

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.

Wrong to pit Bible against church

To the editors:

Jesus did not entrust the good news of our salvation to the written word alone. Rather, He hand-picked and personally trained the men upon whom He would build His Church. To this Church, He gave divine authority (Mt 16:13-20) to teach, govern, and sanctify in His name, until the end of time.

Scripture verses like James 2:24, "... a person is justified by works and not by faith alone," and Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith... it is not from works..." seem contra-

dictory. These, and dozens of other examples, lend confusion to the "specifics" of salvation, as well as other points of faith. The Bible, therefore, is not sufficient, nor is it even necessary, to effectively proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not sufficient because the inspired Word of God is easily misinterpreted by fallible human beings. It is not strictly necessary because the Church, which the Bible calls "the pillar and foundation of truth," (1 Tim 3:15) existed well before the first word of the New Testament was written. Three thousand people "accept-

ed the message" and "were added" to the Church on that first day of Pentecost. For hundreds of years, countless more received the Gospel, without benefit of the written word. Likewise, if today all the Bibles in existence were to suddenly disappear, the Church would continue to preach the same full-Gospel it has proclaimed for nearly 2,000 years.

It is wrong to pit the Bible against the Church, as if the two did not teach one and the same truth. When questions and disputes arise, we must look to the Church, as the first Christians did (Acts 15), for guidance and clarification. After all, which of us did not receive the Gospel from the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church? It is only our pride which convinces us that our wisdom, understanding, and interpretation are greater than that of the Church, which gave us the Scriptures in the first place.

It is also wrong to pit faith against works. They are two sides of the same coin. Recently our pastor reminded us that we could no more have saved ourselves, than we could have conceived ourselves in our mother's womb. So both our natural life and our supernatural life are gifts, that we are powerless to bring about on our own. However, once born into our natural family, or into the family of God through baptism, we bear a certain responsibility to cooperate with these free and undeserved gifts. Overflowing with love and forgiveness, what parent, for the sake of his child, does not require "works"? The Church and the Bible agree. "We are saved by grace, through faith, working in love." (Gal. 5:6)

Kathleen A. Donohue
Avis Street
Rochester

Group thanks Charities for helping to bring speaker

To the editors:

Brighton Residents Against Violence (Brave, Inc.) would like to thank Catholic Charities of Rochester for helping to bring Norma McCorvey to Brighton on March 2, 2000. McCorvey was the Plaintiff in *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court Decision that made abortion legal. McCorvey is now pro-life and a Catholic.

Money for McCorvey's visit was made possible in part due to an outcry against Catholic Charities' prominent acknowledgement of New York State Senator Richard Dollinger at the October 1999 luncheon for human rights Nobel Prize winner (Archbishop) Desmond Tutu. Dollinger, who had solicited funds from the state for the event, was running for a political office at the time.

Ironically, Dollinger is a great violator of the human rights of the unborn. He

is the poster boy for the pro-choice movement. He was the featured speaker at a pro-choice rally celebrating the anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade* on January 22, 2000 here in Rochester. Dollinger has led the opposition on the Senate floor to a state ban of partial birth abortion. He has opposed even notifying parents when a minor has an abortion.

In August of 1998, the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued diocesan guidelines to prohibit pro-choice Catholic candidates who would try to use church events to appeal for votes. It is fitting that part of the fund for which Dollinger solicited from the state was used to educate his own constituents about the evils of abortion.

Maureen O'Brien-DiPoala
Secretary, Brave Inc.
Claybourne Road, Rochester

Bible is book of the church, not other way around

To the editors:

"Why must we complicate salvation?" (Opinions, March 2) offers the Protestant perspective on the primacy of faith over works. The proposition is defended on the basis of Scripture alone. It is true that the Bible is clear that faith is first and foremost a requirement for salvation (Eph 2:8-9). But the Bible also is clear on the saving role of works alone in the lives of the faithful (1 Pet 2:12, Mt. 5:16, Mt. 16:27). The Bible further states that man is not saved by faith alone (James 2:24). Neither is he saved by works alone (Rom 9:31-32). And there is much biblical evidence that there must be a balance between faith and works (James 2: 14-18, 22-20).

The issue then becomes a matter of interpretation. Are some authors more inspired than others? What did Paul and James really mean by "works"? How am I, as a Catholic and a Christian, supposed to understand these seemingly contradictory words in a way that leads to salvation? It's obvious in this case that Scripture alone is not sufficient, inspired though it may be. So I must look somewhere for additional help to guide and sustain my faith. That "somewhere" is

in the 2000-year teaching authority of the Church, an authority given by Jesus Himself (Mk. 16:15).

Indeed, the teaching authority of the Church was exercised long before there was a Bible. The list of books (Canon) of the Bible we use today was officially certified by the bishops under the guidance of the Holy Spirit at the Council of Hippo in 393. We know the Bible is the inspired word of God because the Church teaches that. The Church, then, is not the Church of the Bible. The Bible — essential as it may be in the life of the

Church — is a book of the Church. Its existence does not supersede the teaching authority of the Pope and the bishops. It confirms it. In denying the legitimacy of Dogmatic Constitution (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*), the writer creates the paradox of dismissing the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, while at the same time claiming to embrace its head — Jesus Christ — as the door to salvation. That seems pretty complicated to me.

Timothy J. Hughes
Shagbark Way
Fairport

Hopes she'll reunite with neighbors in Heaven

To the editors:

I always read the opinion section of the *Catholic Courier* and the letter of Thursday, March 2, by Charles Dolcimascoco ("Don't let Catholics hear you") brought a smile on my face. St. Simon and Jude was my family's parish for many years. At the time I was a little puzzled since not too many years before that sermon, the nuns at the school across the street were still teaching us that there was no salvation for people that weren't

Catholic. Even as a child I could not believe that only Catholics had access to heaven, especially when there were so many good people around me of other faiths. Thankfully that thinking has fallen by the wayside, so I am sure that someday I am going to meet my non-Catholic friends from the Gravesend section of Brooklyn again.

Gerri Randazzo
Calm Lake Drive
Farmington

Leader in Charismatic movement will be missed

To the editors:

Twenty-five years ago I rang the doorbell at 3681 Lake Avenue on a Tuesday evening and was graciously invited in to pray with the members of St. Michael's Prayer Group, lead by Bill Buechel. We have continued to pray with our beloved leader throughout these many years, almost until the moment of his death on February 24.

Bill was an extraordinary man, a devoted Catholic who dedicated his entire life to spreading God's word, defending the Church and deepening his own spir-

ituality. Bill studied Catholic theology throughout his life. He wrote prolifically, publishing over 700 articles in Catholic magazines. He worked diligently in his parish and with the Legion of Mary. He was an exemplary husband to Mary, his wife of 65 years.

In 1969, Bill and Mary opened their home and established the first Catholic charismatic prayer group in the Diocese of Rochester. St. Michael's Prayer Group met weekly for many years, singing, praying, listening and learning as Bill shared the Scriptures with us and encouraged

us to stay close to the Church. He was our example, attending daily Mass, setting aside time to meditate, read and reflect each day. He reminded us often that "God is faithful." And now, this good and faithful servant is with God, witnessing even in his final hours to his caretakers and friends as he passed peacefully from life to death. Although we are saddened by his loss, we celebrate the gift of his life and we thank God for our spiritual father, Bill Buechel.

Ed and Kathy DeMott
Belcoda Drive, Rochester

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