

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.

Schools are hope for church's future

To the editors:

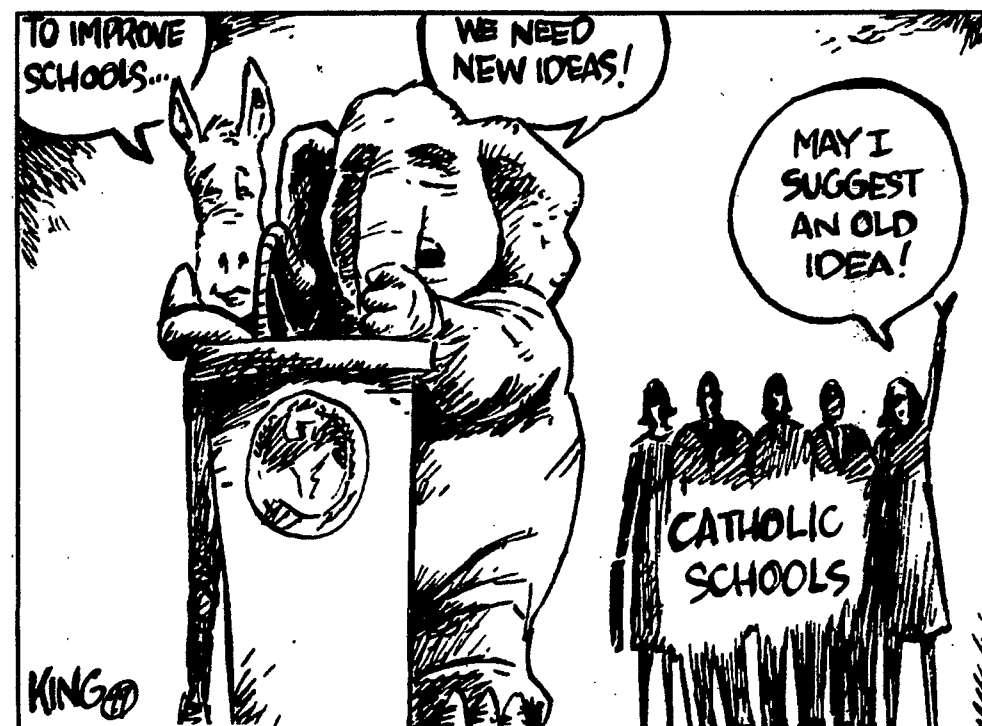
Hope for the church springs from the parochial school ministry. Our son John attends Northeastern Catholic Junior High and daughter Clare is in second grade at St. Margaret Mary's elementary school. Jesus Christ is not an abstract academic concept in the curriculum but a dynamic presence in their daily school life supporting the faith formation they get at home.

The lessons learned from a recent tragedy involving a teacher at St. Margaret Mary's affirmed our commitment to the parochial school ministry. Miss Jean Cannan taught sixth grade at St. Margaret Mary's for 26 years. "Miss Cannan" brought out the best in our son. Unexpectedly, she was diagnosed with cancer last summer and died peacefully a few months later. Her death deeply affected the St. Margaret Mary's School community. Correspondence from the principal, Sister Mary Alice O'Brien, to students and parents about Miss Cannan spoke passionately of her faith in the face of death. This was an invaluable lifetime lesson in Christian optimism for the children.

The monthly tuition is a financial sacrifice that we gladly make. We also participate in the Fair Share Program adding charitable gifts along with the monthly tuition to support the schools. However, tuition and the Fair Share Program only cover part of the educational cost. If not for the additional financial support from parishes, the doors to parochial schools would be forever closed for many in our diocese that now benefit.

As parents and as members of this diocese we are deeply grateful for parish support of parochial schools. Investing in the children guarantees dividends for all of us now and into the future. If you are looking for hope in the church this Jubilee Year, you will find it in a parochial school.

Jack and Marianne Kreckel
Webster



Precious moment 'lost' in Masses

To the editors:

A subtle change has been creeping into the Mass — robbing it of a moment of great wonder — and we are the poorer for it. It occurs during the part of the Mass called the Presentation of the Gifts.

We gather together to honor God, to praise Him and to show our love for Him. And we bring gifts to show that love, symbolized in the bread and wine that we offer to Him. We also have a spokesman for us — the priest — who offers the gifts in his and our behalf.

