

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.

'Stagnant' mainstream is necessary

To the editors:

In her (column) in the October 7 *Courier* titled "Life issues surround us," Sister Schoelles seems to be throwing the baby out with the bath water!

Her main concern seems to be that the morality of an issue is generally judged based only on an individual's actions instead of bringing into the picture other circumstances which she feels will show the moral issue in a more complete light — thus giving it its "true moral meaning." According to Sister Schoelles, most of us use the "stagnant mainstream of moral theology" approach and look only at the action and not the circumstances surrounding it.

The first moral issue she discusses is abortion and how we often do not consider related issues that have enormous implications for justice and for the woman's freedom to choose as well as issues which actually influence the woman's decision to have the abortion. The issues she raises are certainly a part of every moral decision which is made, but those issues do not give "true moral meaning" to an already objectively immoral act.

If we allow ourselves to be coaxed away from the "stagnant mainstream of moral theology" — which clearly identifies moral issues for what they are — by the feel-good approach of analyzing the "true moral meaning" of an act in relation to varying circumstances as Sister Schoelles seems to be suggesting, we will soon find ourselves without any objective moral truths. The Catechism of the Catholic Church #2271 clearly tells us that abortion is "gravely contrary to the moral law." So although the particular circumstances surrounding a person's decision to have an abortion can lessen the culpability of the person, they do not change the objective evil of the act.

The proper Catholic response to a person's decision to have an abortion will include compassion and empathy for the circumstances the mother finds herself in, but that compassion and empathy can never be allowed to cloud the true morality of the act. We need the "stagnant mainstream moral theology" as a touchstone of moral certainty in culture which bases many of its decisions on the particular situation that we find ourselves in and on how we feel about things.

Michael A. Gallagher
West Church Street, Fairport

I WENT TO A FIGHT AND A POLITICAL DEBATE BROKE OUT!



City parishes have room to spare

To the editors:

In the article "Parishes face growing pains" (*Catholic Courier*, Sept. 23), William Pickett, diocesan director of the Office of Planning, is quoted as saying, "Catholics have become Americans. They're affluent, upwardly mobile, want things for their children, want new stuff. They want to live in certain kinds of homes with more land, cathedral ceilings and extra bedrooms. It's ironic because family sizes are smaller than they used to be, and yet the houses are larger."

Has Mr. Pickett's definition described correctly today's American Catholic? For some, the answer is obviously yes. To the extent it applies to a bigger part of the population, it exists only as a dream. After all, everyone, the not-so-well-off as well as the well-off, aspires to better things for their children.

Many American Catholics who do not live in homes with cathedral ceilings on

large plots of land live in the city — and worship in the city. One immediate and partial relief to overcrowding in suburban parishes is to join fellow Catholics — Caucasian, Hispanic, African-American, Vietnamese — at Sunday Mass in a city parish.

There is a lot of room in city churches. For example, at Ss. Peter and Paul Church — a large, beautiful church at 720 W. Main St. — about 80 people gather for the 10:15 a.m. Eucharist each Sunday. It is a small group — the type contemplated by one of the Synod goals — but a very caring and diverse group of people.

Try it. You might like it. Parking is available. And, oh yes, it is safe!

Travel time to Ss. Peter and Paul is 17 minutes from Pittsford and 20-25 minutes from Webster and Greece. Just like going to work in the city, but with no travel hassle on Sunday.

George E. Perrin
Oakmonte Boulevard, Webster

Follow dissent models of Nugent, Gramick

To the editors:

Your Sept. 30 issue reported that Sister Jeannine Gramick will seek reversal of the Vatican ruling on her pastoral ministry to gays and lesbians. The best part of this news is that she will work "within church structures." And, that Father Robert Nugent, while he objected to aspects of the (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's) decision, will abide by it "as a son of the church, a presbyter and a member of a religious congregation with a vow of obedience."

This does NOT mean that the two must surrender what they so ardently seek. It is a matter of "faithful dissent." This same thinking can be found in the writings of many theologians. Take, for example,

Charles Curran's "Faithful Dissent" and Richard McCormick's "The Critical Calling." From past history, we know that the church does an "about face" on many issues. It is just that we must be patient and let the Holy Spirit work in "her" own good time!

Now, Father Jim Callan, Sister Margie Henninger and company, please heed your own vows of obedience. Return your "Spiritus Christi" to the REAL Spirit of Christ which belongs at Corpus Christi!! I do not recall the origin of these words but they are as true today as when first uttered, "United we stand. Divided we fall." God bless us each and everyone.

Grace B. Carnes
Eagle Ridge Circle, Rochester

More remembrances of Bishop Hickey

To the editors:

Bishop Hickey will be remembered by me for the courageous and timely homily which he delivered while administering the Sacrament of Confirmation at St. John of Rochester Church a few years ago. It was certainly refreshing to hear the much needed message regarding the church's stand on premarital sex and chastity. He chose that teachable moment to show how deeply he cared about the souls of our young teens.

I'm sure that the Sunday evening prayer vigil on Oct. 10 was a beautiful and memorable tribute to the bishop. However, I was surprised to learn that he was not honored, as are all priests who have died, with the Mass of the High Priest. Every Catholic knows that the Mass is the most important of all our prayers. Bishop Hickey deserved nothing less!

Mary Lou Reifsnyder
Mountain Rise, Fairport



EDITORS' NOTE: The Mass of the High Priest is a local Rochester tradition, and not the prescribed rite of the church. Celebration of evening prayer is the ordinary rite of the church for all deceased and, as such, was more appropriate to celebrate for Bishop Hickey. The diocese also hopes to move toward this celebration for all deceased priests.

To the editors:

We the people of Holy Family Church sadly and deeply mourn the loss of our beloved Bishop Dennis W. Hickey.

For many years he resided at our rectory, serving our faith community with his very presence. Bishop Hickey presided at our weekend liturgies. He was there for our beginnings and our endings. The Bishop was indeed a caring gentleman and person with the demeanor of a Saint and sweet compassion. He enriched all our lives with his spiritual guidance and humanity. Bishop Hickey became the threads of the fabric of all our lives and we shall truly miss him.

You are with God, dear Bishop and we know all the angels in the heavenly choir are singing your praises in your heavenly home. We can hear God's voice saying, "Well done my Son."

Dorothy Panineau
Trabold Road, Rochester