

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.

Don't brand critics 'heresy-hunters'

To the editors:

Father Richard McBrien, in his recent column entitled "Heresy hunting always in season" (*Catholic Courier*, July 9) rightly affirms that the word "heresy" is often used improperly or even recklessly. He also concludes with the important point that the best way to combat heresy is to teach the truth more persuasively.

Yet in between he mistakenly asserts that heresy can only involve Church dogma. The clear implication is that the rejection of Church doctrine, which he repeatedly — and erroneously — identifies as "non-fallible teaching," is "never heretical." This obviously includes Church teaching on controversial topics such as contraception and the all-male priesthood.

Church law (canon 751) clearly provides that heresy refers not only to the denial of Church dogma (canon 749), but also to the denial of any teaching of the ordinary Magisterium (canon 750). The recent amendments to canon law by Pope John Paul II make this fact even more explicit.

Obviously, Father McBrien has much at stake on this point, because his own dissent from the Church's ordinary Magisterium is well documented. No one should desire that Father McBrien and other dissident theologians be punished for punishment's sake. But when they teach falsely in a public forum, the good of the Church requires that appropriate action be taken. A concerned Catholic should be able to expect such redress

without being vilified as a "heresy-hunter." At stake is the integrity of our Catholic faith, a faith that unites us as brothers and sisters in Christ and which provides a true and lasting "common ground" on which to build authentic Catholic unity. Heresy only brings bitterness and division. Who wants that?

When St. Thomas More was told that heresy was not a nice word, he simply replied, "It's not a nice thing." Because heresy is "not a nice thing," love for our brothers and sisters in Christ impels us to confront charitably and honestly the often painful repercussions of false teaching.

Leon J. Suprenant, Jr.
Catholics United for the Faith
Steubenville, Ohio

Clergy set good, bad etiquette examples

To the editors:

Before the clergy points a finger at the laity, they would do well to examine their own behavior in church, as they set the tone, by their example.

I have been in parishes where from the beginning of the Processional to the end of the Recessional the devotion of the priest inspired and was shared by the laity and not one single criticism made in the "Church Etiquette" article applied.

I have also been in, for example, a parish where the priest strolled down looking right to left during the Processional, then at the altar turns to the people with remarks on the Buffalo Bills or any other "seasonal" comment. Sermons? Obviously not prepared, at times rambling like a stream of consciousness and worse yet, sometimes not even touching on the Gospel.

Perhaps the most shocking, at least to me, is to receive Our Lord in Holy Communion and within five minutes the priest breaks in with a commercial on the sale of raffle tickets or sale of this and that. And I cannot help but think "isn't he at all affected by Holy Communion — the tangible Presence of Our Lord?"

Clergy be conscious of the Presence of God and the awesome moments you are responsible for. You may be surprised at the response of the laity who left their homes to gather to worship God.

Georgette M. Murphy
Cortland Street, Geneva

Quiet necessary before and after Sacrifice of Mass

To the editors:

I wish to make a correction to a quote attributed to me. I never said I witnessed several instances of children running down the aisles during Mass.

The 11:30 Mass I attend is always orderly and reverent. I was describing something that happened after the previous Mass and before the next Mass was to begin.

What I hoped to get across, when I agreed to do the interview, was to remind God's people the Creator and Redeemer of the world is present in the tabernacle. His temple is a sacred place. Parishioners need to be reminded their behavior before the Lord demands reverence.

When one is in prayer preparing for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, a reasonable quiet is hoped for. Those who forget should be gently reminded.

With all the changes coming so quickly and many were drastic, we need to find a balance. Sadly, reverence before God has been lost in the shuffle.

Margaret Ryan
Upper Foothill, Montour Falls



Jesus accepts, loves all people

To the editors:

The Catholic Community wonders why there are those parishioners who are falling away from the church while others choose to attend non-traditional Catholic parishes. I think the answer lies very simply in the words of Father Stravinkas in your July 30 article on church etiquette, "The whole idea that we'll take anyone, no matter how they look or act, is ridiculous." I thought the Lord is the only one who should judge a human being!

Aren't we taught that it is what is on the inside that is important? Maybe the fellow who came to Mass in the sports uniform wasn't able to attend on Sunday — at least

he was at church. The church my husband and I attend encourages parishioners to socialize before and after Mass — doesn't that build a community? We laugh and clap during Mass. What God must think!

As long as I am dressed in a decent manner, does it matter what I wear? Who does Jesus love more — the man dressed in rags or the one dressed in eye-pleasing clothes? The one who sits quietly with a rosary in his hands or the one who laughs and cries in church? My guess is both, because Jesus loves and accepts all people for who they are. Perhaps we should too.

Susan M. D'Arienzo
Pemberton Road, Rochester

Remember whose house you're in

To the editors:

I refer to the July 30 issue of the *Courier*, and its lead article on this subject. Does it not all boil down to respect? Why do some people dress better for the movies than Mass? Would you chew gum at a formal party? If you were invited to the White House, would you socialize with the person sitting next to you while the President is speaking? Do you come late and leave early for a concert by the RPO?

I am not saying that we need to return

to the past, I am only saying that when you come to the House of God, remember where you are. All people are welcome in our church, but some of their actions are not. Since Vatican II encourages the people to take a more active part in their church, I make these remarks, leaving the preaching of the Word to the priest.

Michael Mumma
Dickinson Road, Webster
via e-mail

Pastor catches paper in outdated thinking

To the editors:

Neither in my interview with the writer of "Church Etiquette" nor in the bulletin article he quotes did I refer to my gum-chewing altar server as an "altar boy." Does the *Catholic Courier* assume that breaches in church etiquette are perpetrated always more frequently, or most likely by males? I thought we weren't going to do that anymore.

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

EDITORS' NOTE: Oops! Staff writer Mike Latona blushing admitted mentally translating "altar server" into "altar boy" not because he believes boys are less mannerly than are girls, but out of years of habit. We hoped we weren't going to do that anymore either, but we'll keep working on it.