### **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.

# Church is not ours to invent

To the editors:

The Catholic Courier regularly carries a column, "Essays in Theology," by University of Notre Dame theologian Father Richard McBrien. I almost always disagree with Father McBrien's opinions on fundamental grounds of Catholic faithfulness. His essay on the millennium and church change in the January 14 issue was particularly irksome to me, though, as an example of how Father McBrien manipulates his "facts" and his readers to agree with his liberal and revisionist ideas about the Catholic Church.

Ironically (because unintentionally), Father McBrien did show how irrelevant to anything the millennium "hype" really is. By projecting us back to the eve of the last millennium, the year 999, he manages to show how, in fact, the millennium of 999/1000 was entirely uneventful and of ono significance in terms of actual historical development for either the Catholic Church or western Europe. The years 999/1000 fell during what is arguably the most disrupted and disorganized period in the history of the Catholic Church, and the "coming of the second millennium" did nothing to change that situation.

But McBrien uses the very disruption and disorder in 999/1000 to advance his own agenda and ideology ... (He) clearly would like to turn the clock back to 999 in terms of the papacy. The pope would simply be the local bishop of Rome (without even the title of "pope"). Bishops would be popularly elected by the laity and clergy of the diocese in any way convenient to the local culture or habit. The bishop of



Rome, emphatically, would not be the "bishop" of the whole church. There would be no Roman Curia. And, again emphatically, the bishop of Rome would in no way have any claim to any sort of infallibility.

What McBrien has described is essentially "high-church Protestantism." It is, in fact, an almost exact representation of Anglicanism.

What McBrien would have us conveniently forget is that the Church is not ours to invent. The Church is not a human construction; the Church is a divine institution, the Mystical Body of Christ, the Sacrament of Salvation, the Communio Sanctorum. The Church is not re-invented from generation to generation in response to perceived needs and felt anxieties. The Church is always the constant work of the Holy Spirit through the development and expansion of Sacred Tradition and Dogma.

... That the Holy Spirit works through time to develop and give growth to the Holy Catholic Church through the means of Sacred Tradition is itself a work of the grace of God. The very developments in Tradition and Dogma that McBrien questions were providentially ordained for the Church by the Holy Spirit as necessary for the Catholic Church to become the world church in which the fullness of the Christian faith subsists (Vatican II) as that world changed and developed. We as Catholics are confident that the providential grace of the Holy Spirit will continue to do so.

Faithful Catholics should read Father McBrien's column with a grain of salt and a prayer for the wisdom of discernment.

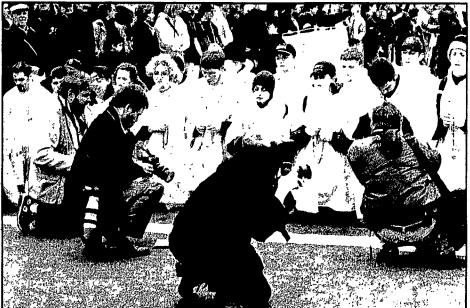
Dr. Mark E. Chapman, Ph.D. West Broad Street, Horseheads EDITORS' NOTE: This letter has been edited to conform with Catholic Courier

# Prieșt's actions were positive disobedience

To the editors:

For those who view Father Callan's actions against the Catholic Church as disobedient, here's a message. As a veteran educator in this community, I have always taught my students the difference between positive and negative disobedience. Negative disobedience is a selfish act intentionally done that may cause

harm to others - like driving through a red light at 60 mph. Positive disobedience is a courageous act done by a person whose conscience or depth of study deems it necessary to act upon an injustice. Some people who have engaged in positive disobedience were Galileo, Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks and the prodemocracy students at



Mary Lueders/CNS

Photographers position themselves to photograph people kneeling in prayer at the March for Life in Washington Jan. 22.

# Reader commends March for Lifers

To the editors:

It's time to congratulate those who take part in the March on Washington January 22. Those folks who do this come home encouraged to help others go the next time. It's especially uplifting to see the many thousands of young folks who take part along with the others. They too are our nation's hope for the future.

God bless all who were able to be there! **Mary Rita Crowe** East Main Street, Rochester Tiananmen Square. I pray that my students will one day have the fortitude to practice positive disobedience like Father Callan when facing injustice no matter what the hierarchal decree. The Catholic Church cannot afford to lose this gifted visionary who lifted my spirituality to new levels and once had the largest number of parishioners of any church in Rochester.

Camille Perlo

Edgecreek Trail, Rochester EDITORS' NOTE: A point of clarification. While Corpus Christi Church certainly had a large number of people attending week end Masses prior to Father Callan's departure - averaging in excess of 2,000 - it had just 1130 registered families in 1998. In the diocese that same year, more than 35 perish es had higher numbers of registered families, with at least nine of them surpassing the 2,000 mark. St. Joseph's, Penfield, topped the list with 3,013 registered families. It is difficult to assess what parish had the largest ac tual number of parishioners.

## Dryden church aids disabled Catholics

To the editors:

I'd like to offer an invitation to disabled Catholics in the Southern Tier. Holy Cross Catholic Church in Dryden is FUL-LY accessible to those with motion impairment ... the sanctuary, bathrooms, and all the meeting rooms are all on ground level and have large, generous doors. Moreover, the altar at Holy Cross has a ramp, making Mass ministries available to the whole community.

Christine Bravo-Cullen, Dryden