

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.

Seeks raises for teachers

To the editors:

This past fall there was an exodus of many Catholic school teachers from Chemung County going over to the public school system.

There was a very good reason, the disparity in wages paid to our teachers in Chemung in comparison to those paid in Rochester schools.

Since we are in the same Diocese, I cannot understand this. These people are made to feel like second-hand citizens, which is unfair. They are devoted to our children and work very hard and eventually it will be these same children who will be our Church.

The Bishop just completed his Thanks Giving Appeal: It would be most charitable if he were to use some of these funds to create an equitable wage scale that includes all the Catholic school teachers in the Diocese. Charity begins at home.

P. Haworth
Coleman Avenue
Elmira

EDITORS' NOTE: Please see the related letter from Sister Virginia Steinwachs, SSJ.

Respect the past while we move forward in faith

To the editors:

After reading the letter to the editors which blamed Vatican II for today's decay in society (Jan. 13), I thought of a conversation on an airplane following the council.

A Methodist asked an American bishop sitting next to him, "Bishop, what do you plan to do with all these new ideas?"

The bishop replied, "I do not plan to be an arsonist, burning down the past, nor an immobilist, unwilling to move. I guess making progress would be taking one step at a time. If I keep my two feet on the ground, I will go no place. If I keep both feet in the air, I will certainly fall.

"If we hope to move forward in the church, we will take one step at a time, one foot on the ground respecting the past and one step in the air willing to accept the new."

During this Week of Prayer for Church Unity may we all avoid extremes and generalities, at the same time respecting our traditions and being open to the people and ideas that come our way.

Father Elmer J. Schmidt
Blossom Road, Rochester



Difference in teachers' pay derives from cost of living

EDITORS' NOTE: The Catholic Courier asked the diocesan Schools Office to respond to the letter from P. Haworth, also appearing on this page.

To the editors:

There is a shortage of teachers across the country. New York State recruiters have already started to recruit in Europe! Twelve percent of newly hired teachers enter the workforce without any training at all and another 15 percent enter without having fully met state standards. Currently in the state of Virginia substitute teachers are required to have a high school diploma and be 19 years old. All this has serious implications for the students.

Catholic School teachers have had the same requirement as the public school teachers and that is permanent New York State Certification. They are hired from college with a certificate of validation and are expected to finish permanent certification within a mandated time frame. Catholic Schools have a smaller pool of candidates to draw from because we pay less and we have an added requirement that teachers are willing to model and share their faith with the students they teach.

Yet our teachers have been superior and are seen now as an excellent resource to public schools who are in desperate need of certified teachers. We train them and the public schools reap the benefits. This year with over a thousand teachers in the Diocese of Rochester Catholic Schools there were some 150 teachers who accepted positions in the public schools. A constant refrain was, "We would love to teach for the Catholic Schools but can't afford it with our education loans to pay off and other financial responsibilities."

Although we pay lower than the public schools because we do not have tax money assistance, we try to set fair standards for all the teachers and staff. We have salary scales that are being worked on now for next year's employees. The teacher scale is 5 percent lower outside of Monroe County because the cost of living has been researched to be 5 percent lower. For example: rent for an apartment in Elmira would not be as high as one in Rochester. Finger Lakes and Southern Tier teachers are held in very high esteem for all they do and the lower salary is entirely a geographic factor.

The Catholic Schools' Office has encouraged the out of Monroe County Catholic Schools to raise their scale 5 percent if this is financially possible. Here is the crux of the matter — the Catholic Schools outside Monroe County are entirely financed through tuition paid by the parents and some 30-40 percent parish support. The parishes have many ministries to support and often can't do any more financially for the teachers.

The wonderful, dedicated men and women who work with the children in our schools deserve higher salaries — this is a given. How we are able to do that without raising tuition to a level parents are unable to afford is the hard question. But believe me concerned parents, teachers, administrators are working on it. Our leaders of the Church are being educated in our schools today — we will do everything necessary to preserve this ministry and to assure just wages for those who make it happen.

Virginia Steinwachs, SSJ
Assistant Superintendent
for Human Resources,
Catholic Schools
Diocese of Rochester

The Bible specifies what we must do to be saved

To the editors:

I am responding to a very interesting but frightening article that appeared in the *Courier* on January 6. The article was entitled, "Survey distinguishes 'spiritual responses.'"

The section that disturbed me the most was the section that stated that 61 percent of Catholics and 42 percent of Protestants believe that non-Christian religions can offer a true path to God. Did not Jesus say in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Why did Jesus die on the cross? Did he die just for a particular group? Did he suffer and shed his blood just for a particular group? The Bible states in God's own words that Jesus came and died for the whole world. He died for all our sins. A famous Bible verse that proves this is John 3:16-18. "For God so loved the World that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to

condemn the world, but that the world would be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe in him is already condemned because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." I believe God makes it clear what needs to be done in order to be saved. We need to repent and give our lives to Christ. We cannot do anything good enough to be saved. Jesus did it all on the cross. All we have to do is believe in him. Our lives will change in the most beautiful way. It is not about being religious, it is about a relationship with Christ.

Many people would say that you are being judgmental about other religions. It is not about judging, it is about love. If you love someone and you see that they are following the wrong path, would you not help them try and follow the right path or at least tell them about the right path? Jesus said he is the only way to the Father. Could you look Jesus in the face and say, Sorry Jesus, but there are other ways to get to heav-

en besides you.

The Bible makes it clear that there are no other ways to heaven but through Jesus Christ. How can people state that there is other paths to heaven? If you believe God's Word — the Bible — you cannot believe this. If you are a Christian, you cannot believe this? The Christian faith is the true faith and the only way to salvation. Jesus is the true way and as Christians we must help proclaim the Gospel to the World. Jesus gives us the choice. If we believe in him we will have eternal life. The Gospel is proclaimed throughout the world now, and so many people have given their lives to Christ. How wonderful this is.

Jesus is the Savior of the world, he is salvation, he is love, he is the only way to the Father. Anything else is false. God loves the whole world, he wants us all in heaven, but we must believe in his son. As Christian Catholics, we must proclaim this.

Dan Giancursio
Macedon