

# OPINIONS

## Converts are a credit to church's scriptural base

### To the editors:

It is ironic that we have massive conversions of well known Protestant Scripture scholars, ministers, lay men and women to the Catholic Church, and a simultaneous exodus to various Protestant sects of cradle Catholics from the Church that Jesus Christ established.

Many exiting the Church are being devoured by Protestant Evangelicals ever eager to debate the Scriptures. Tragically, they are leaving because we have failed to convey the fire of our Tradition, passed down from generation to generation since Apostolic times. This Tradition has its basis in the very Scriptures that Evangelicals often misquote to lure Catholics away.

That is why I wish to commend Mother Angelica's "Eternal Word Television Network," which has featured a legion of

converts coming back to the Catholic Church. The stories these converts relate of their journeys Home are riveting.

Scott and Kimberly Hahn joined the Church separately. Scott, who was bitterly anti-Catholic for years, drawing many teens out of the Catholic Church, had discovered the writings of the Early Fathers while attending Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary near Boston. He and Kimberly co-authored a book on the conversions, *Rome Sweet Home*. Both have made cassette tapes (voice and video) of their conversion stories.

Steve Wood, who was implored by Kimberly to talk Scott out of the "serious mistake" he was making, ended up joining the Church before Scott, after devouring large volumes of theology books offered by Scott, written by Catholic scholars they'd never previously heard of.

Gerry Matatics, also dedicating himself to convincing Scott of his "terrible folly," followed them in.

Jeff Cavins, born Catholic, left the Church in a huff after venting his frustrations at a Bishop, who told him he would be back — as an instructor! He rejoined the church and now hosts his own show on EWTN, "Life on the Rock," aimed at teens and young adults. He also co-hosts a series with Scott Hahn, "Our Father's Plan," which is the ultimate in Bible Study!

Marcus Grodi, after his own conversion, now has a Friday night series featuring one or more such stories every week. Marcus (was) invited to speak at St. Jude's Church, Gates, by David Higbee a scripture scholar convert from Evangelicalism. Grodi (spoke) Saturday and Sunday, November 15th and 16th.

David Higbee, in addition to coordi-

nating Catholic education at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Irondequoit, after an appearance on EWTN with Father Mitch Pacwa, accepts invitations to teach in various parishes here and around the country! He will easily expand on Marcus Grodi's appearance here.

*Surprised By Truth*, edited by Patrick Madrid; documents several more such stories. These are a very tip of the iceberg.

We, as Catholics, need to learn more of our True Faith. When we do, we will exhibit the Holy Fire these new converts have been displaying. Wake up, Catholics! Smell the wonderful scent of Roses God has blessed us with! Stop trying to change His most beautiful handiwork! Be the Catholic Evangelizers our great John Paul II is urging us to be!

John G. Lentricchia  
Bly Street, Rochester

## Bishop Clark's Catholicism should not be under attack

### To the editors:

At the risk of being run out of the diocese, I am writing another letter! I first met Bishop Clark when I was a seventeen year old senior at Aquinas Institute, and he was the young and newly ordained Bishop of Rochester. Bishop Clark visited Aquinas within weeks of being installed as Bishop. He came to Aquinas to celebrate a student body Mass and was available in the school library after Mass to greet students. Previous to Bishop Clark's visit, a visit by the Bishop meant the rest of the day off from school. So you can imagine a visit by the Bishop was eagerly awaited by the teenage students. However, Bishop Clark being young and new, announced "I don't say I'll never give you the day off, but I'm not going to today." Needless to say, the announcement was not greeted by a thunderous round of applause! Shortly after the Mass, some of my classmates came over to me and said "let's go meet the new Bishop." I must admit that the prospect of remaining in school the rest of the day did not make me feel like running up to the second floor of the school to meet the man responsible for my dilemma. Never the less, my classmates talked me into it. I found Bishop Clark to be humorous, warm, and humble. He seemed genuinely interested and concerned about the students. My opinion has not changed in the last eighteen years. In fact, my admiration for Bishop Clark has grown during these years.

Over the years, the Bishop has had more than his share of controversies. The Diocese of Rochester is not an easy place to be Bishop. Bishop Clark has been faced with some tough and at times, unpopular

decisions. However, the resurgence of the let's bash Bishop Clark bandwagon has gone too far. One recent letter actually questioned Bishop Clark's Catholicism. As far as I'm concerned, there is only one person who can question anyone's Catholicism and that would be Our Lord. Although I am looking forward to the day I am in Our Lord's presence; I really don't want to speed up the process. I adhere to Bishop Sheen's philosophy "Life is worth living." Besides that, heaven isn't ready for me, take my word for it. Yes, we can disagree with the Bishop from time to time. I've disagreed with some of Bishop Clark's more progressive views over the years. But I have never questioned his Catholicism. Nor have I ever or will I ever question his devotion as shepherd to the flock.

