

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.

Gives writer credit for plan to 'warn'

To the editors:

I give Dan Giancursio full credit for good intentions (April 20, "Writer sees idol worship in crowning"). Once again he writes to "warn" Catholics that they are idol-worshippers when they honor Mary. Unfortunately, he needs to pay a bit more attention to the Scripture we both love so much. A full reply would take pages, but let's stick with Exodus 25:18-20, Luke 1, 2 Sam 6 and John 19:26-27 for now.

In the first passage, God commands the making of two "images" of angels to adorn the Ark of the Covenant. How could He do that when He commanded us not to make any "idols"? Simple: making an "image" is not the same as making idols or "graven images" — those made for worshipping in the sin of idolatry. Otherwise we should tear down the statues honoring Abraham Lincoln, the soldiers of Iwo Jima, etc. If Lincoln is worth honoring with a statue, I wouldn't think one for the mother of Jesus — or Jesus Himself, for that matter — would make a Christian complain. Photographs are "images" too: how would Mr. Giancursio respond if I asked him to tear up all his family pictures, pointing out that he didn't need images to honor them?

Jesus made clear on the Cross that Mary is our spiritual mother, in giving her to John and John to her (John 19). Jesus kept the commandments perfectly — they include honoring one's father and mother, and the Bible makes quite clear that we are to imitate Jesus. Therefore honor — not worship — of Mary is right and proper.

Mary was protected by God from sin due to her role as the mother of Jesus, according to Church teaching, and this is implied in Scripture as well (Luke 1:28 — the inspired writer Luke uses a Greek term for "full of grace" indicating a perfection or plenitude of grace, incompatible with sin). Also, compare 2 Sam 6:9-14 with Luke 1:41-56 to see why Mary is called "the Ark of the New Covenant" and to see why the Catholic Church asks, "If God took so much care with the old Ark (see God's lengthy twice-reviewed instructions in Exodus) why would He let the New Covenant be carried around in any old filthy vessel?"

Keep writing, Mr. Giancursio. Christ's holy Catholic Church has a loving answer to each one of your questions and your misunderstandings about the Faith passed down to us from Christ Himself through the apostles. We're praying for you, and we look forward to welcoming you one day into the fullness of truth.

Karen A. Webb
Lilac Drive
Rochester

Writer should learn before criticizing Catholic traditions

To the editors:

Statues of saints (are) physical symbols to remind us of their good works.

Besides the "Mother of Jesus," she is also "Queen of Heaven," "Virgin Mother" et al. Why not a crown? Symbolism of devotion and veneration.

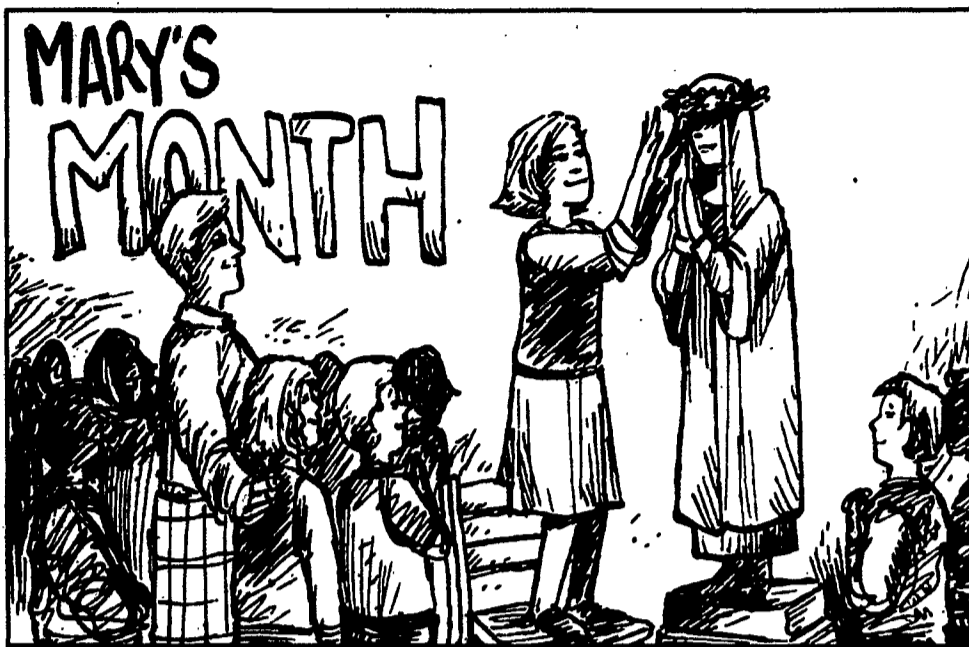
She is not a "sinner like the rest of us." She was conceived without original sin. We were — hence baptism. Her body was assumed into heaven because of her sinlessness. We rot — original sin.

