

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

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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.

Faith sustains through 'plagues'

EDITORIAL

The Dec. 15 issue of *U.S. News & World Report* contains a story on end-of-world predictions, complete with discussion of the Antichrist and assorted plagues to be unleashed upon the world.

Recent events suggest that — while the end may not be nigh — some plagues already affect people's lives.

In Rochester, Eastman Kodak Company, with exquisite timing, is supplying some workers with pink slips with which to decorate their Christmas trees.

Meanwhile, the University of Rochester Department of Family Medicine held a Dec. 12-13 conference to train medical personnel in chemical abortion techniques. The promotional flier described it as an "educational activity" that will examine "pregnancy options" for women.

And the United States Dec. 3 refused to join 120 nations — including the Vatican — in signing a land mine ban, even though land mines kill or maim approximately 26,000 people each year.

These are some of the contemporary plagues affecting families today. What if they were present during the days of the family we remember this season?

Imagine Mary going to her doctor soon after becoming pregnant, and the sympathetic, well-trained doctor saying, "Mary, you're young and single. You have your whole life ahead of you. Let's talk about some pregnancy options."

Or think of the Holy Family fleeing the massacre of the innocents, only to find themselves trapped in fields of land mines between Israel and Egypt.

Or consider what might have been going through Joseph's mind if, a few years later, he returned from work to the family's Nazareth home with a pink slip instead of a birthday gift for young Jesus.

Of course, the Holy Family didn't face these particular woes; they had their own trials and tribulations. So Mary and Joseph certainly could un-

derstand what troubled families today are feeling. They knew about the slaughter of innocent souls. They lived in an occupied land where civilians suffered at the hands of opposing forces. They were forced to relocate and start over. Mary witnessed the maiming and execution of her son.

But despite these troubles, Mary and Joseph kept their focus on the Child who had come into this world to bring hope and salvation.

Thoughts of the Holy Family's experiences may not provide immediate comfort to women who made bad choices about their unborn children, families torn apart by land mines, or those who suddenly find themselves on the unemployment line.

At times like these, many of us must simply rely on faith in that Child whose birthday we celebrate Dec. 25. But as that Child revealed by his birth, life, death and resurrection, faith will ultimately sustain us through whatever plagues come our way.

Writers take polar positions on homosexuality

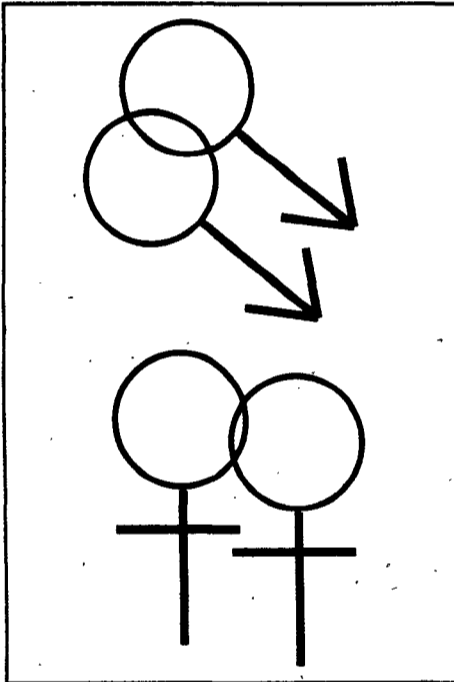
To the editors:

Gay men and lesbian women have never been considered "a part of" by the Jewish and Christian Traditions — not a part of God's people, not even a part of God's good creation. I recently preached on a reading from Scripture that is among the tradition's favorites to justify such discrimination: "And God created them male and female." Our heterosexist culture has canonized a literal interpretation of the first couple, an interpretation that has provided a basis for all sorts of presumptions about God's creative will and design.

If we take the creation narrative literally, if we use it to explain that that's why things are the way they are in the world, we misread our sacred texts and miss the point. The myth of Eve as "Adam's rib" is not a description of historic fact, but a vision of wholeness to which all are called. Like the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures, this story is the people's way of articulating what it means to be in right relationship with God and neighbor. It emphasizes that we were created relational.

