

# OPINIONS



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## Limit 'unnecessary' duties

### To the editors:

I am very disturbed by some of the ideas expressed in your article "Daily Mass diminishes" in the March 2 edition of the *Catholic Courier*.

Joan Workmaster, who seems to be the spokesperson for the bureaucracy who makes these decisions, states that "The daily Mass used to be among a priest's top priorities, but the reality is, they have so many responsibilities now it's slipped down by necessity." And later in the article, she states that "priests are discouraged from saying more than one weekday Mass per day."

This doesn't make any sense to me at all. The Mass and Sacraments are the heart of the Catholic Church's worship of God. The only reason we need to ordain priests is that they may celebrate the Mass and Sacraments. None of their other "responsibilities" requires ordination. So why are you discouraging them from exercising their priestly functions to take on responsibilities that the non-ordained can do? We don't have enough priests, so let's use the ones we have efficiently without burdening them with

unnecessary responsibilities. We can't afford to have them burn out.

I also don't understand why Communion Services are discouraged. What is wrong with reserving in the tabernacle "a large number of consecrated hosts?" If we are to have prayer services without Eucharist, we may as well join our Protestant neighbors. They have beautiful services. If we can't have Mass, can't we at least have Communion Services?

Ms. Workmaster says that prayer services are better than no worship gathering at all and that we should stay together and pray as a community. But shouldn't Mass and Jesus in the Eucharist be the center of our community prayer?

As Ms. Workmaster says, "The spirit is moving in the world in a way we don't understand." But I am certain He is not moving us away from the worship of God in the Mass and Jesus in the Eucharist.

Please, Diocesan Office, rethink these issues! **WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?**

Jane Greiten

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## Disturbed by group's readiness to discard centuries of teachings

### To the editors:

Recently there have been some letters and an article in the *Courier* concerning the group Call to Action. On March 5, I attended a local Call to Action meeting held at St. John the Evangelist Church on Humboldt Street in Rochester. Around 40 to 50 people attended, most of whom seemed to be in their 50s, 60s or older. They were for the most part a friendly group, but it was disturbing to witness how ready they appeared to be to discard centuries of Catholic Church teaching and the guidance of our current Holy Father.

In small group discussion, some of the Call to Action members mentioned the primacy of conscience as a justification for dissenting from certain Church teachings. In this, however, they ignored the fact that one of the Vatican II documents that they consider a "founding document" for their movement, *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World) clearly reminds us that human freedom, weakened by sin, necessitates God's grace (17) and that a conscience is correct only when guided by objective moral norms (16). Our current Holy Father, John Paul II, reiterated this teaching in *Veritatis Splendor* (The Splendor of Truth) as he again reminded us, "Conscience is not an infallible judge, it can make mistakes" (62).

*Veritatis Splendor* reminds us further that at times conscience can be incorrect as a result of what is called invincible ignorance. The person in error is in error because they don't know any better and so may not be culpable for their actions. This, however, does not make some ac-

tion that is objectively wrong somehow no longer wrong (63).

In a theology class I was once taught that as Catholics we look to three areas of authority to help guide us in our Christian walk, especially when faced with difficult situations of conscience. We look to Scripture, to Church Tradition, and to the Magisterial leadership of the Church. These three areas work together and are not mutually exclusive. Call to Action members apparently want to ignore Magisterial leadership and much of Catholic Tradition and interpret Scripture in a very individualistic — Protestant — manner. It is hard to understand how Call to Action members can believe that our own personal, fallible human judgements and experiences, however important, can be better guides to what is true and just than the wisdom of Scripture, 2,000 years of Church Tradition, and the Magisterial leadership put in place by Christ (Matthew 16:18-19).

We can hope that Call to Action members, especially those involved with Spiritus Christi, will stop and reflect more deeply on the direction they are headed. A more involved study of Church history, including the development of Church doctrine and its roots in Scripture, the documents of Vatican II, and the recent encyclicals of our Holy Father would perhaps open hearts and minds to see the wisdom and beauty of the "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic" Church and inspire greater faithfulness.

Robert Pokalsky

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## Let's try regular prayer as aid in vocations fight

### To the editors:

For a number of years now — let's say 15 or 20 — there has been a great deal of concern, to say the least, about the current and future shortage of priests in our diocese.

It seems as though almost everyone nowadays just accepts these statistics as a matter of fact. I do not believe I have ever seen this subject approached from any way other than a negative nature. We often say we are a prayerful people, that we believe in prayer, believe in the "power of prayer." We believe in miracles, the rosary, in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit as well as the fact that with God, anything is possible.

