

OPINIONS

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.

Recipient ill at ease with annulment

To the editors:

As one who in 1996 sought and, nearly a year later, received an annulment of my first marriage, I would like contribute my two cents to the current buzz on the Church's policies and procedures in this regard.

First, the applicant must send out questionnaires to relatives and friends asking dozens of very personal, very difficult questions, some of which require expertise and well-developed judgment as well as intimate knowledge of the couple's life together. Even my sisters had trouble answering them.

At bottom, the process is hypocritical. The Bible commands: "What God hath joined, let no man put asunder." Pretty clear, right? No divorce. Period. The matter should end there. But if it did Catholics everywhere would either drop out and divorce anyway or press on in lifeless or miserable or even dangerous marriages. Neither alternative is or should be acceptable to Church or to church-goer or, one hopes, to a God Who's supposed to love us.

So the dance begins: "Well, maybe God didn't really join these two, after all," we seem to say. Maybe the marriage didn't "take." Perhaps God wasn't paying attention. Or maybe the couple was immature or crazy or dim-witted or under-socialized or uninformed or heedless or hormone-driven, as though any of these circumstances could somehow invalidate a divine decree, and as though someone exists who wasn't accurately characterized by at least one of these adjectives on his/her



wedding day. And yet, obviously, no man or group of men can know the mind of God in this or in any other matter. Since no battery of questionnaires, no tribunal deliberations, no official decrees can accurately determine the "validity" of God's establishment of it, we must assume that a marriage is a marriage is a marriage. An annulment is simply a divorce that the Church hasn't the courage to call a divorce and to grant the thing without all the time- and heart-wasting fuss.

What most intrigued me as I went through the annulment process was trying to figure out what answers might win an annulment and what answers might lose. On what basis does the tribunal conclude "This couple gets an annulment, but

this one has to stay married"? Or, even more arrogant, "God really married this couple, but not that one." How did the tribunal, knowing neither me nor my ex-wife nor our marriage nor the will of God, conclude that, in spite of my heartfelt protestations to the contrary, I was never really married in the first place? I have no idea.

Much better for Catholics just to divorce if we have to, and hope a loving God understands and forgives, rather than to pussy-foot around with tribunals and questionnaires and divine mind-reading. Annulment/divorce should be either Biblical — and impossible — or almost automatic, the quick completion of a form.

Peter Dzwonkoski
Westmoreland Drive, Rochester

Departed members are welcome to return

To the editors:

"Let he/she who is without fault cast the first stone," Jesus. I dropped mine many years ago way, way back on the road of time. Did you? It seems so easy to sit back and criticize those in authority, in all sectors of society be it religious, civic, educational, etc. Constructive criticism, I believe, would be accepted by most of us when leveled reasonably and justly. The point is to disagree agreeably and when it is over and done, drop it!

The recent column by Bishop Matthew Clark in the *Catholic Courier* in my opin-

ion was a good Palm Sunday message! One of love and peace toward all. Love the sinner, hate the sin, I believe, is just what Bishop Matthew is trying to accomplish regarding the dissension in the particular Rochester Catholic parish where too many parishioners left to form their own church along with their pastor. Every entity on the face of this earth has bylaws which must be followed and obeyed by members of each individual — be it sect or otherwise.

Sinners all are welcome to come — come to the Catholic Church

and in the process so as to make it complete in the state of grace, confess and make peace with God so that in case of a quick departure from Mother Earth we will hear Jesus say at judgment, "Come" and not "Depart." I hope and pray we each hear Him say "Come, come, come!"

We were each created by the same creator, our heavenly Father who prepared a place for each one of us in His kingdom before any human or the world was created — infinite and eternal joy for everyone regardless of race, creed or status. "Ask and you shall receive" and we will each be welcomed to that eternal home waiting to be occupied by you, me and every sinner alive if only we make repentance to know, accept and will to carry out God's will and to obey His commandments! Brothers and sisters, that includes everyone of us — no exceptions!

Like the good Lord, Bishop Matthew and many of us welcome you back to your ever-loving church/parish. Our "dear friend," Jesus, is there 24 hours a day waiting, just waiting for each one of us to come, come, come to me. Once we come to Him on earth we for certain will hear Jesus say to you and me by name come, come, come and take the place prepared for you by my Father before you or the world were created. Come! Come! What a beautiful and most powerful word.

To our brothers and sisters who feel that they have been wronged, dear loved ones, I ask God to bless each one of you — us too! May the powerful wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit enlighten us to "Come" to the road of peace back to our earthly home and church so that we will all be together in our eternal home of joy, peace and love forever and ever.

Brothers and sisters, our Good Lord is waiting, as stated, for you and me to come to Him to the church He founded when He said to Peter, "Thou art Peter. Upon this rock I will build My church. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Not my words, but the words of Jesus, the Triune God. ... Much peace and love to everyone.

Francis J. Mastropietro
Clark Street, Auburn

Issues have changed at Corpus

To the editors:

A lot has been said about the three "issues" that started the Corpus Christi controversy. For some of us, it goes beyond those issues.

In September my letter to the editor entitled "Wants parishioners to stay" was published by the *Catholic Courier*. I urged my fellow Corpus Christi parishioners to stay and work for change from within the Roman Catholic Church. Unfortunately, I can no longer follow even my own words of over half a year ago. Originally, I thought it made more sense to work within the norms of the Church as Bishop Clark had suggested. But to me, it's not about the "issues" anymore. It's about what the diocese's "scorched earth" policy has done to Corpus Christi, even after some of us were willing to stay.

I originally became a member at Corpus Christi because it was the most Spirit-filled Catholic church around. But now,

many of the wonderful programs that touched so many have been slowly and methodically destroyed. The three things that were most important to my spiritual needs — inspiring sermons, the Downtown Workers Mass, and the Gospel Choir — are all gone now. None of these had any connection to the three "issues" and didn't need to go away. The new administration has even gone so far as to tear the first eight pages from the hymnals in all the pews.

I still attend Corpus Christi but have one foot out the door. My problem is that I don't know where to go. I don't fault anyone's choice of how to deal with this tragedy, because I know that it has torn me apart inside ever since day one. Please understand that for some of us it's about more than the issues — it's about finding and doing what's right for one's Faith.

Mark S. Coon
Laurelton Road, Rochester

Long-distance wishes on another significant milestone

To the editors:

I am a 1975 graduate of St. Boniface School. I was cleaning and found a class picture from Sister Maureen Williams' third grade. I would like to wish all of us from that class a happy 40th birthday. Thank you.

Eileen Gaffke Stanley

Baltimore

Maryland

EDITORS' NOTE: We don't typically publish letters like this. But with this being our "Milestones" issue, we figured, why not? Cheers!