

OPINIONS

Follow 'formula' to recruit priests

Catholic Courier

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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.

To the editors:

I agree completely with Chris Ciaccio's assessment of the cause of the decline in vocations ("Priesthood is higher calling," *Catholic Courier*, June 29). Let me take his argument one step further.

It is undeniable that there has been an effort locally and in many other dioceses to minimize the differences between the ordained priesthood and the "priesthood of the laity." We consistently witness a number of practices which contribute to the confusion caused by that effort:

1. Lay men and women and non-ordained religious are regularly preaching the homily during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. This ignores Canon Law and the consistent teaching of the Church.

2. A number of non-ordained "pastoral administrators," "pastoral associates," "parish ministers," "chaplains," etc. have been appointed to parish posts.

3. The unjustified use of extraordinary ministers has become commonplace throughout the diocese. In one parish alone there are currently 276 active "extraordinary ministers" of the Eucharist.

4. Some parishes have permitted or even encouraged "Liturgies of the Word and Communion" or "Communion Services" — a Protestant practice — in place of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and these services are being led by "lay presiders." One parish with two resident priests and two deacons has nine lay "leaders of Parish Communion/Scripture Services."

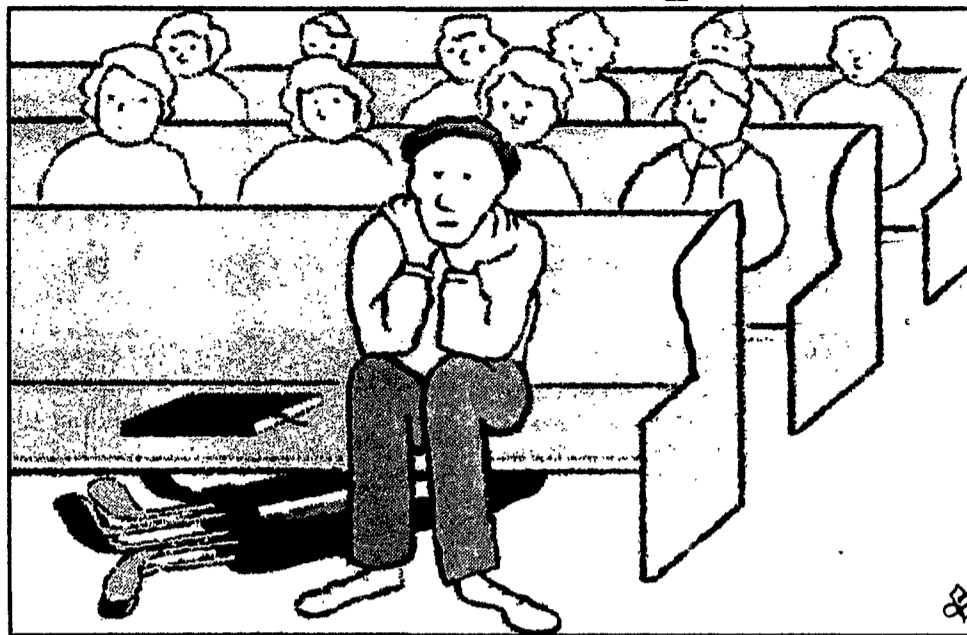
All of these practices either violate Canon Law or are prohibited by Pope John Paul II's *Instruction* on these matters.

As lay men and women, we express our "priesthood" by the example we give and in the way we live our lives — not by performing liturgical and other priestly functions. ... Is it any wonder, then, that young men are not answering the call to the priesthood? Who needs priests? How is the priest different from any of those lay persons who regularly perform priestly functions? Pope John Paul II answers this last question as the Church has always answered it. The character of the cleric depends upon an ordination founded in Apostolic succession.

To quote from his *Instruction*, the "exercise of teaching, sanctifying and governing by the sacred minister constitutes the essence of pastoral ministry. ... This doctrine needs to be affirmed especially in the light of certain practices which seek to compensate for numerical shortages of ordained ministers."

How can we get more men to answer the call? Simply, follow the Church's teaching on these and other matters. That is the formula of those dioceses and religious orders which are successful at recruiting new priests. We can do the same here in Rochester. The new priests will follow.

Joseph A. F. Valenti
Park Circle Drive, Fairport



Trust that God will provide

To the editors:

A letter (in the June 29 issue), claims that informing "interested candidates (males) that the priesthood is a higher call" would replenish our seminaries. Celibate maleness seems to be the twofold necessary criteria for being chosen for priesthood. The writer continues, this higher call requires "an extra special devotion to prayer, holiness, self-sacrifice, the better to sanctify the rituals only a priest can perform." I would suggest that choosing candidates exemplifying a life of prayer, holiness and self-sacrifice would better serve the church than limiting the choice to celibate males. The single male pool is probably not the best place to find these qualities.

