

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.

Grateful for diocese's hospitality effort

To the editors:

This past August I attended the Diocesan Leadership Days. It was a worthwhile investment of my time and energy. I am still pondering the messages I heard there. Of particular value was the message Bishop Matthew shared with us on Reconciliation — which was the theme for the days. He rightly described reconciliation as the mission of the Church. His talk was valuable because it was more than a warm fuzzy message — he gave us a process to move toward forgiveness and reconciliation.

Father Kennedy's keynote on the Sacrament of Penance was excellent, too, but the workshops on Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry were the most inspiring. There are many ways in which we as Church need to grow. One is in being a more welcoming community to people who are marginalized, oppressed and in the minority.

If you and I are to take Jesus' words in the Gospel seriously, then we must take an honest and hard look at how and who we really welcome and what it means to welcome people who may be different in some visible or invisible way. Hospitality — true Christ-like hospitality — means being attentive to what gives a message of welcome to everyone. It also means doing what we can to be sure ours is a comfortable and safe place for people to come and worship.

God is mystery and our God comes to us as the stranger in our midst. Can you see the face of God in the person next to you in church? Can you believe that no matter what the racial or ethnic origin, what standard of living, what dysfunction, what sexual orientation that person has, they are made in the very image and likeness of God, just as you are?

Whatever we do to any of God's children, or don't do, we do or don't do to God. God welcomes each of us sinners to

the table — without cost. God's gift is freely given and we are to do likewise. And we must leave the stones at home, in the garden.

Because a member of my family is also a member of the gay and lesbian community I am particularly sensitized to this issue. I am grateful for the progress our Diocesan Church has made in moving toward reconciliation and hospitality. I am grateful too for the ministry being offered to support members of the gay community and their families. But as a Catholic I am saddened and pained by the ignorance and confusion, the judgmentalism and lack — at times — of charity in attitudes within the Church. I am committed to pray for greater understanding and healing, as well as conversion for us all, to more fully live out the Gospel message of Jesus.

**Sheila Cody
Alpine Knoll
Fairport**

Church must be inclusive of disobedient

To the editors:

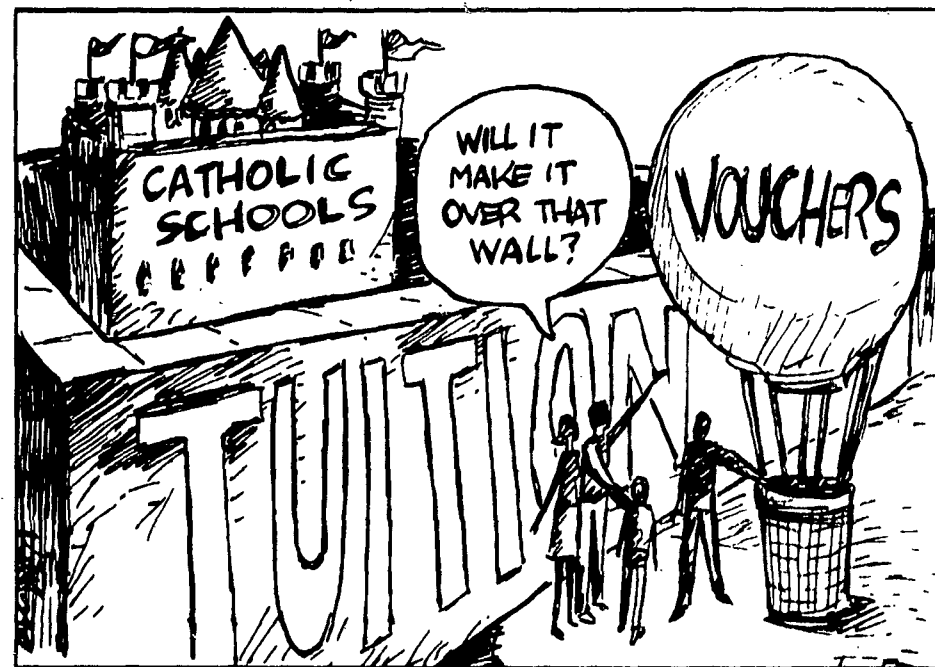
In a 1998 lecture on CBC radio called "Becoming Human," Jean Vanier, founder of l'Arche, speaks of "the danger of churches becoming closed in on themselves, losing sight of the larger principles to which they were committed. All are bonded together in a common destiny and are called to be concerned about others. When religion closes people up in their own particular group, it puts belonging to the group and its success and growth above love and vulnerability toward others. It no longer nourishes and opens the heart. When this happens, religion becomes an ideology, that is to say a series of ideas that we impose on ourselves as well as others. When religion helps us to open our hearts in love and compassion to those who are not of our faith so as to help them to find the source of freedom within their own hearts and to grow in compassion and love of others, then this religion is a source of life."

