

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.

Commit diocese to total stewardship

To the editors:

The report (*Catholic Courier*, March 30) about the results of the annual bishop's 1999-2000 Thanks Giving Appeal would seem to indicate that the diocese should make its goal again. However, would a closer look prove that this year's annual TGA has been a dismal failure? The article informed those who had not yet responded to the original appeal that they were about to receive one more letter — i.e. one more opportunity to make a pledge. We also learned that the total number of donors had dropped off — but the good news is that the average gift is up by a whopping \$2.

On the page facing this article is another appeal from Bishop Clark, (an advertisement) asking for donors to step forward to assist in raising money for a special jubilee fund to help some needy parishes. Even to the unsophisticated observer these two items seem to be a juxtaposition of incongruity. Is it improper to ask — if the TGA had been the success it is supposed to be would there be any

reason for supplemental fundraisers?

All of the news services report that we are experiencing one of the greatest periods in history as far as jobs, income, personal growth, investments, 401-K plans — we are living in the virtual "best of times." Yet, in spite of all this good news our TGA is a bust. If the diocesan TGA was participating in these "best of times," there would be more than enough excess contributions to give the affected parishes the assistance that they need without having to come to the well again.

There are some complex issues involved — there will be no simple solution. However, the right start would be for the diocese to develop a more encompassing approach. For nearly 20 years, the diocese has relied on the TGA to support the broad range of services offered to the various ministries it provides. However, the individual parishes are left on their own — to do whatever is necessary to raise revenue to support the parish. This has been good because it allows each pastor to be autonomous in formulating plans within

their borders. There has been no precise direction from the diocese on how to proceed to these lofty goals. Consequently, the financial health of parishes varies as widely as the people who are in charge. It appears that the time has come for there to be a major shift in this regimen.

A total commitment to Stewardship is the best approach to these very complex issues. It has to start with the bishop and be supported by all the pastors, priests and laity. There is no need to abandon the TGA — for diocesan-wide needs will always be with us. Commitment to Stewardship and all that it involves requires a change in thinking. In addition it requires courage to take the leap of faith necessary to assure its success. It has to be based on a principle that financially healthy parishes lead to a financially healthy diocese. It is not as simple as "One hand washes the other." It is as critical as having a strong foundation to support the rest of the structure.

Tom McCarthy
North Park Drive, Greece

Writer sees idol worship in crowning

To the editors:

On Mothers' Day, some members of (an area parish) will be parading the statue of Mary into the church and crowning the statue. They are also getting the children involved by helping to crown this statue. Is this not idolatry? What are we doing? God forbids this type of behavior. The Bible states in Exodus 20:3-5: "You shall not have other gods besides me. You shall not carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or worship them."

Do we not learn from our past sins? Do we remember the story of the golden calf in the Bible? Many people would say that they are not worshipping the statue, they are honoring Mary. Why do you need a statue to honor Mary? Mary is special and should be respected as the Mother of Jesus, but that is where the line should be drawn. She was chosen by God to deliver the Savior of the World, Jesus Christ. She was a sinner just like us. If she was here today I am sure she would say, focus on my son Jesus Christ. He is your salvation.

To make matters worse, they are having children participate in this crowning. How can we deceive our children this way by having them participate in such an event? I believe that this church and other churches who participate in this crowning of the statue of Mary need to seriously look at the Bible and how God reacted to this type of behavior. If this is not idolatry, I do not know what is.

