

# OPINIONS

## Catholic Courier

©2000, Rochester Catholic Press Association.

1150 Buffalo Road  
P.O. Box 24379  
Rochester, NY 14624  
716/328-4340  
800/600-3628 outside Rochester  
http://www.catholiccourier.com  
e-mail: cathcour@frontiernet.net

### President

Bishop Matthew H. Clark

General Manager/Editor  
Karen M. Franz

### Editorial Department

#### Assistant Editor

Kathleen Schwar  
Finger Lakes

#### Staff Writers

Rob Cullivan  
Genesee Valley

Mike Latona  
Southern Tier

#### Staff Photographer

Andrea A. Dixon

#### Editorial Assistant

Louis Litzenberger

#### Photo interns

Mike Mergen  
John Powell

### Business Department

Office Manager  
Mary DiPonzio

Administrative Assistant  
Arlene S. Gall

Circulation Manager  
Donna Stubbings

Subscription Sales  
Joyce Kluchko  
Marilyn Musson  
Deirdre Payne

### Graphics Department

Graphics Manager  
Kim Parks  
Graphic Artist  
Linda Jeanne Rivers

### Advertising Department

Account Executive  
Ralph Hyman

## 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.

## What better role model?

### To the editors:

May is the month we honor Mary, Our Blessed Mother. I think it is appropriate that we should do so. Two thousand years ago on the cross Jesus gave us His mother to watch over us and protect us, and she is still doing so today.

What better role model could there possibly be than the Mother of God! While sports and entertainment celebrities are drowning in scandal and sin, the Blessed Mother dedicated her entire life only to God.

I personally don't see a problem in giving Mary as much honor as she deserves. In this way we are imitating Christ. There was no one that Jesus loved more except "God the Father" Himself.

God chose Mary from all humanity to conceive His Son. From the moment of the Annunciation she said "Yes" to God and her entire life was spent with devotion to her Son through sorrows and sacrifice. She was the only one that was present for the most important events in Jesus' life.

Throughout history, whenever God wanted to shower down His love and blessings upon His children, He sent our Blessed Mother to let us know, such as in Fatima and Lourdes.

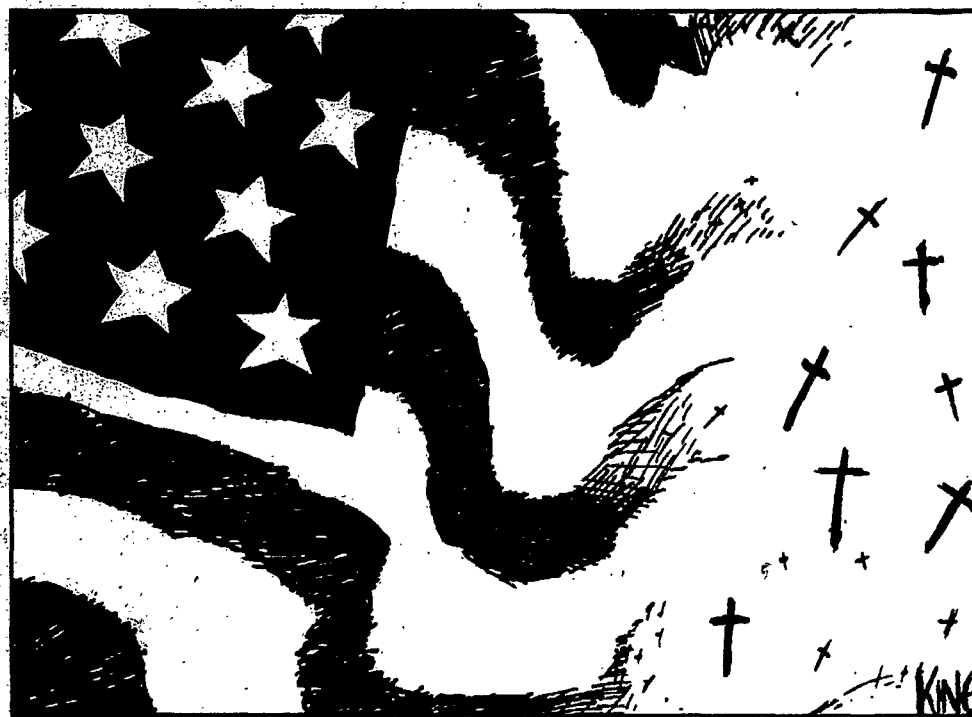
God sent the Blessed Mother with the rosary centuries ago, which is one of the greatest ways of receiving graces and blessings from God.

More Catholics today should recite the rosary daily; then maybe our world wouldn't be in such turmoil as it is today.

Mary taught us to love God above all things and to love our neighbor as ourselves. This was illustrated by her actions.

If God himself could choose Mary as the mother of His only Son, then I feel we as Catholics should honor Mary more openly as our Mother. This would also be a great way to imitate Jesus. As we become more holy and our devotion to Our Lady becomes more natural, I'm certain that this would make our Blessed Mother very pleased.

