

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.

We must nurture the priests we have

To the editors:

I would like to take the opportunity to say a few things about the most neglected members of our Church — our priests! Day after day, year after year, these men offer their lives in service to Christ and to his people, the Church. Overworked and under-appreciated, priests are now often asked to serve two, three, or even more parishes...

Paradoxically, just as the priest's role is expanding rapidly, so it is narrowing. A priest covering several parishes is in danger of becoming a "sacramental machine" not unlike the so-called "Mass priests" of the pre-Tridentine era. And, as if this were not enough, all too often members of the parish staff or lay volunteers resent or criticize the pastor as if he is simply in their way... Yes, I am sure that there are priests who are grumpy, old — or even young — men who operate with a "turf mentality." Is there any way we can justify our being grumpy or "turf" minded in return? ... Everyone, staff and volunteers, must be willing to compromise, to support, to empower, to facilitate, to grow, to change, to soften, and, most importantly, to love.

When we bemoan the declining number of priests, we need to ask ourselves some hard questions. When we get up from the pew and go home, is our favorite Sunday dinner "roast preacher?" Sometimes it is mine and I am ashamed of that. Will our young sons who hear our words want to grow up to be the brunt of jokes? ... If we do not appreciate, support, praise, pray for, and love our priests, we should not be surprised to see their numbers decline.

To the priests, I say, God Bless You! Thank you for being there for us all. Thank you for welcoming us into the family of God in Baptism. Thank you for feeding us with the very Body and Blood of Jesus. Thank you for absolving us from our sins. Thank you for blessing our marriages. Thank you for comforting us when a loved one has died... Thanks to the priests I have worked for — you were the best bosses I have ever had. Thank you for defending the lives of the unborn and for speaking out on behalf of the oppressed. Thank you for putting up with me when I was on your parish staffs or parish councils. Thank you for giving up wife, children, and family for me. I won't ask you to forgive me for my ingratitude or my backbiting. I know that you already have. You guys are forgiving machines. Thank you for being the fathers of our Church family. No one can take your place.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we have a long road ahead of us. The number of priests in our diocese is declining rapidly. We must lovingly nurture the priests we have and pray for and foster more vocations to the priesthood... Let us all be Christ-like in our actions and attitudes toward one another and, in particular, toward the priests who serve us.

Deacon Gregory Kiley

West Genesee Street, Clyde

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter has been edited to comply with our 500-word limit on let-

Couple took offense at 'Energizer' cartoon

To the editors:

The cartoon published in the *Catholic Courier* for March 5, 1998, was inappropriate and insulting to our Holy Father, the Vicar of Christ. Although he may be slowing down physically, his mind is a sharp as ever. Like Jesus Himself, he courageously teaches the truth which many people do not want to hear. He is a great gift from God to the Church during this period of turmoil and confusion. Long live John Paul II!

Dolores B. and Douglas R. Vining
Black Watch Trail, Fairport



Three views on fish, Fridays Bring back our lost Catholicity

To the editors:

Rose R. Harshbarger — and many others I'm afraid — has missed the point about meatless Fridays in her March 12 letter to the editors. She dwells on the issue of eating fish on Friday, how it is a costly alternative to meat and how forcing people to participate in this practice is a negative approach to sacrifice.

To begin with, the Church never said we were required to substitute fish for meat, but rather to make a sacrifice by giving up meat. One could simply have a meal of vegetables at home as a sacrifice instead of trying to put together an expensive meal of fish as an alternative. After all, a practicing Catholic would try to follow the intent of the law, sacrifice and repentance, not just the letter of the law substituting expensive fish for meat.

But this is not simply about us giving something up. It is also a penitential ac-

tion by the whole Catholic community directed at a particular immoral issue — abortion, euthanasia, etc. It is a way to bring the issue to the forefront and a way to repent for our actions as a community for allowing these things to occur.

I say let's bring back that lost Catholicity of the community in an outward way by supporting the bishops as they discuss this matter. Let's change our attitudes to ones of joining together in supporting the common goals of the Church instead of complaining that the Church always wants us to do something that might require some sacrifice or some change from our already very comfortable lifestyles. It's a simple way we can fight the culture of death that has worked its way into our society while also being reminded that Friday is the day Christ died for our sins.

Michael A. Gallagher
West Church Street, Fairport

Seafood is no sacrifice for him

To the editors:

The comments on meatless Fridays by Rose Harshbarger were interesting, especially the claim that they originated in the motivation to provide jobs for fishermen. I had never heard that. Am I naive to believe that fish were simply used by Catholics to comply with the mandate that was established as a token of self-denial?

I heartily agree with her that fish is now quite expensive, especially in Rochester. As a boy in Brooklyn I recall being taken by my father to Sheepshead Bay in the 1930s and '40s to buy fish directly from the boats. It was then quite cheap and often used instead of meat

because of its low cost and abundance.

I myself am very fond of most seafood. It has always been a pleasure, and indeed a self-indulgence to eat it. It therefore behooves me to forego both meat and fish if I wish to make some gesture of abstinence or self-denial. Tomato soup and a grilled cheese sandwich, a rice and beans casserole or many other alternatives are available. There is such an abundance of vegetables, grains and fruit available none of us should feel that abstinence from meat or fish is much of a sacrifice.

Eugene F. Lutz
Holiday Harbour
Canandaigua

Follow French for inexpensive meals

To the editors:

May I make a comment on the lengthy letter of Mrs. Rose Harshbarger in the March 12 *Catholic Courier* about a return to meatless Fridays?

The origin of Friday abstinence in the Church had nothing to do with the fishing trade, but was a penitential act in reparation for Christ's death on Good Friday. We were never told that we had to eat fish on Friday — only to abstain from meat. A little ingenuity and imagination produces delicious Friday menus without either fish or meat. The French, who are astute in the kitchen — and also in economic shop-

ping know-how — produce fantastic omelets, souffles and pasta dishes which are cheap, filling and delicious. As for not returning to meatless Fridays because of the resentment of the younger generation, such a reason seems to me both trivial and unfair to the young who are by nature generous and idealistic. What they need is to be given a good reason for what otherwise looks like a silly rule.

One meatless day a week for Christ? What person, young or old, cannot make that sacrifice?

Margaret Vincent
North Street, Caledonia