

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.

'Appalled' by bigotry of missive

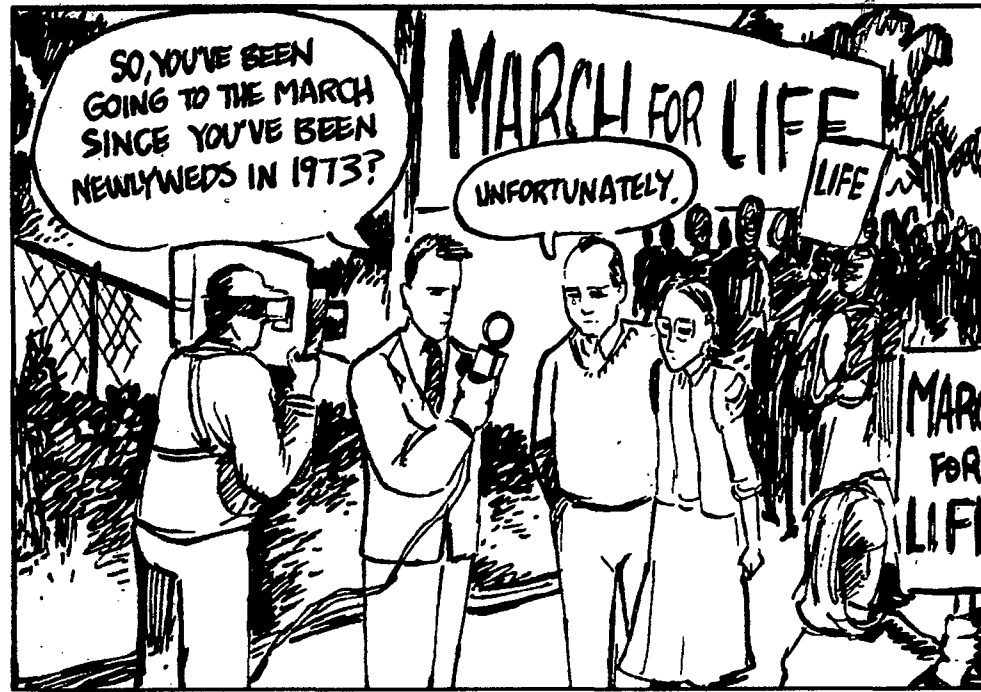
To the editors:

I had the good fortune to experience 12 years of Catholic education. I was blessed with parents whose strong faith nurtured a desire for me to follow their path. I came to firmly believe that Christ through His life on earth, His teachings and His death on the cross provided us with a four-lane highway to heaven if we choose to follow it.

However, I am appalled at the utter arrogance displayed by Dan Giancursio in his letter to the editor (*Catholic Courier*, Jan. 20: "The Bible specifies what we must do to be saved") in which he tells us unless you are Christian, God will turn His back on you and you will be denied the rewards of eternal life.

In my view God loves all of His creatures and will judge them primarily by the lives they have led and certainly not solely by whether they were Christians. I wonder if Mr. Giancursio knows of a grandfather clause in the contract he has assumed in his self interpretation of the Bible. I wonder if in his view all who lived in the centuries before Christ are automatically excluded from heaven.

More importantly he condemns all



those born after Christ unless they have embraced Christianity. He even fails to make provision for those who have never heard of or had the opportunity to know Christ. He condemns all those who perhaps by the circumstances of their birth or the dictates of their culture or conscience worship God in another fashion. It makes no difference to him as it is "his way or no way."

His letter leaves me almost nauseous. While I will never be accused of being a theologian, my gut reaction to his letter is that certainly we should spread and share our Christian faith, but I think we should leave it to God how He chooses to judge.

I feel confident God will reject Mr. Giancursio's personal interpretation of biblical passages just as I most emphatically do.

I truly expect that those Christians fortunate enough to attain heaven will be rubbing elbows with many non-Christians. Those non-Christians having led good lives in accordance with their beliefs and conscience will very possibly outnumber us just as they outnumber us by far here on earth. I had hoped we had progressed beyond religious bigotry, but apparently I was in error.

