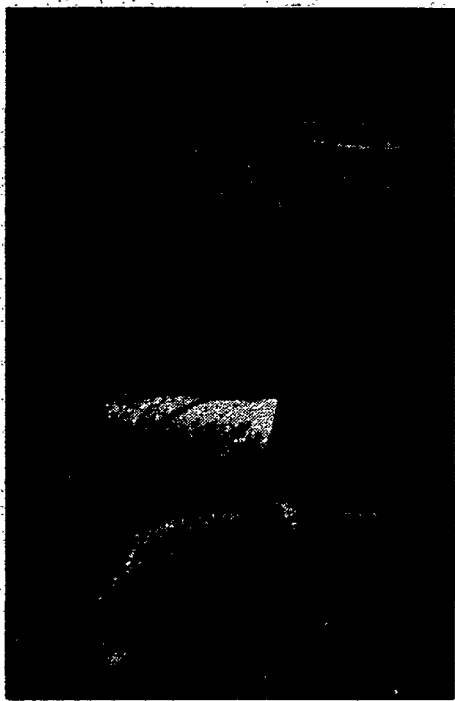


Readers respond to removal of priest



Greg Franica/Staff Photographer

Father James Callan is hugged by Corpus Christi parishioners Donna Rae Stevens and Robin Lavergne after he met with officials at the Diocesan Pastoral Center in Gates, Aug. 21.

Priest could have avoided losing parish

To the editors:

Recent disclosure that Father Callan of Corpus Christi parish has been removed from that ministry by the Vatican should come as no surprise. I know for a fact that Bishop Clark has asked Father Callan on occasion to refrain from some of the objectionable practices that he continued with anyway. I attended a memorial service at Corpus Christi almost 10 years ago and a woman came dangerously close to concelebrating that Mass.

Although I believe Father Callan deserves a great deal of credit for ministering to the "leopards" of today's society, aids patients, gays, and the downtrodden of today's world, I also believe the Vatican action to be right, proper, and long overdue. I also wholeheartedly believe that this is yet another example of a controversy that could have been avoided. Father Callan could have and should have ministered to the gay community without blessing gay unions. He could have also ministered to Protestants by setting up the mechanism to enlighten them on how they could become Catholic so they could receive the "Body of Christ." Bishop Clark also must share the responsibility for this Vatican action, for by his silence he was condoning these practices at Corpus Christi.

What troubles me most are the remarks Father Callan made to his parishioners. He said, "I've been fired." Father Callan doesn't seem to grasp that one is fired from a job. The priesthood is a vocation, where one lives with reassignment. In closing, I would encourage Father Callan to reassess his vocation and carefully explore whether he wants to continue as a Roman Catholic priest or whether his talents might be best suited elsewhere.

Alan Rector
Augustine Street, Rochester

Vatican action has precedent in church history

To the editors:

A century ago the Catholic bishop of Rochester successfully plotted with Vatican reactionaries to squelch some promising experiments in evangelization being tested by Father Isaac Hecker and the Paulists, by bishops in St. Paul, Baltimore and elsewhere and by creative lay people. The climax of that era was the January 1899 encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae* which

To the editors:

I am writing in response to Bishop Clark's decision to honor Cardinal Ratzinger's request and remove Father Jim Callan from Corpus Christi Church. I, like many parishioners, did not come to Corpus Christi solely because of Father Jim Callan. We came because we had struggled for years to live our lives in the way Jesus Christ would like us to live them, while also trying to remain true to certain church laws and guidelines that obstruct this lifestyle. Father Callan simply gave voice to this dilemma and boldly questioned certain teachings and assumptions that many of us had questioned for years. I joined Corpus Christi because I found a place where others openly embrace differences, while working together in their common struggle to lead Christian lives.

It seems ironic that Father Callan is be-

ing dismissed for promoting the idea that God has created each of us in his image — man or woman, Protestant or Catholic, homosexual or heterosexual, rich or poor. What he and the Corpus Community have done is help contribute to a paradigm shift — one that can be threatening to some and exciting to others. This paradigm shift toward the important role of women in the clergy, the more ecumenical nature of worship, and the integration of all of our sisters and brothers in the church is also occurring in other places in the country. Removing Father Callan from his post will not stop this paradigm shift. I compare the removal of Father Callan to the removal of one key scientist from a community of scientists, with the hope that this loss would stop the move from Newtonian to quantum physics.