As is symbolized in Adam's experience, we are intuitively aware of the fact that when we are not connected to others we are somehow incomplete. But when we do connect, especially when we connect in sexual intimacy, the experience is profoundly unitive.

But what makes them so? The key is found in the image "And the two became one body." The fragmentation of the human person into body/mind/spirit is a Greek concept. The Hebrews, however, viewed the person as an integral whole. The "one body," then, is not just a description of physical intimacy — nor is it restricted to heterosexual intercourse, no matter how naturally the parts fit together. "One body" is an image that speaks volumes about the totality of one's being, joined to the beloved.



Pope John Paul II, during his recent trip to Brazil, again labeled homosexuality as an anti-family trend (*Catholic Courier*, Oct. 9), reiterating that the church can't recognize "sexual diversity" within its vision of marriage (*Democrat and Chronicle*, Oct. 5). It is tragic that, because of the heterosexist field of vision that he has inherited from the tradition, he can't "recognize it." When the Pope encourages his flock "to always join fidelity to happiness, because one cannot exist without the other," he is challenging all who love. When he encourages couples: "Welcome your children with responsible love... defend them as a gift from God," he is describing non-traditional families as well. When, however, he identifies same-sex love with "the destructive forces of evil" that attack human dignity, he himself attacks the diversity of God's good creation.

Michael J. Nicosia
Dignity-Integrity/Rochester

To the editors:

It is unfortunate that the Lopatas and our Bishop are so blind as to the misery of the homosexual lifestyle which is lavishly documented as an extraordinarily promiscuous lifestyle — up to 5 or 10 partners a night. If you have read any of the books or studies on this issue you know that even gay couples who have been together for a number of years are not monogamous. What is against nature is inherently unfulfilling. Since there is an evil pseudo-fulfillment in sin nonetheless — abetted by Satan — what is further from the good, i.e. degrading and promiscuous, is sought as compensation for the good that is not realized.

The assertion that homosexual attractions are stable and cannot be changed is erroneous. Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons — who spoke at the Catholic Physician's Guild Healing and Spirituality Seminar — specialty was treating excessive anger. In his patients who happened to be homosexual, he found that when their anger was healed, so also were their homosexual attractions. Although many of us survive the less than perfect family situations of our youths and our decadent culture to lead relatively chaste lives, perhaps 1 to 3 percent of adults are so overwhelmed by the injuries inflicted upon them as children — often by parents — or simply by the culture in which they live that they come to embody a falsehood.

Homosexual attractions are treatable — and largely preventable. Through spiritual and psychological means including self-therapy as described by Gerard J. M. Van Den Aardweg, Ph.D. (*The Battle for Normality A Guide For (Self-) Therapy For Homosexuality*) those who desire to be chaste in action and pure in heart can be so.

Helen Ann Wagner
Lark Street, Rochester

'Nothing Sacred' portrays characters' love for God

To the editors:

In your Nov. 13 issue, Michael F. Brennan of Webster stated that his perception of the priests portrayed in "Nothing Sacred" are unhappy, out of touch with God and the Faithful. He implies that if a priest likes this show then he too must be unhappy, out of touch with God and the Faithful.

My question to him would be: Mr. Brennan have you ever watched the show? If you have then you seemed to have missed the very real to life issues that all the Faith-

ful — including priests — deal with. When I watch the show I see actors portraying priests, religious, and lay people who love God and struggle with understanding that love — just like real life. That struggle does not mean they are unhappy, or out of touch with God or the Faithful. If you

look closely enough you might notice that the struggle is to remain in touch with God and the Faithful. Quite frankly that's a self image I wouldn't mind having.

Rev. John H. Hayes
Holy Cross Church
Freeville

Note to Readers

Next week's edition will be devoted entirely to a Christmas theme, and will not include letters to the editors. Publication of letters will resume with our first edition of 1998 on Jan. 8.