

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.



Reuters/CNS

A Catholic priest prays in front of a makeshift shrine that reads, "Pray for peace in Kosovo," at a camp for Kosovar refugees in Kukes, Albania, in April.

Doubting apparitions wins readers' ire

To the editors:

Is it the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary "literally to scare the hell out of" Slobodan Milosevic, dictator of Serbia, in order to end the inhuman violence in Kosovo? Father Richard McBrien seems to think so, in his recent column in the *Catholic Courier*. I am disturbed by his distorting of the nature and role of Mary and of her intercession for us:

The Catholic Church teaches that Mary, at the end of her life, was assumed, body and soul, into heaven. Therefore, the Mary who intercedes for us and for all of suffering humankind is precisely the "historical Mary," Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus. What we can expect of the intercession and influence of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven, is then no different from what we may discern of the "historical Mary" revealed to us in Scripture.

In Scripture, Mary is always portrayed in relation to Jesus. Mostly, Mary is silent in the presence of what God is working in and through her — e.g., before Simeon in the Temple; or at the foot of the cross. When Mary does speak, her words are either a hymn of praise to God for the redemption he has worked through her (the Magnificat), or of humility before the incomprehensible will of God and of holy submission of her own self-will in obedience to the will of God and in cooperation with the mystery of the redeeming plan of God (e.g., the Annunciation). Is this the Virgin Mary who we would reasonably expect, as Father McBrien suggests, to "scare the hell out of" anyone?

No; that is NOT the "historical Mary," the one who truly intercedes for us. Which means it is NOT what one should reasonably expect from Mary. The "peace" that Mary, Queen of Peace, calls the world to is not the political pacifism that so many equate with God's peace. The peace Mary speaks of is the peace of the CONVERSION of the HEART to which Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, calls all humankind.

It is not, as Father McBrien asserts, that Mary "usually seems so indifferent to what is actually going on in the world around her." It is, rather, that Mary speaks to us when we have CONFUSED the peace of Christ with what is going on around us. For those who equate the kingdom of God with a politics of "world peace," Mary calls us to leave our own worldly schemes of self-salvation in order to join her in the real grace and peace that comes through her from her Son, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Mark Cyprian Chapman, O.S.B.
West Broad Street
Horseheads



Julie Denesha/CNS

A woman in prayer is dwarfed by a large cross set on a hill near Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The cross marks the place where in 1981 a vision of Mary was reported by six young people. Vatican officials have said that private pilgrimages to the site are permitted while the reported apparitions are investigated by the church.

Should Mary check with Father McBrien on appearance sites?

To the editors:

My prayers go out to "Father" McBrien in regards to his recent slamming of the Blessed Virgin Mary in your May 6 issue. He forgets that she does not have a political agenda. Her mission is not to be popular with the "in" crowd of the century. Somehow I feel "Father" McBrien feels she should check with him first about where she may appear and what she should say. May our dear Lord forgive him for his lack of respect for Our Lady. Since she may be the one who asks the almighty judge for mercy on "Father" McBrien's judgment day, he ought to take better care of his dissent toward her and the church itself.

Kathryn Wacenske
Cedar Lane
Groton

To the editors:

This letter is in response to the article, "Will Queen of Peace ever speak on Kosovo," written by Father McBrien, a professor of Theology at Notre Dame.

I truly took offense to this extremely sarcastic and what I consider to be sacrilegious approach to the visions of Our Blessed Virgin in Yugoslavia. How can this man be a priest?

First of all, it is Faith that binds a person to the Blessed Mother. Can you physically touch faith — of course not. Can you feel the warmth and peace it brings into your heart? Of course you can. Father McBrien is remarking, quite disrespectfully, that our Blessed Virgin didn't warn us about the problems in Kosovo, and he further rambles on about how Mary has no concern for the "Holocaust-like outrages."

Who the heck does this man think he is? We are not here to question Our Blessed Mother or her Son's actions. Apparently (Father) McBrien feels he is above Our Lord and His Mother, with his smug attitude and rantings. I do not believe that this warranted the space of paper that the *Catholic Courier* allowed him to use.

In this day and age, we can pick up any newspaper and read his type of sacrilegious garbage, but I certainly do not expect to read it in the *Catholic Courier*. I much prefer a more faithful and uplifting article. I'm sure that many would agree with me.

If the *Catholic Courier* is looking for things to place in their publication, perhaps they could focus on the children in the Diocese, their thoughts and concerns. The Catholic schools are full of our future Catholic leaders. Hopefully, none of them will be as disrespectful of Our Lady as (Father) Richard McBrien is.

Catherine Dickinson
Lovell Avenue
Elmira

'Need' was not the issue in Padre Pio beatification

To the editors:

Concerning Father Falcone's reservations about Padre Pio's beatification: Of course the church does not "need" it, and certainly Padre Pio does not "need" it. But today, Sunday, May 2, 1999, the shout heard round the world is "THANKS BE TO GOD!"

Doris Martina
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