

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.

Sisters thank donors for assisting missions

To the editors:

The Intercongregational Council of the Sisters of St. Joseph and Sisters of Mercy is most grateful to the people of the Diocese of Rochester for their continuing generosity to our missions in both Brazil and Chile. We rely on the financial assistance of the annual mission appeal in our diocese as well as that of our congregations, to carry out our ministries in these countries.

The needs of our sisters and brothers in Chile and Brazil continue to be overwhelming. Through the assistance of those in our faith communities, some measure of relief can be felt and our sisters can continue to walk with the women, men and children who are in most need.

Our sisters minister in the name of their respective congregations and in the name of this diocese. Your love and care are felt many miles away and your prayerful and financial assistance extends the ministry of this diocese well beyond our geographic boundaries.

In the name of the people of Brazil and Chile and in the name of our sisters serving in these countries, thank you for your generosity once again.

Sister Rosemary St. Peter,
Congregational President,
Sisters of St. Joseph;

Sister Sheila Stevenson,
President, Sisters of Mercy;

& the Intercongregational Council

Detroit priest welcomes Rochester panel's effort

My name is Father Bernie Owens. I serve at St. Joseph's Retreat House near Detroit. I have been a member of the individual and group prayer groups in the diocese for many years. I have been inspired by the efforts of the Rochester panel to improve the effectiveness of what I preach and teach. I have learned in the last two decades the importance of using language that makes every person in a congregation feel included, especially women and children. For me this has a certain parallel with what I had to learn in reflecting to Afro-American and Christian denominations other than the Roman Catholic denomination a recognition of their own dignity before God.

I recently had the opportunity to read through the *All God's People: Focus on Gender Inclusive Language*, published by the Women's Commission of your diocese. I am impressed by its content and manner or spirit. Some efforts at inclusive language proceed from an un-Christian attitude and alienate. This offering is respectful throughout, providing a practical way for many of us to live out Jesus' all-inclusive commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you."

Father Bernie Owens, SJ
Maestros Jesuit Retreat House
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

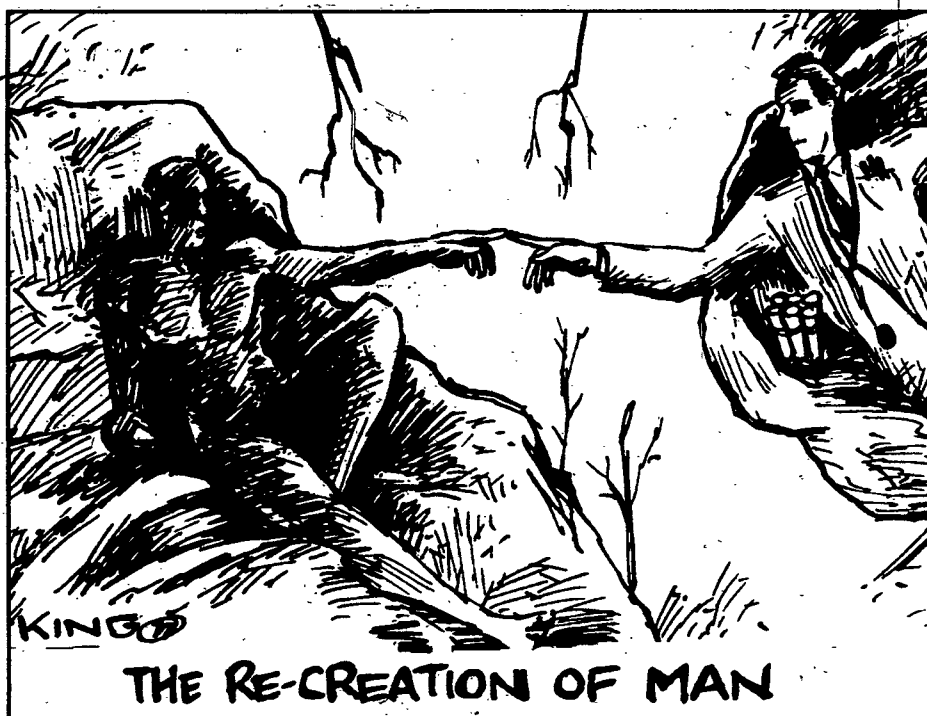
Write Congress on bill

To the editors:

The U.S. Supreme Court is addressing doctor-assisted suicide and Congress once again will try to override the President's veto of the partial-birth abortion bill.

Do soon write your elected officials and encourage them to serve our country's real best interests. The opposite of pro-life is pro-death! And the life you save may eventually be your own!

Mary Rita Crowe
Main Street East, Rochester



Questions fellow author on sweeping allegation

To the editors:

I am loath to criticize a "fellow-author," but I must question a statement made by Father Shamon in his "Word for Sunday" of December 11, 1997. He makes the absolute statement — I know he is fond of absolutes — that "College ethic courses are teaching little about private decency, honesty, personal responsibility of honor."

I have taught ethics myself for a quite a number of years; and, as a longtime member of the College Theology Society, I know quite a few ethics teachers. I don't know any who teach the kind of ethics courses which Father Shamon alleges we are teaching.

While I am writing this letter, I might as well make another point: Some people

seem to feel that whenever a priest mentions gays and lesbians, he fails in his responsibilities, unless he states emphatically the Vatican position that homosexual activity is sinful. I find it strange that these same people do not insist that, whenever a priest speaks about marriage, he fails in his responsibilities if he does not state that every act of intercourse in marriage must be open to procreation. Yet this is the stated position of the Vatican teaching on contraception in the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*; and, if opinion polls mean anything, it appears that a large number of Catholics find difficulty in accepting the position.

Monsignor William H. Shannon
East Avenue, Rochester

Debate over 'lay' preaching devolves into sexist attacks

To the editors:

As an occasional lay preacher in my parish, I was interested in your November 6 cover story on this issue. I appreciated the references to Canon 767 and the distinction that was made between preaching and proclaiming the Gospel at Mass. I believe that the ambiguities mentioned apply especially to daily Masses, where I preach. However, the article did not discuss the kinds of worship services where lay people are clearly permitted to preach and proclaim the Gospel. Nor did it consider the desirability of a preacher's consulting the faith community in the process of preparing a homily or sermon. I believe that good preaching is essential to good worship, and that the gift for

preaching is not limited to the ordained, although it should be a requirement for ordination. The article mentioned some of the pain women preachers have felt when they are criticized for preaching or when people walk out during their sermons. I experience pain when a layman is praised for his words from the pulpit, but a woman is denounced. What was a legitimate discussion about the desirability of lay preaching has become yet another attack on women.

Finally, Bishop Clark's comments on the origins of reform in the church do apply to this question of who can break open the Word of God to God's people.

Sheryl B. Zabel
Lyndon Road, Fairport

Rethink priorities for the new year

To the editors:

As the Advent of a new liturgical year proceeds upon us, my reflection wonders if the voice of the prophet today might not beckon us all, "Rethink your priorities, O people of God!"

When we seem, of late, to spend more time, energy and thought on who should proclaim and preach the Gospel in our midst, whether the church should indeed welcome and love all people, even gays and lesbians, or whose role is greater, lay or cleric, than to work together to the benefit of our children, the poor, or even stand up for economic justice right in our own community as thousands of people are put out of work for the sake of Wall Street satisfaction, I for one must side

with the admonition of the so-called prophetic voice and rethink priorities.

Tom Jewell, Director of Worship
St. Helen's Church, Rochester
via e-mail

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to the editors by e-mail!
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