

Theory shows peril of multiple views

Catholic Courier

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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.

To the editors:

Practices in the Church have changed over the years with more or less turmoil. The greatest change was the acceptance of just war theory as an exception to the earliest 300-year practice of the nonviolent love of enemies that was in accord with the explicit command and example of Jesus.

Often changes in society and the practice of some Catholics precede a change in authoritative teaching as Father Jim Callan noted in an August 20 *Courier* article. This was true of the above example but I hope the truth of such teachings as *Humanae Vitae* will not be "changed" no matter how many "go beyond the rules."

I have more sympathy for some of the changes Corpus Christi would like to see in Church teaching. At least the parish makes appeal to the inclusive, liberating and nonviolent practice of Jesus to support its positions; something just war theorists could never do with their "exception." Nevertheless, I find it very difficult to justify changes in practice ahead of changes in teaching.

In removing Father Callan from Corpus Christi, Bishop Clark has decided it is not acceptable to "... even appear to defy the legitimate authority vested in the Apostolic See of Rome" and that "... every ordained minister has a responsibility to uphold the Church's teaching publicly." Still, Bishop Clark is sympathetic with the sentiment behind some of Corpus' positions. For example, I think he was happy to hand the Pope the results of our General Synod which included prophetic recommendations for a married clergy and women's ordination.

It would be easier to abide the slow pace of change if Church teaching did not contain a precedent that allows two opposed positions, on participation in state sponsored killing, i.e. war. I hope Corpus folks do not see the unique just war situation as one that should lead to the acceptance of multiple positions on other issues, tempting as that may be. It should be seen for the disaster it has been for the Body of Christ. It has produced serious fractures of unity and incredible unChristlike violence; scandalous countersigns to the Gospel.

When we have a problem with Church teaching, we need pray that it will come to reflect Jesus and the Gospel more clearly. As it does, we will want all Catholics to take the teaching seriously, no matter how challenging. Certainly, we should have open lines of communication with our bishops who are responsible for the teaching.

Corpus Christi has lived out Church teaching to a remarkable degree. Dorothy Day has been one inspiration for the parish's ministries of life, peace and justice that have been a great example and gift to our Church. Perhaps the Community could take another leaf from this woman of extraordinary love and long suffering. Her great influence for change came not from taking her practice outside the teaching but from being submitted to the teaching authority even while critical of much in the Church. "Do all you can to preserve the unity..." Ephesians 4:3.

Mark Scibilia-Carver
Cold Springs Road, Trumansburg



Urges others to experience joy, benefits of volunteering

To the editors:

Since 1983 I have been chronically mentally ill. Always wanting "to give back to society," I tried many different volunteer jobs. After 15 years, I finally found two jobs that are perfect for me.

In 1996, I lived in Shumway Group Home. My friend and I found a real treasure while walking around the neighborhood. Eyeing a sign, we wondered what the Mercy Prayer Center was. We knocked on the door. Five people were socializing in the kitchen. We felt welcomed and accepted. One sister gave us a tour and we received information about the center.

I sought advice about the availability of volunteerism and spiritual direction. Two priests recommended the Mercy Prayer Center or Sisters of St. Joseph Spirituality Center.

I chose the Mercy Prayer Center because I live so close to it. As it worked out, Sister Jody allowed me to volunteer in exchange for spiritual direction. She also used to pick me up each Monday on her way to work and bring me back later.

My volunteer job on Mondays gives me a satisfying feeling of creation. I cook soup, stew or chili, and bake cookies, muffins or brownies. The food is served to guests that come there. The employees and volunteers both have gifts of hospitality.

My mom volunteers at the Sisters of St. Joseph Infirmary. Last Thanksgiving, she

invited me to go with her. I fell in love with the way the place functioned. It is unlike any skilled nursing facility that I've seen. The sisters and priests are alert, sociable, and take care of each other. The building is clean and inviting.

My Wednesday job included: visiting with people who have their door open, walking, bringing people to activities and just doing what needs to be done even if it's only just being there.

All in all, I'd like to share my benefits of volunteerism:

The people are exceptional.

Conversation is good.

I felt called to do creative work.

Both jobs have a need for me and I feel rewarded.

I feel closer to God and my Church.

Volunteerism — serving those in need — has long been part of Christian tradition. I write this to encourage you to think about the benefits of volunteering in your neighborhood or some place of interest to you.

Thank you for allowing me to share my jobs with you. I invite you to volunteer also. The benefits are great.

Connections for volunteer work:
Sisters of Mercy Prayer Center: Sister Jody Kearney, (716) 473-6893
Sisters of St. Joseph Infirmary: Sister Beverly Jones, (716) 381-4064.

Mary Ann Huether
Clinton Avenue South, Rochester

Jesus would do more to help gays

To the editors:

Today's controversies within the Church are very close to my heart. Two of my sons are homosexual. My love for my family is second only to my love for Jesus Himself. Seeing my sons struggle with the social and moral issues, and a host of emotional problems, has convinced me

that homosexuality is about very real problems of very good people.

The teachings of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, while they may be correct, do not complete the picture for me. Imagine Jesus saying to the man born blind, "Gee, Bart, that's a really bad condition you have there. It must at times be a powerful occasion to sin for you. I'll instruct my disciples to treat you with respect and dignity. But blindness is your cross. You must accept it patiently."

Talk is cheap. We all know what Jesus really did. And if I am to accept the Roman Catholic Church as part of the Body of Christ, I must see it doing what Jesus would do.

I have great hope that the upcoming NACDLGM Conference "Imaging Justice" will develop some practical Christ-like solutions to peoples' real needs.

John F. Toth
Stonehill Drive
Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter was received prior to the NACDLGM conference.

Joy of high school retreat inspired chaperon

To the editors:

This past July, a large group of young adults and chaperons from the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community traveled to Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, to participate in the high school youth retreat. I was once again one of the chaperons.

In this day in age, when the youth of our country often get a bum rap as being trouble makers involved in drugs, alcohol, and sex, it was refreshing to witness 2,500 young adults from all over the country sharing their faith and getting high on

God! Remember Benediction, adoration, and praise? This was a first-time experience for many on their faith journey.

I would like to thank the Community for supporting our fundraisers — our only support — and the parents for working at those events and for trusting us with their children for this weekend of spiritual enrichment. We look forward to next year's retreat and encourage participation in our youth programs throughout the year.

Michael DelGrosso
Painted Post, via e-mail