Alan Campione  
Denise Road  
Greece



## Wonders about 'honoring'

### To the editors:

In a letter published in your May 4 issue, a writer raises a point often made in discussions of Jesus and his mother: "Did not Jesus obey and honor his mother?" Sometimes such remarks are preludes to the broader claim that Christ was sinless. Thus, the writer proceeds: "...he was perfectly obedient to all the commandments..."

I wonder about all this. Virtually all we know about Jesus and Mary comes from the Bible, and the Bible offers almost no specific information about their relationship. Indeed, searching "Mary" in my Bible CD-ROM just now, I found a total of only 59 occurrences of her name in the entire New Testament. All but a handful of these relate to Mary's participation in Christ's birth and in his death, and of course some of the 59 "Mary" references are to Mary Magdalene.

One of the very few instances, perhaps the only one, in which Jesus speaks directly to Mary occurs in Luke 2:48-52. At the age of 12, Jesus vanishes for three days without telling his parents. Finding him at last, his "astonished" mother quite reasonably asks, "Son, why hast thou done so to us?" He responds with the famous line: "Did you not know that I must be about my father's business?" Mary "did not un-

derstand," the Bible says, and that's how it's left.

Well, I don't know about you folks, but if at the age of 12 I had disappeared for three days without permission and upon my return offered only what must have seemed to Mary — would certainly have seemed to my Mom! — a mysterious, unsatisfactory non-explanation, I'd have been in church the following Saturday afternoon confessing it as a sin against the fourth commandment. Of course Mary "did not understand!" And Jesus must have known that she would not have understood.

Not to make too big a deal of this, but it seems to me that a reasonable assessment of his conduct in this anecdote would conclude that Jesus fell rather short of the perfection with which he is invariably credited. His conduct hardly "honors his father who was apparently also present and mother." In both deed (wandering off) and word (sassy reply) Jesus sins, venially I suppose, but I'm sure no one would argue that our young sons should follow his example in this case! Actually, in Matthew 12:48-50, Jesus again slights his mother, albeit to make a larger, spiritual point.

Peter Dzwonkoski  
Westmoreland Drive, Rochester

## Former participant hopes program can help fill void

### To the editors:

This past weekend I had the joyful privilege to minister with peers on a Beginning Experience Weekend at Camp Stella Maris. It is an international peer ministry for the separated, divorced and widowed and for their children. The weekend is the foundation of the ministry with support programs and outreach to youth integral to the ministry. This ministry was begun 22 years ago by a Catholic nun, Sister Josephine Stewart. Beginning Experience is unique in the fields of peer ministry and ministry to the single again. Its well-structured programs are both psy-

chologically and spiritually sound, having been designed and developed by respected professionals in the fields of ministry, grief psychology, education and organizational process.

Having been blessed by participating in the ministry previously, I was eager to have the opportunity to give something back. What a tremendously moving experience of empowered lay ministry it was for me! Going through divorce is an experience of death. Beginning Experience opens the broken-hearted up to Jesus' gift of Resurrection new life. The gifts of understanding, compassion, caring and

hope flowed throughout the weekend.

When I think about the statistics of divorce in our society and the fact that that number is not diminished within the members of the Church, the need for this ministry is profoundly evident. So often, for a variety of reasons, those whose marriages have failed drift away from the Church. Among many is the feeling that they will be looked down on, judged, not welcome any more, and at a time when they and their children need the compassion and sensitivity and spiritual care more than ever! And that withdrawal from the Church is often accompanied by a distancing from God, too.

One of the most powerful gifts the ministry has given me is that of understanding. To know that everyone there understands the hurt, the pain, the loneliness without having to say a word, was tremendously comforting. What a difference that makes! That gift of understanding helped by validating me and giving me a sense of solidarity and hope.

I would hope that because the Diocese no longer has a designated ministry for families, including single parent families, nor one specifically for the single again, that every parish would communicate to its members the availability of this wonderful ministry. For more information anyone may call the BE hotline: 1-800-987-1750.

Sheila Cody  
Jefferson Avenue, Fairport

## Sorry to learn life advocate is leaving post; hopes replacement will have equal courage

### To the editors:

I was very saddened to learn that Suzanne Schnittman is leaving her position as life issues coordinator at the Diocese.

As a member of the Pledge for Life Committee, I have come to admire and respect her diligence and commitment to helping women and their unborn children.

Her special role in the diocese is, however, far less popular than the charitable



work of our committee. Suzanne has been strong on Bishop Clark's behalf in challenging "pro-choice" laws that create the mentality of the "culture of death." This is the politically incorrect work Suzanne has done, and she has done it valiantly.

Replacing her with someone willing to challenge the culture publicly, the only way a Church can challenge society, is a monumental task.

On behalf of the Pledge for Life Committee, I ask that the Diocese settle for nothing less than Suzanne's courage.

Amy Rieck  
Castle Park, Rochester