

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.

Recognize importance of linguistic distinctions

To the editors:

If a married woman is pregnant, is it cause for embarrassment? According to a world-view followed not many years ago, the answer would be a resounding "yes." In fact, such an unfortunate world-view is reflected in modern Spanish; the most common Spanish word for pregnant is *embarasada*. I have done simultaneous Spanish interpretation for over 20 years, and from time to time have had a good laugh when this and other "cognates" have been translated rather than interpreted. There is a big and an important distinction.

In a recent issue of the *Courier*, two letter writers complained about the careful and insightful interpretation of biblical texts referred to in an earlier letter by Gloria Ulterino (May 13: "Was Clopas' companion really his wife?"). In particular, one writer pointed to the longstanding "inclusive" sense of the word "man." Interestingly, the next letter, also objecting to Ms. Ulterino's letter, insisted that the word "man" in the Emmaus account unambiguously meant a "male." Since neither objector cited any scholars, either of Sacred Scripture or of Biblical languages, your readers are left to conclude that their criticism stems from their personal opinion and emotional reaction to something they had not encountered previously.

Language theorists, both Biblical and otherwise, agree that the meanings of words change from place to place and over the years. A word that previously had one meaning can mean something quite different indeed in another context or time. Ms. Ulterino's article points to the exclusion that a very large number of women recognize when they are referred to as "men." It further points to the systematic elimination of females from significant roles in our religious story. Far from deserving reprimand, Gloria Ulterino and all who remind us that women play a part in the history of salvation deserve the Church's hearty thanks. Further, anyone who reminds women that they have rights and a voice make admirable strides against the violence perpetrated so often behind closed doors, and not addressed to avoid embarrassment!

The distinction here is very serious, indeed.

Father Paul English, CSB
Fairport Road, Rochester

Questions identity of Yugoslavian hill seen in photograph

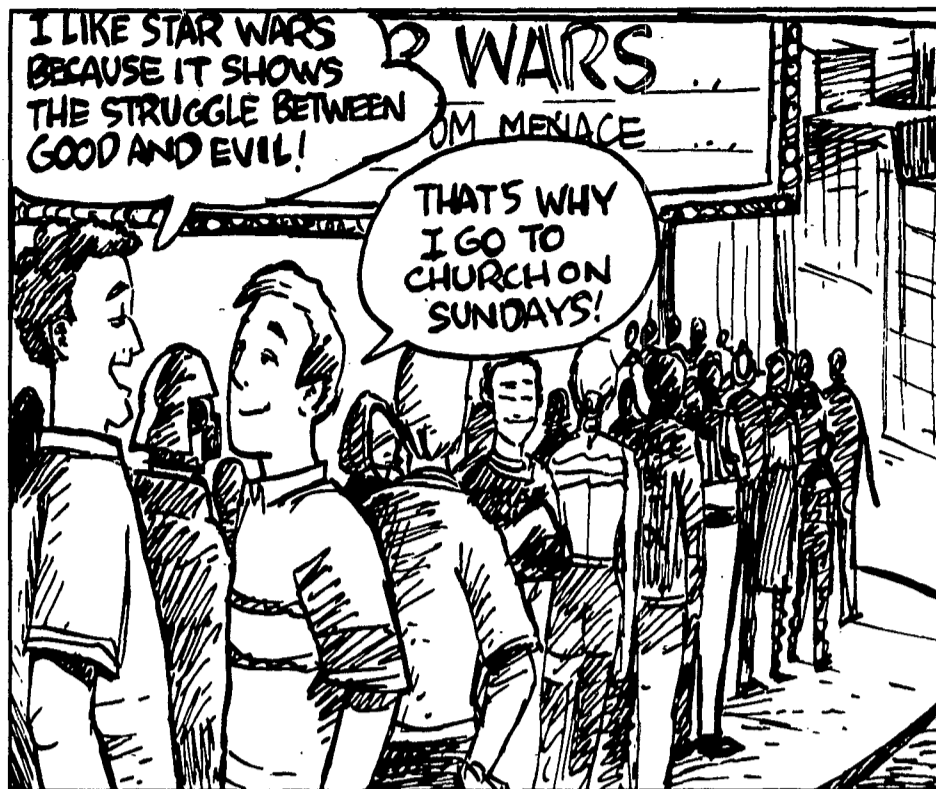
To the editors:

In the May 20 issue a photograph of a cross atop a hill in Medjugorje was identified as the site where apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary had occurred.

