

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.

Article failed to recognize insiders' path

To the editors:

I read with great interest the *Catholic Courier* article of Oct. 8, "Church Teachings Call for Political Involvement" by Lee Strong. However, I was disappointed that Mr. Strong did not mention the significant contributions of the Catholic lay people who have run for and held public office in our diocese.

Mr. Strong used the term "public advocacy" when he discussed actions Catholics can take relative to issues. His examples ranged from the parish "social justice committee" to arrest and jail for civil disobedience. Perhaps in his diffidence to the IRS and our church's status as a tax-exempt organization, Mr. Strong forgets there is a middle ground!

I would like to suggest he read an excellent book written by two lay Catholic men and former Rochesterians, *Confident & Competent: A Challenge for the Lay Church* by William L. Droel and Gregory F. Augustine Pierce. In their chapter "Social Justice," they talk about ordinary Catholics exercising "calculated Christian courage" at work and in their communities and having lasting effects on institutions. They call these people "insiders."

"It is necessary to highlight the role of the insider in achieving social justice because so much of the language and practice of the church suggests that protest and prophetic witness are the only vehicles for social justice" (p. 77). But, as they quote from another document, such ideas "clearly depart from the mainstream of Catholic social thought which regards the advance of social justice as essentially the service performed within one's professional and occupational milieu. The almost exclusive preoccupation with the role of the out-

Priest's column requires a reply

To the editors:

Father Richard P. McBrien's column of Oct. 15 ("We cannot judge another's guilt before God") begs for a reply. Who in Washington, D.C., is judging another's guilt before God? Whatever happened to separation of church and state? Is this a Humpty-Dumpty routine or a convenient dismissal of the facts to promote a Liberal ideal?

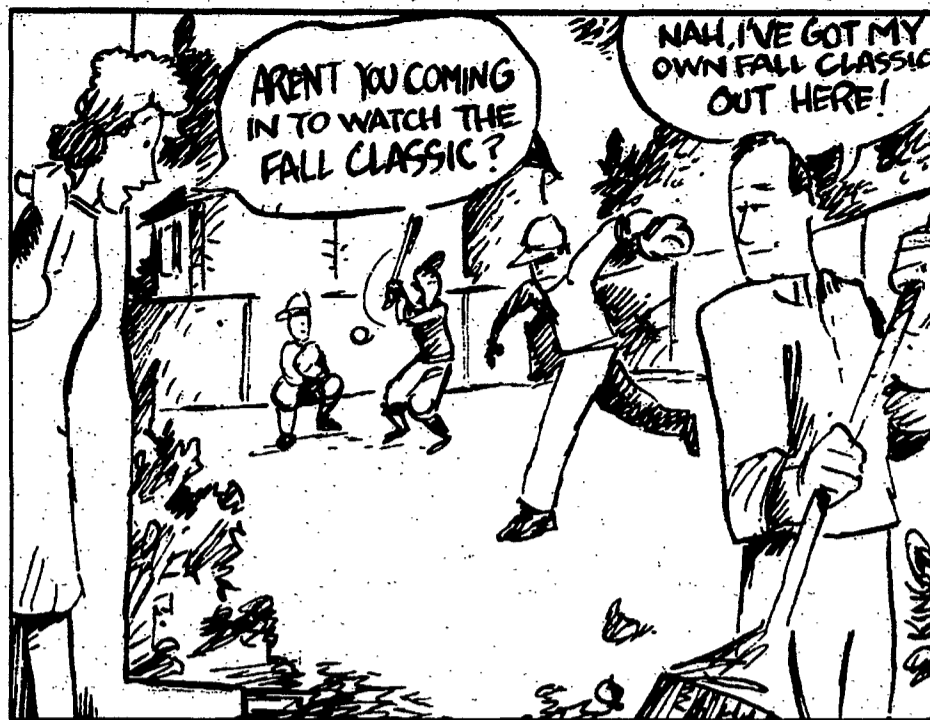
As to justice, who in this world has cornered the market on justice? This is God's domain. As to charity, I believe God will judge us according to what we give in relation to our ability to give.

Perhaps a few rich people do abuse workers, but most rich people work hard and offer employment for workers and their families. They try to be fair to both the stockholders and to the workers. If their businesses do not make a profit, workers lose their jobs. However, regardless of the history of wrongdoing, we should not use any type of immorality as our excuse for not being responsible for our good moral behavior.

