

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 deficient in balancing views

To the editors:

I am NOT responding on e-mail to your article on body-piercing, and not responding to your author.

It was interesting to me that the only time I have seen a request by the *Catholic Courier* to use e-mail was with this article. Is this somehow conveying that it is "modern" and "hip" to body pierce? I am choosing to write to the Editor who somehow chose to publish an unbalanced article on body piercing.

Was the intent to ask questions about this practice, or to glamorize it? Was it to ask questions about motivation for doing this, or to rationalize its use by the author or his associates? And what does this have to do with American Catholicism?

I have seen other such articles in the popular press, and they gave more than a sidebar reference to the public health aspects. To look at the total picture, one might ask health care workers who see the off side of the practice, or look at scholarly journals that have begun to discuss it. In addition to the risk of infection from HIV and hepatitis that you do note in your article, one might look at the risks taken with unhygienic conditions and dirty instruments, risks of the loss of muscle tone and dam-



age to delicate organs themselves from the piercing, and risk of topical infection and lead poisoning from the metals on other parts of the body. If one were to write

about it in a family paper, one might look at causes of the desire to do this kind of act to one's body — be it alienation from mainstream society, anger at one's parents, lack of self-esteem, etc. This kind of material might have been garnered from those who work with the psychological aspects of children and youth. Your author only interviewed a few parents.

If one were to write about it in the Catholic press, however, one would expect to see some relationship to the Church or its teaching. The only reference seen was the hope that the "jewelry" were removed before going to church. How about an examination of the 5th Commandment

which, when I went to school, included doing unhealthy things to oneself and interfering with one's health.

I wonder if the author ever gave blood to the local Red Cross? If he had completed the screening form and had had any part of the body "pierced," he would have been blocked from donating. Maybe the Red Cross knows something your author doesn't.

Corrine Muldoon McKinney, CSW
North Road, Canandaigua

EDITORS' NOTE: "Body Piercing: The Hole Truth" (*Catholic Courier*, Oct. 22) originated after staff writer Mike Latona noticed a picture of the keynote speaker for the August Diocesan Youth Convention wearing earrings in both of his ears — and decided that body piercing seemed a timely topic given its prevalence.

He also wrote that week's cover story, "The Year of the Three Popes."

On the Move, although often read by adults, is intended for teenagers. It has covered subjects as varied as reciting the rosary, becoming a church leader, and dancing. It aims to cover pros and cons, as did the body piercing stories, and church teachings where applicable.

We know of no official Catholic Church statement regarding body piercing.

The American Red Cross does require that donors wait a year after having a body part pierced before donating blood, but then may donate.

While comments have always been welcome, *On the Move* began to request e-mail responses in September.

Priest questions paper's standards

To the editors:

I read with disgust the "On the Move" feature in the October 22 issue of the *Catholic Courier*. I found no redeeming qualities in the feature and am left with this question. As a Catholic newspaper can't we come up with something more

wholesome and purposeful to fill the pages of what is supposed to be a Catholic publication, other than body-piercing?

You ask for people's support. If you want it, raise your standards!

Rev. Walter L. Wainwright, Pastor
St. Mary's Parish, Canandaigua

Abortion ranks as greatest injustice today

To the editors:

Voting for a pro-choice candidate is incompatible with Catholic principles. It is unjustifiable. Many consider this position closed or narrow-minded. How can we discount a candidate on one issue alone? We do it all of the time. For example, if a person is an explicit racist, that issue alone would rightfully disqualify that candidate in the eyes of many no matter what other positions he or she held.

Most people (hopefully all) would justifiably refuse to vote for a candidate who publicly advocates for any of the following: racism, sexism, white supremacy, not allowing a particular group of citizens to vote, segregated schools, slavery, child pornography, sexual harassment in the work place. Is not the life of 30 million innocent people more important than any of these other issues? Sadly, it seems that most people do vote over the wrong single issue: who will

make for a better economy?

Adolf Hitler led Germany out of economic depression, radically reformed and improved education, greatly reduced violent crime, vastly improved health care, revitalized the arts, established a strong national defense, lifted many out of poverty. However, the Jewish question made his leadership intolerable. Currently we are aborting more children at a faster annual rate than the Nazis killed Jews during WW II. The abortion question is not just one among many.

The Consistent Life Ethic links many issues under its umbrella. However, they are not all of equal importance, nor is it realistic to think that advocates will achieve political victory on all of those issues simultaneously. Many issues fell under the umbrella of civil rights. Success there has been incremental, step by step, over one hundred years. For African-Americans it

began dealing with the most important injustice: slavery. Today the most important injustice is abortion.

The lives of 30 million innocent people mean something, and Catholics should not support a candidate who ignores them. No other issue in American politics (or in all of human history) so dramatically affects the lives and deaths of so many innocent people. No other issue approaches the injustice of this one. Refusing to cast a vote for a pro-choice candidate does not mean that one must vote for his or her opponent. However, if all Christians refused to vote for pro-choice candidates, then legalized abortion would be eradicated from our society within six years or less because no pro-choice candidate would hold an office.

Under the Mercy,
Dean Condon, Pastoral Administrator
Guardian Angels Church, Henrietta

College community commends Bishop Clark's leadership

To the editors:

At a time when criticism of public officials — even justified criticism — seems to have become excessive and well beyond the bounds of civility, and when there is an atmosphere in our own Church of division and tension it seems appropriate not only to support those in our midst who draw us together but also to affirm them in a public way.

With that in mind, the members of the Newman Community of SUNY/Brockport commend our bishop, Matthew Clark, for his steady, fair and faithful leadership of our local Church.

There are times we feel estranged from one another and torn apart, within ourselves and from each other. Our divisions run deep and at times feel overwhelming. Especially at times like this, we need someone who works for unity and who has the clarity of vision that our Bishop has — someone who does not further divide us by responding harshly to unjustified criticism or

even personal attacks, continuing to work to bring us together. All of this is being done in a compassionate and gentle manner that puts into action his own description of a Bishop who "stands in the midst of a community to give his very self as a symbol of its unity and a guarantee of its peace." ("The Pastoral Exercise of Authority")

We believe Bishop Clark continues to put into action his vision of the Gospel of "Authority as Service." This often is a difficult path to take as he continues to reach out to minister to the Gay and Lesbian Community, to affirm and further the giftedness and dignity of women in the Church, attempting to conciliate factions within communities. He reminds us that: "The Church is not a collection of individuals each pursuing holiness on his or her own. It is the People of God, the Body of Christ, a Community of Faith and Love."

We strongly support positive and significant movement on the three issues

that many faith communities have already begun working toward and Corpus Christi Parish has underlined. Much is needed to further women in leadership in our Church and inclusivity of and respect for people of all sexual orientations and faith perspectives.

Tension and disagreements will always be part of the community of faith. Leadership like our Bishop's reminds us of the Gospel imperative of respect, compassion, and love. It is the Spirit's gift to the local Church — one we must not devalue or ignore. It is a gift we must remember to receive with gratitude.

In prayerful hope for the present and future of our Church.

Nancy J. DeRycke, Chaplain
Newman Catholic Community of
SUNY Brockport

EDITORS' NOTE: This letter, drafted as a statement by SUNY Brockport's Newman Community, was signed by more than 70 students, staff and community members.