

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.

Outsiders prophesy about sins of present

To the editors:

There is a story from the Desert Fathers about Abba Moses, a follower of St. Anthony. A brother in the community had committed a fault so a council was called to judge him. Abba Moses was asked to attend, but he refused to go. Then a priest sent someone to him saying, "Come, for everyone is waiting for you." So Abba Moses got up and went. He took a leaking jug, filled it with water and carried it with him. Seeing this, the others came out to meet him asking, "What is this, Father?" The old man replied, "My sins run out behind me and I do not see them and today I am coming to judge the errors of another." When they heard this, they said no more to the brother but forgave him.

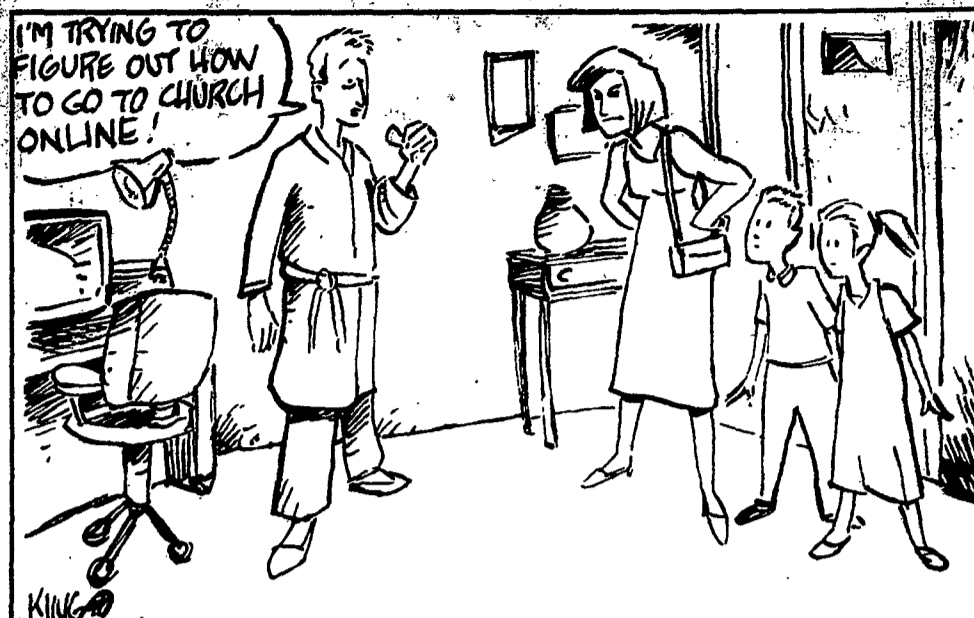
I am pleased that the Holy Father has apologized publicly for some of the past sins of our church. But what about the here and now? Our present-day sins continue to run out behind us and we do not see them. Is it enough to recognize and be sorry for other people's sins, sins of the distant past. Will we ever recognize and address our own? This will be possible only if we listen to our prophets.

The biblical prophets were not just people of foresight. They were primarily people of insight. They called the people to accountability for their failures but were persecuted for their witness. Who are the prophets in today's church? Where will you find them? If biblical testimony remains true, you will not find them among the accepted for they will be rejected. They will probably not be the insiders. They will be the outsiders. If they are insiders, they will live on the edges breaking down the walls that separate us.

In the Bible, the outsiders, the rejected, are the ones who understand. The Bible is a history of outsiders. It is not written from the top. It is written from the bottom. The poor, the oppressed, the powerless more clearly see the truth of Scripture. They can also reveal that our sins run out behind us. In a downtown area near a homeless shelter these words were written in chalk, "I watch how eagerly these people protect their nothing. Truly God is hated here." A homeless outsider becomes a prophet seeing what the insider can never see.

In the Temple system at the time of Jesus, there were seven groups of people who were outsiders not allowed into the Temple. Yet when you read the Scriptures, it was the insiders who opposed Jesus every step of the way while the outsiders were open to his teaching. Our only hope is to follow in the footsteps of the exemplary outsider, Jesus, the rejected one, crucified outside the city walls of Jerusalem.

