

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.

Why didn't Tioga event earn photo, news story?

To the editors:

June 15, 1998, was a very special day in the rural community of Tioga County. Even Bishop Clark and Bill Pickett were among those gathered at St. Margaret Mary's Church in Apalachin, N.Y.

Why were we gathered? That was a question that I thought would have been made well known by an article in the *Courier*. But alack and alas, it appears that the Celebration of Unity of the six parishes in Tioga County was not something that was newsworthy. Over the past year members of the six parishes, as others in the Diocese, have been working countless hours to put together our strategic plan for the next millennium. Do we feel our plan is more important than others? No. But the celebration we had was of a very special significance to us. All of the SOS — Strength of Six parishes — in the Tioga area: St. Francis of Assisi, St. John the Evangelist, St. James, St. Margaret Mary, St. Patrick, and St. Pius X, participated in OUR celebration. It was a very moving and spiritual ceremony. The procession entered to the singing of the Litany of the Saints. Besides the Bishop and lectors, there were 36 children who represented each Saint in the Litany. Of those 36, six were dressed to represent the patron saint of their parish.

The highlight of the evening's celebration was when each parish stood and made its commitment to the other five. At which time a ribbon depicting a color of the rainbow, was attached to a wreath suspended from the ceiling. After all six ribbons were attached, the Bishop was presented with a gold ribbon, and as the choir sang "Bind Us Together Lord" the Bishop tied the six ribbons together with the gold ribbon as a sign of the unity that now was to be. We the members of the SOS parishes are proud of the PGLT's work and have accepted the PLAN that was presented to the Bishop during such a warm and spiritually uplifting celebration. Did we expect front-page coverage? No. But it would have been nice if even Bishop Clark could have made mention that he was here to witness our commitment to one another. Even though the event was not worthy of even a photo in the *Courier*, at least those of us who are parishioners of the SOS parishes will not only keep the celebration close to our hearts; we will always remember the commitment we made that night, and we will continue to work together to fulfill that commitment.

Rosemary Niznik
State Route 38
Newark Valley

EDITORS' NOTE: Reduced page counts — coupled with a need to provide more in-depth information on issues facing the church today — continue to push the Catholic Courier away from events reporting in favor of issues-based coverage. Yet we did indeed consider the pastoral-planning process in Tioga County to be newsworthy. That's why on June 6 we published a lengthy story about the planning group ("Tioga plan unifies six parishes") on page 1a of the supplement "Toward the new millennium: A pastoral planning progress report." While a photograph of the celebration Ms. Niznik describes might have provided clippings for the scrapbooks of Tioga County parishioners, we think the June 6 story was a more effective use of limited space because it informed readers throughout the diocese about the specific achievements those parishioners celebrated June 15.



Takes issue with flier article

To the editors:

The recent *Catholic Courier* article repudiating claims that Bishop Clark supports gay and lesbian marriages prompts many questions (June 25: "Bishop repudiates charges found in CDC flier"). Are Catholics expected to believe that the goal of the Diocesan Gay & Lesbian Ministries is simply to provide support to gays and lesbians who choose to lead a celibate lifestyle so they feel welcome in the Catholic Church, as stated in the article? If that were the real goal, most of us have no problem with that objective. Goal accomplished! But — history and experience have taught us that is NOT the goal of gays and lesbians in the Church.

I cannot remember reading or hearing of any Church document or position suggesting that gays and lesbians were hereby ostracized and were no longer welcome in the Catholic Church. Rather, most gays and lesbians have simply excluded themselves because of THEIR objections to Church teachings against having homosexual sex. A focused effort to help homosexuals feel that they are very welcome in the Church, and that we only ask that they avoid homosexual sex — will not bring back gays and lesbians who have excluded themselves for this fundamental reason.

As we go to church, or elsewhere, few of us wear signs indicating our sexual orientation. It is the current climate of the Gay

& Lesbian movement that dictates that gays and lesbians should proclaim their homosexuality "publicly" and insist on their right to require society to accept their perverted sex activities as "right and normal." Is this really what we want our church leaders to support.

The *Courier* article makes the erroneous statement that "few people realize that the Church does not consider a homosexual orientation immoral." On the contrary, most people do realize that the inclination to sin is in itself *not wrong or sinful in any way*. Rather, it is the very act of "doing wrong" that is sinful and the fundamental reason why there is justified concern over Bishop Clark's evolving agenda in support of homosexuals. Catholics already welcome gays and lesbians who want support in leading a celibate life — or help in changing their homosexual orientation. It is no secret that some priests and sisters have homosexual orientation and have been welcome in leading a celibate life. But this is clearly not the agenda of Gay & Lesbian organization, including the national Organization of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian & Gay Ministries.

The name of the game seems to be "get the camel's head into the tent." Then the rest will be easier.

Pray that Bishop Clark will receive God's guidance.

Paul Cannon
Sherri Ann Lane, Rochester

Pray for justice to attract vocations

To the editors:

You are to be commended for the June 11 edition, when you did not shy away from addressing the happy occasion of the ordination of three priests in our diocese, while also covering Rev. Charles Mulligan's decision to marry and his resulting forced departure from the active sacramental priesthood. These stories were both important news and were worthy and deserving of the coverage they received.

I grow steadily more weary of people who continue to blame the declining number of ordained priests on societal scapegoats. The church — and I use a lower case letter deliberately — suffers no lack of called servants — people who have heard God's voice and have done all in their power to respond to their calls to ordained leadership. Father Mulligan has given 34 years of his life to the unselfish service of God's people. He has spent much of that time suffering painful loneliness and personal isolation that the Church — please observe the upper case this time — forced upon him in order for him to answer the call of God. Throughout the world, there are tens of thousands of ordained priests who have been forced to make the same choice as Father Charlie. Where is it written that God only calls in one way, and only one time?

It is shameful that these men are removed from sacramental ministry, not because they do not want to be priests, but because they are not allowed to be as God

called and ordained them. It is unjust to these men and it is unjust to us, the church. Each time a priest is forced to leave the active priesthood because his heart yearns for a spouse, the church is diminished. Each time the love of a companion and the love of God are set up as adversaries, the whole church suffers. Each time we watch silently as another priest is removed from service because he's heard the call of God to marriage, our shame deepens.

Let me say again: The church suffers no lack of called servants. Allow me to slightly corrupt a slogan I've seen on T-shirts and bumper stickers all over this country. If you want priests, work for justice.

Lisa P. Marcelletti
Daniel Drive, Rochester

Paper offers challenges

To the editors:

We enjoy reading the *Catholic Courier*. We feel your choice of columnists is balanced. One is challenged every week to read the paper with an open mind and a prayerful heart. The very good letter from William Irwin of Elmira (June 18: "Glad bishop, paper printed story") concerning the manner in which you reported Charles Mulligan's leaving the priesthood deserves a big "Amen."

Vincent and Eleanor Sementilli
Corning, via e-mail