Walter C. Ervin Jr.
West Water Street
Elmira

Path to heaven open to all who obey God

To the editors:

Reader Dan Giancursio in his letter entitled "The Bible specifies what we must do to be saved." (*Catholic Courier*, Jan. 20) quotes Scripture accurately and in good detail, but in-depth understanding appears to escape his attention. According to the Bible in answer to the question, "Lord, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus said, "Obey My commandments" (John 14:15). And to the question, "and what is the greatest commandment?" Jesus said, "Love God with your whole heart, your whole mind, all your soul and your neighbor as yourself" (Deut. 30:6, Matt 22:27-40, Mark 12:29-31, Luke 10:27-28).

Those who obey His commandments, will find a path to heaven, even if

they do not know Jesus personally as most Christians do. Jesus also instructed "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 10:28). And the prophet Jeremiah records (31:33) "I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their hearts." So every living soul has the opportunity to attain eternal salvation if only they obey God's laws as written in their hearts, irrespective of their church affiliation. That does affirm what Dan says in his letter, Jesus died for all, that is, Christian, Jew, Muslim and all who sense God's love within themselves and who do as the Lord says. Certainly, those who choose to worship money, power, wealth, idols, or false gods are those who choose not to obey God's commandments and will suffer the consequences, but that is

not for us to judge. It is task enough that we demonstrate God's command to love each other and by our example, not exhortation, lead others into a fuller understanding of their relation to God.

It is interesting to note, that the Muslims, the Jews and many others worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Any Christian who will deny a path to heaven to others than themselves are violating the virtue of charity if not of truth. The late Rev. Leonard Feeney was severely chastised by the Roman Catholic Church many years ago for saying that "outside the Catholic Church there was no salvation." True Catholic belief states otherwise.

Kenneth G. O'Brien
Laurelton Road, Rochester

Church Tradition complements Scripture teachings

To the editors:

Regarding the letter to the editor of Jan. 20, "The Bible specifies what we must do" I commend Mr. Giancursio for his faith that "Jesus is the Savior of the world, he is salvation." However, I would like to add that we as Catholics also believe in tradition as well as Scripture as a means to salvation.

To me God provides the Bible as an instruction manual, but we have to go about the act to complete the instructions. Nothing gets done by simply reading and talking about it; you have to do it.

The Bible as we know it today was not

put together until 359 at the Council of Carthage. Before that sacred truths and events were handed down through traditions via oratory. As Catholics we also believe in the church suffering, militant, and triumphant. Sure people love to talk about the triumphant church, but we also have to carry our own crosses in reparation for sins committed. One also is called to act — church militant — on the injustices taking place in the world, via pro-life marches, help feed the hungry, clothe the naked etc.

If God would have allowed Catholic traditions to be written within the pages of the Bible just as the inspired word of God

is written, He would have compromised the human condition of free will by not allowing us the freedom to discover the sublime truth that our Catholic traditions hold. Why do we put so much faith in our traditions? They have stood 2000 years because the Holy Spirit has preserved them from error.

I thank Jesus for providing us with salvation, but I will pray to Him and His mother Mary for the poor souls in purgatory who were guilty of the sin of presumption and other sins as well.

Michael P. Valerio
Malin Lane, Penfield

Father Francis Blighton put Jesus at the center of his life, work

To the editors:

On January 11 one of the most Christlike priests I have ever known died. Father Francis Blighton was a person who truly lived his commitment to Christ. He was a friend, a spiritual director, a mentor, a priest who loved the Eucharist, a man who believed that each person can have an intimate relationship with God if only they take time to notice God's activity in their lives. He respect-

ed God's presence in each person and he had a deep love for Jesus. When he was with anyone he gave them his full attention. This was particularly true during spiritual direction whether in a small group or one to one.

When he saw potential in someone he spent much time training them and helping them notice God's activity in their life. Those who worked with him at the Borromeo Prayer Center realized

that Jesus not Father Francis was always at the center of any program or activity.

Father Francis' funeral was a testimony to the love and respect that many people had for him. His legacy will live on not only in the hearts of those who were close to him but his work and vision will continue at the Borromeo Prayer Center, a place he loved.

Jean Dealy
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