The second bash the Bishop issue is his ministry to gay Catholics. I think some people should look at the entire issue. Bishop Clark is the shepherd of the diocese. That makes him responsible for all Catholics in the diocese, not just those who consider themselves "holier than thou." Do we really want to pick and choose who can go to church and who can't? So today we exclude gay people. What's next? Do we exclude divorced Catholics? Then, do we exclude unwed mothers? Remember, they told Saint Joseph and Our Blessed Mother "there's no room in the inn." Do any of us really believe that the Good Lord would tell anyone "there's no room in the inn?" I say "let those of you without sin cast the first stone!" (Thank God for plexiglass windows.)

Alan Rector  
Flower City Park, Rochester

## Dialogue travels on two-way road

### To the editors:

In the November 6, 1997, edition of the *Democrat and Chronicle*, Sister Mary Sullivan wrote an article titled "Let love prevail amid theological argument." She encourages all Catholics to read Bishop Matthew Clark's paper on pastoral authority and begin to study, dialogue, listen, speak, pray, etc. Well, I've done all those things, including reading his paper. Then, at a recent gathering, I peacefully asked the bishop a question regarding this paper. I wondered what parameters were in place to see that our faith's views regarding the sanctity of human life would not be compromised. I cited an incident involving a speaker at Corpus Christi Parish who was partially funded by Catholics for a Free Choice. The bishop said he didn't know all the details and wasn't comfortable "answering that on his feet." The bishop asked me to write

him a letter. I did write a letter restating my question more clearly and explicitly. I received a response from the Vicar General saying they forwarded my letter to the (administrator) of Corpus Christi. I responded to the Vicar General that I still wanted an answer to my original question regarding potential problems of increased local authority. I received a second letter saying it's impossible to have "parameters in place" for every conceivable situation and I should wait to hear from Corpus Christi. I never heard from the (administrator) of Corpus Christi. Dialogue is a very healthy thing and necessary for the mission of the Church. But, it does take at least two parties. To date, I have already followed all of Sister Mary Sullivan's wise advice without success. Any further suggestions?

Margaret Smerbeck  
Pittsford



## Ordained must read Gospel

### To the editors:

Once again the *Catholic Courier* has been bold enough to tackle a timely and often difficult question: "Lay Preachers: Who has the right to talk and when?" (Nov. 6, 1997).

Your story was clear enough about naming the prohibitions against the non-ordained proclaiming the Gospel in the context of the Eucharistic Liturgy, but the reasoning behind such regulations was not evident.

It seems to this reader that, next to the Eucharistic Prayer itself, the Proclamation of the Gospel ought to be the highlight of the Eucharistic Liturgy. The most ancient traditions of both the East and the West give the Proclamation of the Gospel preeminence and sublime honor in the Eucharistic liturgy. A fanfare of Alleluias. We reverently rise to attention. The beautiful Book is borne to the holy place of proclamation in a fragrant haze of incense, accompanied by acolytes with lighted candles. We thumb the Book and ourselves with the sign of the cross — all, the liturgical equivalent of a stirring drum-roll in salute to the Holy Gospel. Glory to you, O

Lord!

At last the Proclamation of the Good News is spoken, or even chanted, by one, properly vested who has been called specifically and sacramentally, ordained — repeat, *ordained* — to proclaim the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Sacrament of Orders which gives even greater importance to the proclamation of the Holy Gospel in the Eucharistic context.

Squabble, if you wish, about who should be ordained. After careful scrutiny, certify to "break open the Word" whoever is qualified. That makes a lot of sense. But in the Eucharistic Celebration, don't disconnect the proclamation of the Gospel from the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Father McKenna suggests that it might be an appropriate time to put together some official directives about lay preaching and Gospel reading. That would be a blessing, perhaps long overdue. But, Kevin, don't let them pillage more of our rich liturgical heritage.

Father John J. Philipps  
St. Bridget's/St. Joseph's Church,  
East Bloomfield

## Thank Lord and paper for Fr. Shamon

### To the editors:

(Father) Albert Shamon's writings are so spiritual and inspirational.

I always learn from them, especially the recent one "Souls in Purgatory" ("Souls in purgatory need our prayerful help," *Catholic Courier* Oct. 30, 1997).

Thank you, *Courier* for printing his columns.

And God bless to Father Shamon — "May your typewriter never run out of rib-

bon."

Father Shamon's books are also excellent. The reader learns so much from them.

Stella Cecere  
North Main Street, Geneva

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EDITORS' NOTE: Fans of Father Shamon's books might want to check out the article about him on page 2a in the "Books, Music, Videos" supplement in this issue.