At other times in history leaders in the Roman Catholic Church have grown anx-

ious or frustrated with the questionings of the masses. They seem to forget that the Church itself would not have existed if it were not for the other human inclination — questioning. Jesus Christ asks us each day to question what is truly important. I am not surprised, but am very disheartened by Cardinal Ratzinger's request. Like all of us who are steeped in one paradigm, he stands at the brink between old and new, and has difficulty envisioning the necessity for the leap. I believe the Bishop sees the necessity but is in an awkward situation. Although Father Callan may not be with us at Corpus when this leap happens, I have faith that it will occur. And as Corpus Christi parishioners say, "You can cut back the flowers, but you can't hold back the Spring."

Mary Tantillo
Klink Road
Rochester



Father Callan's supporters rally at the Pastoral Center Aug. 21 while he and Corpus Christi staff met with diocesan officials to discuss the parish's situation.

Hopes parishioners will stay

To the editors:

What hurts so much about Father Jim Callan's "firing" is not only that we will be losing the best priest ever at Corpus Christi, but also because the church that we love, the Catholic Church, is trying to force us to compromise our ideals. Because these are ideals that exist in the very depths of our consciences, I think I may know a little more of what it feels like to live in a non-democratic country. I feel oppressed — ironically just like those who Father Callan ministers to.

Because of this, I have heard many of my fellow parishioners say that they may leave the Catholic Church. Now, more than ever, the Church needs members like those from Corpus Christi. If we leave

now, we become part of the problem, rather than part of the solution. It's okay to disobey Church traditions.

At one time the Church supported slavery, segregation, and banned girls from being altar servers. How foolish all of those stances seem now. Of course, Corpus Christi allowed altar girls before the Catholic Church did. Remember, Jesus was a radical in His time too. Now is not the time to give up on the Catholic Church. We must continue fighting to make the Church what it ought to be. You can trim back the flowers, but you can't hold back the spring!

Mark S. Coon
Laurelton Road
Rochester

Bible speaks against stand

To the editors:

I'm not a member of Corpus Christi. I did go there for Mass several times in the past. I also volunteered in one of their wonderful ministries for a year. Their outreach is simply tremendous.

However, it bothers me that some priests do not believe that the Bible is the Word of the Lord, even though they profess it. Father Jim Callan is not alone. I know of others. In a letter to the *Democrat and Chronicle* one time someone said that there was nothing the Bible prohibiting homosexual activity. I would suggest they read Romans Chapter 2, verses 26 and 27. Verse 32 says that all who do these things deserve death (The New American Bible).

There are other passages referring to illicit sexual union. I'm not trying to force my beliefs on anyone else. I'm just giving information.

It also says in the Bible that any who receive Communion should be baptized first. This is also church tradition. Whether this is the case at Corpus Christi, I don't know.

I do know that Father Jim Callan has been an inspiration to that parish. He has built it up from practically nothing. I'm also sure he believes in everything he has done. I have no desire to denigrate him.

I'm just one of those poor people caught in the middle between church tradition and modern church.

Lillian Adams
Fort Hill Apartments, Canandaigua

Scripture readings offer counsel on difficult situation

To the editors:

Come Holy Spirit! Today's readings (August 16) are most appropriate.

Jeremiah: "Ebed-Melech said, 'My lord king, these men have been at fault in all they have done to the prophet Jeremiah, casting him into the cistern.'" But, Jeremiah was vindicated.

Responsorial Psalm: "Lord, come to my aid."

Please, everyone, read all of Hebrews 12:1-4. Especially, "Persevere in running

the race which lies ahead; let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith. For the sake of the joy which lay before him, he endured the cross..."

And, Luke 12:49-53: "I have come to light a fire on the earth." And, "Do you think I have come to establish peace on

the earth? ... I have come for division."

Father Callan: Rejoice and be glad! Through your form of "martyrdom" the church will be strengthened. I may not see it in my lifetime, but I trust you will. Peace be with you.

Grace B. Carnes
Eagle Ridge Circle, Rochester

No one more controversial than Christ

To the editors:

I'm not a parishioner of Corpus Christi, but have been to Mass there on numerous occasions. I found the parishioners to be very friendly, and the Mass a true celebration.

Father Callan has done nothing but good for the community. He has started programs for the homeless, ex-convicts, recovering alcohol and drug addicts and much more. His parish has grown from a few hundred to thousands. He has drawn people to the Church.

There are people in this community who claim Father Callan is too controversial. Who could have been more controversial than Christ. He accepted and ministered to all. These people should spend their time and energy on helping people, rather than hindering those who are doing good.

Father Callan should be allowed to stay at Corpus Christi Parish and continue doing the good he has started.

Jo Ann Del Mastro
Moxon Drive, Rochester