I've known many good priests and some not so good. The good ones were never inflated with their own importance but were humble servants. I recently saw a first mass invitation — not in this Diocese, thank God — where the ordinand appeared to have an inflated ego justified by his image of an elevated priesthood. He promised obedience to the Pope, magisterium and bishop, not to God, Christ or the Holy Spirit. Who will his priesthood serve? We need priests who are servant-kings, not priests with inflated egos.

The writer also maintains that there is an abundance of priests in Africa and other Third World countries. I recently spoke with a young woman from Kenya. Referring to the large number of priests in her homeland she said, "They live well, above the people." If that's the reason for an abundance of priests then it's not the fruit of the Spirit.

It may surprise you to learn that there is no shortage of people being called to priesthood today, just a blindness in recognizing where the charisms of priesthood are found. Peter tells us that we are — all of us — "a chosen race, a royal priesthood,

God's own people." At Pentecost all received the Holy Spirit, not just Peter, not just the Twelve; yes, even the women. Does this mean nothing?

Consider these questions. What makes Jesus come? Can only an "ordained" priest perform these holy rituals? Who presided over these rituals in the earliest small Christian communities? Did Jesus actually ever ordain anyone? Why did he put down the priests of his day but empower the people? That's what he did when he turned over the tables in the temple. That's why the priests plotted to kill him.

What should we do if we had no ordained priests? Follow the dictum of Christ, "Do this in memory of me!" Choose a Christ-like member from the community and do the ritual trusting that God will provide. God's grace is everywhere, abundant and overflowing as is God's love. Jesus taught us this.

Emmett Neary
Bakerdale Road, Rochester

Shortage is paradox

To the editors:

Christopher Ciaccio is wrong in claiming the ordained "priesthood is a higher calling." Different it certainly is. But the call to holiness is universal. Ciaccio should be advised on the difficulty of living the Gospel as a spouse and a parent. My own opinion is that the number of candidates to ordained priesthood will paradoxically increase when the whole church gets serious about the universal vocation crisis and overcomes its obsession with shortages in the ordained priesthood.

Bill Droel
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Story on ballplayer was testament to Christian faith

To the editors:

A month or so ago a wonderful piece on Rochester Red Wings Hall of Famer Bobby Bonner appeared in the *Democrat and Chronicle* Sunday Sports Section. All Christians should be proud after such a great testament to a superb individual whose story should be echoed to all corners of the earth! In 1980 I was on the Rochester Red Wings broadcast team with Pete Brown and had the pleasure of sitting with a young shortstop at the Red Wings "Welcome Home Dinner" that year. His name — Bobby Bonner. He and I chatted a great deal throughout that event about both faith and baseball. Bobby told me of his "rebel youth" and how he found God which changed his life forever! That season I witnessed Bobby making plays that many Major League shortstops "wished" they could make. It was so unfortunate that he was "black balled" by O's manager Earl Weaver

at that time. It was even more heart warming to see Bonner live out his faith and maintain his morals amid the temptations and distractions of professional sports. He was always great to the youngsters, too, and that was evidenced when his playing days were done, with his work at Northstar Christian Academy. I think Bobby did everything at that school from coaching to driving the bus! I knew he had gone abroad as a missionary, but knew little more than that before reading the article on the heels of his Hall of Fame induction. That honor is greatly deserved, as was his "Rookie of the Year" selection in 1980.

When Bobby Bonner gave himself to doing something, he gave it all! On the ball diamond, to his family, to his faith, to his African Missionary friends and to his God! My couple of years in the Red Wings broadcast booth were very memorable from both a professional standpoint and now I real-

ize how important that time has become from a Christian view seeing what Bobby Bonner has done for these people who are the farthest thing from fortunate like most of us are. I literally cried when I read this article, it was so powerful and so moving, especially knowing that I watched a young man who would someday follow so closely in Christ's footsteps. They are now quite fortunate because they have Bobby Bonner. It's obvious that God had bigger plans for Bobby than playing for Earl Weaver. He's now playing on a team that can't lose. I'm very fortunate just to have known Bobby Bonner and am even more proud now because of what he stands for and what he continues to accomplish despite odds which would be extremely depressing and discouraging to the rest of mankind! May God continue to bless you, Bobby Bonner!

Frank "Williams" Guillaume
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