love enough to tell the truth even though it may be painful.

We are all sinners including me, but I think we may need reminders from the pulpit from time to time.

**Eileen Wilkin**  
Joanne Drive, Rochester