Emmett Neary
Bakerdale Road, Rochester



Honor most revered human

To the editors:

Regarding the letter published April 20 from Dan Giancursio, the writer needs to do some homework with regard to the Roman Catholic faith.

First of all it is the dogma of the Immaculate Conception — pronounced by the pope in 1854 — that Mary was born without the stain of original sin. This was a singular grace bestowed by God.

Secondly, devotion to Mary is NOT idolatry. As Catholic Christians we are called to imitate Christ. Did not Jesus obey and honor his mother? Of course he did for he was perfectly obedient to all the commandments including the fourth, "Honor your father and your mother." So as good Catholics we are imitating Christ when we show honor to Mary through devotions and prayers. To us, giving Mary a crown each year is a minor way to honor a creature who had the choice, as Adam and Eve did, to remain pure and perfect until death. Remember this: Adam and Eve chose to do it their own way, not God's way. Mary, Mother of God, chose God's way by choosing never to sin.

Through her we are taught to Love, as God Loves, not as human beings love. Because our love is imperfect, stained with selfishness and greed. We are privileged and should be honored to know that the most revered human being ever to live was also a woman. That is another stated honor. So that is why we honor her on

Mother's Day.

Finally, statues and icons are NOT idolatrous. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains idolatry (#2113) and we suggest the writer read it for we do not have space for it here. The catechism further states, "the veneration of sacred images is based on the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God. It is not contrary to the first commandment" (#2141).

David M. and Celeste Mercandetti
Burley Road
Rochester

EDITORS' NOTE: Idolatry and veneration of sacred images are discussed in catechism entries 2112-2114 and 2129-2132, respectively.

Writer needs update

To the editors:

I can't help but wonder about Dan Giancursio's statement in his letter published in your April 20 edition in regards to Mary: "She was a sinner just like us." Catholic teaching has long stated that Mary was conceived without sin. Mary announced herself to Bernadette at Lourdes, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Perhaps Mr. Giancursio needs some updating.

Patti Federowicz,
Apalachin

Urges gifts to charitable agency

To the editors:

After reading your article dated April 12 "Prominent Archbishop Begs American Catholics To Help Bring Comfort To Haiti's Suffering Poor," I feel guilty as I sit here with a full stomach in a warm home. What must each morning bring to these unfortunate people but another day of searching for food and water, and a clean, dry place to rest.

On Christmas Day my husband's brother Jerry announced at dinner that he was donating the money to build a school in Haiti in honor of his brother Tom who has suffered with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy for many years.

Not until then had I heard of "Food for the Poor." Recently I have talked with the director and am beginning to learn more about their projects. What truly is incon-

ceivable is that such a nominal amount of money will procure so much there in terms of essentials and housing. I also realize most of us in the United States take things for granted and how blessed we are in comparison to the third world countries.

I encourage you to consider those who are less fortunate and send a contribution to Food for the Poor, Dept. 25585, 550 SW 12 Avenue, Deerfield Beach, Florida 33445. Every contribution is tax deductible and will make a significant difference.

Tom and Mary Connolly
Foster Road, Canandaigua

EDITORS' NOTE: The two-page spread on Food for the Poor actually was a paid advertisement, as noted at the top center of each page.

Classmate's story points to NY cardinal's kindness

To the editors:

I read with great interest your article on Cardinal O'Connor in the March 23, 2000 edition.

A college classmate of mine who resides in Connecticut has Crone's disease. A couple of years ago he was to undergo some major surgery for that illness. Before his surgery he spoke with another classmate of ours from New York City who is very active in the Archdiocese of New York. In the course of a meeting of

one of the committees, the New York classmate mentioned the other gentleman's illness to Cardinal O'Connor.

A short time later the Connecticut resident received a personal letter from Cardinal O'Connor indicating that he would pray for the success of the operation and keep him in thought and prayer.

My classmate from Connecticut was astounded to receive this letter, especially since he was not a resident of the Archdiocese of New York.

I believe this story just goes to emphasize the kindness and Christlike qualities possessed by the Cardinal.

Cardinal O'Connor has spent his lifetime ministering to the needs of others as well as upholding the fundamental teachings of the Catholic Church, whether by word or by example.

Cardinal O'Connor, you are my hero. God be with you.

James R. Boehler
Lakeshire Road, Rochester