Dan Giancursio
Mendon

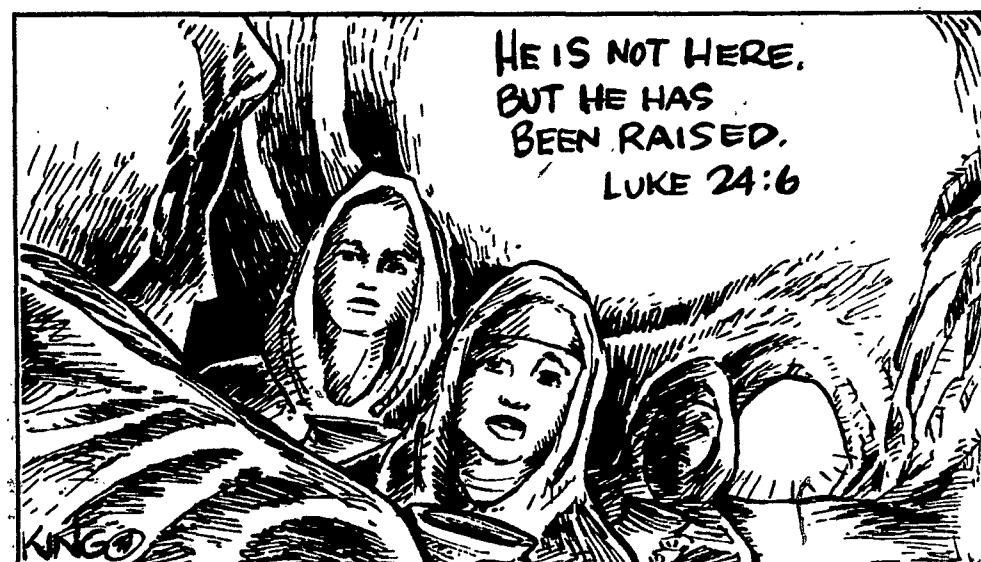
Did crucified Christ seek 'dispensation'?

To the editors:

As Good Friday approaches during the holiest days of Lent (Triduum), I can't help but meditate on the cross and the enormity of Christ's suffering for us sinners.

Then I wonder why we need to ask, discuss and even argue about whether or not a "dispensation" could be granted to us for a day. Look at that human/God on the cross and ask yourself this question. Was He granted a dispensation from this cruel suffering and death?

Gerard Tette
Coolidge Road, Irondequoit



Why no outrage over essay?

To the editors:

The March 28 *Democrat and Chronicle* ("Speaking Out") essay by Assistant Professor Scott Brenon Caton of Roberts Wesleyan College is an open attack on the Roman Catholic Church. Catholics in this Diocese have been too frequently subjected to criticism and attack because of their religious beliefs and the absence of loud public protest from the laity doesn't speak well of our commitment to the Church. We have had public criticism and dissent from within that is left largely unchallenged.

The March 30 issue of this paper was absent of any timely mention of the *Democrat and Chronicle* essay, and the paper will probably overlook the instance in favor of more relevant subjects for the Diocese. Our Catholic newspaper continues to fall short of being an effective teaching tool for

the Church, choosing to have the likes of priest-in-disguise Richard McBrien contribute his often critical columns of dissent, and featuring articles that soft sell the feminist and homosexual issues in the diocese. Should we tolerate Caton's demeaning references to us as sophisticated and modern American free thinking Catholics who "weigh for themselves the ailing Polish gentleman's ethical claims over them," and who are "in effect Protestants"?

Where is our outrage? Where is our moral leadership? When will this Diocese wake up and defend the Faith that has been entrusted to us?

David Coriale
Conifer Cove Lane, Webster

EDITORS' NOTE: Mr. Caton's letter used the phrases quoted here to describe "a sizeable chunk of" and "many" American Catholics.

Local AIDS expert offers resource

To the editors:

A recent (March 9) article in the *Catholic Courier* announced the availability of a new manual for AIDS ministry, "Many Threads, One Weave," created by the National Catholic AIDS Network and Catholic Charities USA.

The article referenced "30 facilitators" across the country who were trained to lead parishes and groups in studying and using the manual.

The Director of AIDS Services of Catholic Charities Community & Residential Services, Jane Hallinen, is one of these 30 trained facilitators. Catholic Charities Community & Residential Services, a diocesan affiliate of Catholic Charities Inc., provides case management, emergency shelter funds, permanency planning and children's activities to persons whose lives are affected by the AIDS virus.

Ms. Hallinen was trained in October of 1998 in the use of the "Many Threads, One Weave" program and has presented at conferences on the national level. She has spoken to professional groups on the state level and has presented to school groups locally.

Ms. Hallinen is a resource for AIDS information, an advocate for the AIDS community and a trainer for the National Catholic AIDS Network. She is a source that is readily available to groups in this area. Please use her talents to enlighten the Rochester area about AIDS prevention, AIDS ministry and living life with AIDS.

Paul T. Pickering
Executive Director
Catholic Charities

Community & Residential Services
EDITORS' NOTE: The article was written by Catholic News Service in Washington, D.C.