How about moral responsibility of setting good example for others? The President of the USA is the No. 1 example-setting person in the world. We want a President to be truthful and to be loyal to his family and to the people who work for him.

Finally, the White House is the people's house. The President is not a king but a servant of the people (Americans who need a President to be the leader and to defend our precious freedom).

Joseph E. Judge
Crow Hill Drive, Fairport



sider as the model of social action can only distract the laity from the apostolic potential that lies at the core of their professional and occupational lives." (p. 77-78).

I applaud efforts of folks like Brian Kane and the Social Action Network. However, complaints that the "political system has become disconnected from the common people" tell me that ordinary Catholics (and perhaps their pastors!) have given up on even fellow Catholics to have the moral courage and ingenuity desperately needed in elected officials.

It is election time now. There are Catholics running for public office all over our diocese. They are running for school boards, town, village and city coun-

cils, the state legislature and for Congress. I urge individual parishioners to find out who they are, what they stand for and if conscience and pocket book allow, support them.

For as Droel and Pierce write, politicians (like all other lay workers) need our congregations to help them mediate solutions to our institutional problems. I pray that elected officials "will find empathy and support from the church this week, the support and wisdom of our Catholic tradition and community. Then it will mean something to them when we pray: Go, the Mass is ended, God's work continues in our work." (p. 96).

Maureen McCarron
Turkey Hill Road, Conesus

Process demands openness

To the editors:

I recently attended a Corpus Christi parish forum in which the topic of discussion was women's roles in the Roman Catholic Church. Of course, the woman in question at Corpus is Mary Ramerman because of her courage in questioning church law related to wearing a "half stole" given to her by the church community and participating in Mass near the altar in ways that some believe are reserved only for the ordained.

The 10/5/98 forum was actually the first one in which I experienced all four speakers as thoughtful, informative, and gracious in their responses to parishioner concerns and questions. While the first speaker from the diocese reviewed church law and the meanings related to certain gestures and words of the presider at Mass, I was able to make some movement toward a richer and fuller understanding of the issues at hand. There was a certain openness to dialogue that I experienced in that moment that I found liberating and hopeful.

However, this moment soon passed. When Mary Ramerman spoke, my heart sank as I began to feel that all too familiar feeling that Corpus Christi parishioners have felt in the recent past — loss, or at least the anticipation of another loss. Mary reiterated that she could not voluntarily remove her "half-stole" because this act was also full of certain meanings. I know that in a "power over" situation, those in leadership will exert their authority. In this case, there is a good

chance that Mary will also be asked to leave the church. By removing this piece of cloth, she would be supporting the subordinate position of women in the church and perhaps adding to the internalized oppression that all women have suffered within the church (and in society) for many years. Throughout the evening I heard the frequent call for us to "dialogue, think creatively, and act collectively" from within the present church structure.

As a therapist, I have found that human beings cannot engage in these activities when they become paralyzed with anxiety and sadness because of a series of real and/or anticipated losses. True dialogue and collective action come from within a context of safe connection and shared vulnerability. Corpus parishioners cannot experience safety in connection when we are faced with the possibility of an additional loss or injury on a weekly basis. Also, vulnerability can never be shared in a patriarchal, power over context. The best solution to a problem comes from a synthesis that is developed from dialectical movement in which two opposing ideas can be held in tension. I believe many of us at Corpus are committed to this process, but it is difficult to believe that diocesan officials and the Bishop are committed to the same process. Instead, their goal seems to be removal of the tension through dismissing those who embody one side of the dialectic.

Dr. Mary Tantillo
Klink Road, Rochester

Bishop Clark deserves our support

To the editors:

As Roman Catholics and members of the Diocese of Rochester, I believe it is time we all raise our voices high in praise and support of our shepherd, Bishop Matthew H. Clark. Even though he is going through many pros and cons with the problems and decisions he has been faced

with recently, we need to pray for his continued success as our leader here in this diocese.

A proud and practicing parishioner at St. Casimir's Church in Elmira, N.Y., for all my life (over 65 years) I am,

Kathleen Cloke Augustine
Lena Place, Elmira