

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.

Behavior undercuts devotion

To the editors:

The recent Feast of The Body and Blood of Christ reminded me of a Gallup poll taken some time last year indicating that only a meager 33 percent of U.S. Catholics actually believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It also occurred to me that many, if not most, parishes in our diocese appear to remain nonplussed and unresponsive to this evidence of a precipitous decline in Eucharistic faith.

To even the casual observer at Sunday Mass, it is obvious that our liturgical celebration, and related conduct, often do not adequately express a belief that Christ is truly present: body, blood, soul, and divinity. Years of careless liturgical innovations and uninspired architectural remodeling have apparently undermined the sense of sacredness with a profound effect on faith formation. Consequently doctrinal integrity is often unsupported in the liturgy and loss of faith is the result.

In order to begin to re-establish an environment conducive to awe, mystery, and reverence proper to the sacred, a certain respect for the rubrics of the Mass, decorum, and the appropriate role of the laity must be guarded. Cavalier treatment and reception of the Eucharist will undermine belief, and all prohibited conduct needs to be recognized and curtailed.

One common example of inappropriate behavior at many parishes is that of self-intinction at Communion whereby an individual will dip the Host into the Precious Blood. Extraordinary ministers, instead of instructing the communicant that this is not permissible, will often tip the chalice forward to accommodate the self-communication. Hence, a "dunkin doughnut" or Oreo cookie moment ensues, and these communicants can often be observed shaking the "wafer" to avoid excess dripping prior to consumption.

In this instance, it is likely that both the communicant and the extraordinary minister are both unaware that all forms of self-communication at Mass by anyone other than a priest is not permitted. The U.S. bishops' 1984 instruction "This Holy and Living Sacrifice" states that "The communicant may never dip the Eucharistic Bread into the chalice." Nonetheless, this practice is commonplace and strains credulity that a proper understanding of the Eucharist is present.

Allowing the non-ordained familiar run of the Sanctuary also undermines a sense of the sacred. During Mass at numerous parishes, the Consecration is followed by a number of non-ordained persons busy opening the Tabernacle like a cupboard in the pantry and grabbing pitchers and cups off of the altar as if at a family picnic. Of course, reverence, sacredness, worship, and adoration of Our Lord suffer in the process.

We must all remember that an impressionable laity, particularly the youth, are watching. Do they see and experience an atmosphere of reverence and humility that affirms and strengthens faith in the Real Presence? That Gallup poll, in a sense, is the unofficial report card evaluating the past three decades of liturgical tampering. The finding that 67 percent of Catholics no longer believe in the Real Presence testifies to a major catastrophe.

Obviously, a substantial reform is now urgently required to restore a lost sense of the sacred and the authentic worship of Christ in the Eucharist. However, that enormous 67 percent figure probably explains much of the apparent lethargy and inaction in the face of that disturbing detail in the Gallup poll.

Alice M. Herman
Helen Drive, Webster



Recall Precious Blood in July

To the editors:

Jesus is our example giver in all that we do. Likely the most awesome illustration of God's love for us is the fact that Jesus gave for us in laying down his life for his friends. In his passion Jesus shed every single drop of his Precious Blood for you, to prove his love for you to save your soul that you might spend your eternity praising his mercy!

Since the month of July is the month of the Precious Blood, it is a wonderful time to think about all the ways that Jesus shed his Most Precious Blood for us: at the Circumcision, the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging, the Crowning with Thorns, the Way of the Cross and the Crucifixion. At the end the last drops were spent when his Sacred Heart was pierced.

The Circumcision, at which the first

drop of Jesus' blood was shed, took place only eight days after his birth. But it was also a joyous occasion for it coincided with the official pronouncement of the Baby's name, Jesus, that name which is above every other name. When we take a good look at the Crucifixion, the price of our salvation becomes more evident! The wood of the cross really became the new home of the Precious Blood. We see Our Lord suffering, dying on the cross. The Most Precious Blood then became our River of Mercy for all of us.

Family, we too must follow Jesus by giving all for our souls. Go to Our Lady of Mount Carmel who gave us the scapular in a great act of mercy. Ask for her intercession. Do it today.

Mary Rita Crowe
East Main Street, Rochester

Honor women yet retain meaning

To the editors:

The defense of the writings of Gloria Ulterino by Father English and Mr. Finks have left me more bewildered than ever. Do words and text have any meaning at all? Is everything to be sacrificed upon the altar of sensitivity to women? Father English appears to argue that since *embarrasada* in Spanish means pregnant in English, men can mean a man and a woman when translated from biblical languages into English. At first reading, Father English's words seem to drain any meaning at all from the text. But, just in nick of time, he saves himself from a charge of outright deconstructionism by citing the work of Ms. Ulterino as a blow against violence toward women committed behind closed doors. Since his entire argument is couched in terms of the church, Father English is clearly alluding to beatings, torture and other violent acts committed against women by the church. It's a pity that he didn't have the time to list and document these atrocities.

Mr. Finks goes on to assure us that one of the disciples on the road to Emmaus was a woman. He writes that one of them was probably the wife of Cleopas because they may well have been the valet and housekeeper/cook for a Roman officer. Conjecture raised to the level of fact! If that is not enough evidence, Mr. Finks informs us

that there is a stained glass window in the National Episcopal Cathedral in Washington showing a man and a woman leaving Jerusalem on Easter Day. What more proof could one need than a window in a church designed nearly two millennia after the fact?

All this shameless uprooting of meaning from the biblical texts would be laughable if it were not what these two gentlemen fail to point out. Verses 22 through 24 of the 23rd chapter of Luke (where the Emmaus journey is described) explains that women were the first to witness the resurrection and possessed more insight, faith, and wisdom than the male disciples. In other words, it is possible to honor the text of the Gospel, avoid unsubstantiated claims of oppression against women, and still find a crucial and exalted role for women in the early church — not a "systematic elimination of females from significant roles in our religious story," as Father English writes.

If the cost of sensitivity to women is the plain truth of the Scriptures, the cost is too high. But, in fact, Catholics are not called upon to make such a choice. Galatians 3:29 sums up the whole of gender equality in Christian teaching: in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female.

Ed Groszewski
Hinkley Lane, Rochester

Canon law should promote healing

To the editors:

Sister Margie Henninger has been dismissed from the Sisters of St. Joseph not because they wish to pursue dismissal but because Canon Law demands it. I am especially saddened by this action because I have fond memories of the Sisters of St. Joseph who taught me at Holy Apostles and worshipped with me in the past at Corpus Christi. They are good sisters, prophetic sisters, who live on the edge where Christ calls us to be.

Perhaps the problem lies with Canon Law. Father Kevin McKenna in his book

on Canon Law suggests that these laws are there to bring healing. Any law that dismisses Sister Margie from the community she loves and loves her does not bring healing. These laws must be subordinate to the great law of Christ, "Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate... Love one another as I have loved you." Now there is a law that really brings healing.

Emmett Neary
Bakerdale Road, Rochester
EDITORS' NOTE: For the time being, at least, Sister Henninger remains a Sister of St. Joseph.