The definition between idolatry — worship — and veneration clearly defined by Roman Catholic teaching, as all of above.

More Roman Catholic teaching involved, but the most simple and obvious points of Mr. Giancursio's errors in his letter. If he is a non-Catholic, he should do more research before criticizing. (Marian devotions) ask Mom to help with Dad.

If a Catholic ... ? Enough said.

Shirley F. Schuhart, OFM
Whalen Road
Penfield



Mary was not sinful like us

To the editors:

In reference to Dan Giancursio's rather strident letter concerning the crowning of the statue of Mary, I would ask Mr. Giancursio to consider Mary's place within the Church.

I must take strong objection to his statement "She was a sinner just like us." I would ask Mr. Giancursio to study again the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and refer him to the Catechism concerning Mary's assumption into Heaven. I would encourage him to read item 966 in the Catechism, "Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin..." Mary was not like us and born without concupiscence, Mary did not sin, a doctrine taught by St. Augustine. Perhaps Mr. Giancursio does not accept Mary as *Theotokos*, "God-bearer."

We honor Mary through Christ and through the Church; this devotion to Mary does not exceed the bounds of Biblical

scholarship and/or ecclesiastical wisdom. Mr. Giancursio's writing makes me question if perhaps he is not one of our Protestant brothers.

I would reiterate the Church's teaching that devotion to Mary is intrinsic to Christian worship and that we must remember that the use of statues are an aid to our devotional life. We pray not to or through the statue, but rather with the person honored by the icon or statue. These symbols are profound expressions of human nature. The very word, symbol, is from the Greek "symbolon" meaning "sign of identification." We identify with Mary as our Mother and the Mother of our Lord, but not as a fellow sinner.

So, let us join in crowning Mary, our Mother, and rejoice in the Resurrected Christ together.

Dr. Allan O'Grady Cuseo
South Fitzhugh Street
Rochester

Giving honor to sinless Mother is appropriate thanks for example

To the editors:

In the Opinions page of the April 20, 2000 *Catholic Courier* a writer was disturbed by an upcoming Mother's Day ceremony which will crown a statue of Mary. He considered this to be idolatry — the worship of idols — which the Bible prohibits. That writer further stated that "Mary was a sinner just like us." The writer is wrong on this point.

Mary never sinned. This teaching is supported by Scripture, and definitively established by sacred Tradition and the inspired teaching authority of the church. This is the same sacred Tradition and teaching authority that we rely upon to know which books were inspired by God

and so to be included as Sacred Scripture.

Knowing that Mary never sinned and that she cooperated fully with the redemption of humanity by her son, she is a great example for us to follow. Mary focused her life on the mission of Jesus, as should we.

Giving honor to Mary for her example is fully appropriate. It is also fully appropriate to pray to Mary for her to intercede on our behalf with the Son who loves her. If a statue can help us to focus our thoughts and prayers on Mary in these ways, then it is certainly not idolatry.

Christina & David Van Lieshout
Cadyville Road
Livonia

Parish effort still needed on Rockefeller laws

To the editors:

As the modification of Rockefeller Drug Laws once again takes center stage in the state legislature, I would like to take this opportunity to publicize my parish's participation in that effort.

Last spring in the spirit of Jubilee Justice and Reconciliation, the Diocesan Public Policy Committee invited faith communities to sign petitions in favor of modifying punitive Rockefeller Drug Laws. Study packets provided education for parishes that helped us learn about the injustice of these laws, demonstrating a need to rely less on incarceration and mandatory sentencing of nonviolent offenders and more on addiction treatment services. My parish, the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady in Fairport, responded to the petition request enthusias-

tically. I understand that since last summer the diocese has collected more than 3,500 petitions, which they sent to respective legislators in Albany. Of those, Church of the Assumption parishioners signed 550, the highest total of any other faith community.

We endorse the continuing effort of the New York State Catholic Conference of bishops, who continue to lead the reform advocacy. If your parish has not yet participated, it is evidently not too late. As the Assembly and Senate meet during the final sessions this spring, we remain hopeful that they will modify drug laws that currently leave judges very few choices besides hefty sentences for minor offenses.

Sheila Cody, pastoral minister
Assumption Parish
Fairport