During our trip to Medjugorje, several years ago, this hill was explained to be Mt. Krizevac where the cross was erected in 1933, largely by the efforts of the women from the area in commemoration of the 1900th anniversary of the crucifixion.

Another hill, Mt. Podbrdo, was identified as the one at which the apparitions occurred.

Thomas Marton
Dibbles Trail, Webster



It takes a discerning eye to see women in the Bible

To the editors:

Gloria Ulterino has the discerning eye of a good Scripture scholar. Several contemporary commentators say that there are good reasons for seeing the unnamed disciple in the Emmaus story as a woman, probably the wife of Cleopas (Luke 24). Emmaus may have been a garrison town for the Roman Legion that occupied Jerusalem. Jesus' discouraged disciples may well have been the valet and housekeeper/cook for a Roman officer. A lovely stained glass window in the Resurrection Chapel of the National Episcopal Cathedral in Washington, D.C., pictures an agitated man and woman, hand in

hand, leaving Jerusalem on Easter Day.

Scripture scholars today encourage us to look for the women disciples of Jesus in the Gospel accounts. The women disciples were there. It just takes a discerning eye to see them in the background, rendered silent and almost invisible by the cultural biases of the society of Jesus' day. We can ask the Holy Spirit to help us as church to celebrate our Eucharistic community of men and women, all called by Baptism to be disciples in the service of Jesus the Christ.

P. David Finks
Trecutters
Sanford, N.C.

Knowledge of seminarians counters columnist's view

To the editors:

Father Richard McBrien's June 3 column, "Saints shouldn't read reviews," was a predictably cynical view of Catholic seminarians.

On Easter Sunday *The New York Times* ran a story favorably profiling Catholic seminary students. Then about two weeks later they reported on declines in enrollment in seminaries but showed some optimistic trends.

Father McBrien's column quickly dismissed the significance of *The New York Times* articles by pointing out:

- the seminarians profiled so positively were studying at "one of our more conservative seminaries,"
- increases in numbers of seminarians are due to (1) older seminarians (with "fewer years ahead as priests," and, (2) seminarians from other countries who "will have cultural problems."

We are writing to suggest that *Catholic Courier* readers can get an objective and fascinating look at the quality of our contemporary Catholic seminarians by reading "The New Men" by Brian Murphy, Penguin Putnam, 1997. This is the true story of the lives of six American seminarians studying at the North American

College in Rome, an outstanding seminary run by the bishops of the United States.

Brian Murphy, the author, is the Associated Press's bureau chief in Athens, Greece. He took a leave of absence in 1996 and was given the opportunity to "shadow" six of the 40 new seminarians, "The New Men," during their first year of their studies in Rome.

The reader will have a far different view of these magnificent Catholic men than one will get from Father McBrien's dreary assessments. But the best antidote to Father McBrien's pessimism about seminarians is to meet some. We have. We are blessed here in Elmira to have at least three young men who began seminary studies in the past two years. One is from our own parish, Our Lady of Lourdes. They are outstanding men. They will make fine priests. We are proud of them.

We urge Catholics to meet our seminarians. Contact: Rev. John DeSocio, Vocations Director, Becket Hall, 314 Gregory St., Rochester, N.Y. 14620, or phone 716/461-2890.

Mary Lou and Ed McGarrell Jr.
Wall Street
Elmira

Who cares about term for embryo researchers?

To the editors:

This letter is in response to the editorial "Racists, Nazis, and ..." of May 27.

What "title" the scientist gets who experiments on embryos is the least of the least questions we should ask ourselves.

Reality is, when will we become aware

of the need to eliminate an "ethics" committee that is NOT ethical?

And then, I propose we ask ourselves: What can we do to change our culture of death to a culture of life?

Helen Shultz
Main Street, Newfield