We sing during the Presentation while the collection is being taken up and the bread and wine brought to the altar. Then confusion steps in. Consider what you usually do when you bring a gift to someone — don't you usually wait at attention just to see if that special person is going to like your gift? Before beginning the prayers to God, the priest should wait un-

til the hymn is finished and the music ceases. He is offering the gifts in our behalf, and his, and uses words to that effect. "...we have this bread to offer...it will become for us the bread of life; ...we have this wine to offer...it will become for us our spiritual drink." When such words as *we*, *us* and *our* are used, I think we should be allowed to hear them, as we used to. But, NO, nowadays the priest silently says the prayers over the gifts, not giving us a chance to hear them or to respond to them.

I do not know by whose authority this is being done or the reasoning behind it, but a precious moment is lost. I guess we'll just have to add this to the growing collection of "losses" in our Catholic faith: Poor Church. Poor us.

Betty DeBlasio
West Hill Road
Elmira

Columnist's view of rite draws ire, praise

To the editors:

Regarding the article "Why some priests 'hate' weddings" (*Catholic Courier*, Jan. 20): When I was a little girl I dreamed of my wedding as many little girls do. Never did I dream that I would be greatly disappointed by my priest and the Catholic Church.

I was married this past September 1999 in a Rochester Catholic church. This is the church where my husband was baptized, made his first Communion and confirmation. When his father died of a brain tumor five years ago, the residing pastor (now retired) visited both the hospital and his home. This is the same church where I made my Communion, confirmation, etc. You may be starting to understand that when we became engaged it was of great importance that we marry there; not because our parents

wanted us to but to us the most important aspect of our wedding day was our marriage ceremony.

We went to church regularly and looked forward to incorporating God in our marriage and to pray together as our new family grew. When the day came for us to meet with the priest he declared, "I hate weddings." His statement was a slap in our faces and I left in tears. Then things worsened. We were not allowed to use kneelers and had many other restrictions going against traditions that my parents and in-laws used during their Catholic marriage ceremonies. The priest stated his reasons were a matter of inconvenience. During the planning of our wedding, with the many vendors used, the church was the most problematic.

Today, the Catholic Church 'recommends' that 10 percent of one's total wed-

ding costs be donated to the church. It takes enormous guts to ask for an average of one to two thousand dollars while declaring hatred of the couples' wedding ceremony. We are at the age where many of our friends are marrying. I have come to find out that we are sadly not alone with our experiences with the Catholic Church.

We had a beautiful wedding and our marriage was not and is not dependent on a kind and thoughtful priest. But, we have since left that parish in hopes of finding another without judgment and hatred. We hope to find a priest who will demonstrate love, acceptance and a warm welcome for us.

Now reading the disturbing article, I see we might have difficulty discovering a church that welcomes weddings, that will actually have priests appear at a rehearsal for which they are paid to do, where the priests embrace children the way the Catholic Church teaches us to. I find myself confused and so disappointed in this whole system. Simply put: If you hate weddings, don't officiate them. We see and feel your hatred. I don't want another bride going through the eye-opening hypocrisy I had to. Remember why couples are coming to you, for guidance and this sacrament. Embrace this and be honored that they want your blessing and you to officiate their biggest day of their lives! These couples are nervously facing their unknown future. Please do not add to their stress by incompetently doing your job. No one wants your hatred, especially at this holy sacrament.

Wendi and Dean Costanzo
Rochester

Sacristan wishes couples would reflect

To the editors:

I was pleased to see the article by Father Eugene Hemrick on "Why some priests 'hate' weddings."

As a sacristan I can appreciate the comments made in the article; often I think they are more interested in making a Hollywood production and not taking into consideration what is about to take place.

We can be grateful that this is not done by all couples who marry. We have had couples after the ceremony is over leave the church and go to the rectory door and spend some time in an area where they are alone and reflect on what just took place. While this is the exception, it is

something that is remembered by the priest and the sacristan. It would be nice if all couples would do this. Private time before the party begins and the memory of what happened in church is only in the pictures they will look at. I'll make a bet that these are the strongest marriages.

These are the couples that will be part of marriage prep for future couples and will give these couples the best guidance to make a lasting relationship.

I think at the Pre-Cana this should be made part of the instructions, "Time to reflect."

Ann Konish, Sacristan
Corpus Christi Church, Rochester