So, if we truly believe in the power of prayer, isn't it about time we took a "totally positive" action toward our diocese vocational challenges?

Years ago, when many of us were growing up, one of the rituals incorporated into our Mass was three Hail Marys and the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, at the very end of the Mass. The priest would come off the altar, then kneel at the foot of the altar and lead these four prayers, as a means to ward off Satan and the temptations of sin. ...

Let's just suppose, for a period of, say, three years, after every Mass in every parish in the diocese, the celebrant knelt

at the foot of the altar and led the congregation in prayer with three Hail Marys, a vocational prayer plus a Glory Be. WOW! Twelve counties, approximately 174 Catholic Churches, thousands of people: concentrating in sincere prayer. Can you imagine, can you just imagine?! Why not??

Here's an example prayer:

Lord Jesus, as You once called the first disciples to make them fishers of men, let your sweet invitation continue to resound. Come follow me!

Give young men and women the grace of responding quickly to your voice. Support our bishops, priests and consecrated people in their apostolic labor.

Grant perseverance to our seminarians and to those who are carrying out the ideal of a life totally consecrated to your service.

Awaken in our community a missionary eagerness. Lord, SEND WORKERS TO YOUR HARVEST, and do not allow humanity to be lost for the lack of pastors, missionaries and people dedicated to the cause of the Gospel. Mary, Mother of the Church, the model of every vocation, help us to say "YES" to the Lord, who calls us to cooperate in the divine plan of salvation. — Pope John Paul II

William F. McGrath Sr.

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### To the editors:

In the 1950s and 1960s various parishes, and at times whole dioceses, had congregants at Sunday Mass pause after the final blessing, kneel, and pray for the conversion of Russia. Stopping the spread of communism seemed a cause worth a short prayer before leaving church. If you believe in the power of prayer, you merely have to observe the great changes in Russia and the opening of that area to the spread of religion. The effort was a success.

Today the American Catholic Church faces another problem, one that might find its solution in prayer once again. Fewer and fewer young men are making a commitment to becoming priests. Families don't talk with their sons about the priesthood as a possible option after graduating school. Students see few

young priests as role models, while the good caring priest role model has dropped out of sight in the media. Few students even know where the major seminaries serving the Rochester Diocese are located. Few high school seniors have ever visited a seminary to make a decision about entering. Secular colleges send recruiters, produce video tapes, and invite students to campus open houses. Seminaries are less aggressive.

Perhaps it again is time for organized prayer for vocations. Three to five minutes after each Sunday Mass would have an effect. If prayer could topple Russian communism, think what it could do at helping young men to realize an unselfish goal of helping people by accepting the vocation of the priesthood.

Gerard Muhl

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## Daily Mass meaningful to many

### To the editors:

In reference to the article, "Daily Mass diminishes," in the March 2 *Courier*, I understand the situation and sympathize with Mary Gilardo and other faithful daily Mass communicants. I first started attending daily Mass in 1969 and for most of the last 31 years have attended daily Mass almost every day.

I remember when there were at least two Masses daily: at almost every church in Elmira. Of course, most parishes had an assistant then, and sometimes another priest in residence. Until six or seven years ago churches also had a Saturday daily Mass, but now, except for our present Lenten schedule, a Mass at our Dominican Monastery is the only daily Mass in town on Saturday. And most of our churches don't have Mass on one of the

weekdays either, usually on Thursday or Friday.

Our priests have a busy schedule, with clustered parishes and no assistant. But I wonder if it would be asking too much for our pastor to take a half hour to say Mass on that fifth weekday? Hopefully we will be able to free our hard-working pastors of some duties in the next one to five years here in the Southern Tier. I hope our priests realize how much the daily celebration of the Eucharist — not a communion service — means to the faithful daily Mass worshippers. Our local Morning Mass Club members not only attend Mass faithfully, they also encourage others to attend daily.

Robert Ryniker

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## Priest's letter seemed to bolster argument

### To the editors:

I enjoy the Opinions page, especially the argumentative letters. Father Robert Ring (March 16) informs us that there are and have been several foreign priests serving in priestly ministry while visiting the diocese. I don't see the relevance of this information about visitors, when offered as a rebuttal to the suggestion of

Mr. Gallagher (Feb. 24), that the diocese recruit foreign priests and seminarians to become Rochester diocesan priests. Indeed, it would support Gallagher's proposal, as evidence that foreign priests can render good ministry.

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