Vanier's prophetic words clearly illuminate the situation at Corpus Christi-Spiritus Christi which involves reaching out with Christ-like love to those that are marginalized. Some argue that we have reached too far, that we crossed the line. The truth is that our failure is not in crossing the line but in not reaching the line. We have not loved too much. We have loved too little. We have not included too many. We have included too few. This is not just our failure but the failure of the whole Church. It is not catholic enough. It is not loving enough. Love can never be offensive to God.

Our diocesan Church must find a way to make room for Spiritus Christi. We are all children in God's eyes. There must be a place in our Church for the unwanted child, the lost child, the forgotten child, yes, even the disobedient child. The parables of Jesus show that God seems to have a special place for the little, the last, the lost and the least. In our Father's house there are many rooms. Certainly there is a room for us.

I find great comfort in Jean Vanier's words. This certain, future saint who founded l'Arche 35 years ago has said that the core members of l'Arche, the mentally handicapped, who in the eyes of the world are the little, the last, the lost and the least have been his teachers because they have revealed to him the way of the heart. Amen.

**Emmett Neary
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Rochester**



Diocesan response to tapes disappoints 'pew' Catholic

To the editors:

When I read in the *Democrat and Chronicle* that the Greater Rochester Community of Churches is opposed to the mailing of a video on the life of Jesus to every Monroe County home I had hoped that the diocese didn't share that sentiment. Then I read the statement by Suzanne Schnittman of the diocese's interreligious office in the September 2 issue of the *Catholic Courier*.

I totally disagree with our diocese making a public statement that is critical of this effort by evangelical Christians to bring this video of the life of Jesus to area families. Think of the good that could come from this project. It could lead some lukewarm Christians to more deeply consider the importance of following Jesus in their life. It could interest some in reading the Gospels. It could educate those with no religious background to who Jesus is and what he preached.

According to the statement, for our diocese "the value of collaborating with religions different from our own helps us choose not to participate in such activities." Does collaborating with other religions mean that we cannot promote our own? Didn't Jesus tell us to spread His message? Is collaborating with other religions more important than supporting efforts by our fellow Christians in their ef-

orts to spread the Gospel?

Suzanne Schnittman said, "we do not impose those teachings among people who do not profess them." What does that say about the missionary efforts of the Church over the last 20 centuries? Anyway, how is receiving a free video in the mail an imposition? We get unsolicited mail all the time. If I got a free video in the mail I would either view it, toss it, or record over it.

All kinds of garbage enters our homes by way of television. Has the diocese or the Greater Rochester Community of Churches ever issued a statement about that? But mail out a video on the life of Jesus and you have controversy and concern. I am finding more and more that diversity and tolerance applies to almost everyone except Catholics and other Christians who hold to a more traditional, orthodox view of the faith and morality.

Oftentimes I feel that many, if not most, of our diocesan leadership are more interested in issues around changing the Church and advancing a certain agenda than in the spiritual and moral concerns and interests of the ordinary, faithful Catholic in the pew.

**Raymond N. Buonemani
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