

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.

Bishop was a treasure for St. Pat's

To the editors:

After moving to Victor in 1991, I asked friends around the diocese to suggest some parishes in the area. St. Patrick's was described as a parish undergoing new growth with a special treasure: retired Bishop Hogan resided and assisted there.

My earliest recollection of Bishop Hogan at St. Patrick's was of his large, prayerful presence at the altar, reverently removing his head covering and ring before the Eucharistic prayer as a sign of humility. After Mass, I saw him sitting in his chair in the sacristy. Bishop was attempting to read his prayer book, but there were five or six young children clamoring for his attention. Their persistent, joyful chatter quickly overcame him, as he gave in to the joy of the moment and steadied the bravest little girl who had climbed up onto his lap. He had been coaxed from prayerful solitude into a warmth and playfulness, made visible by his broadening smile and hearty laughter. Surely, no seasoned grandfather could have responded better!

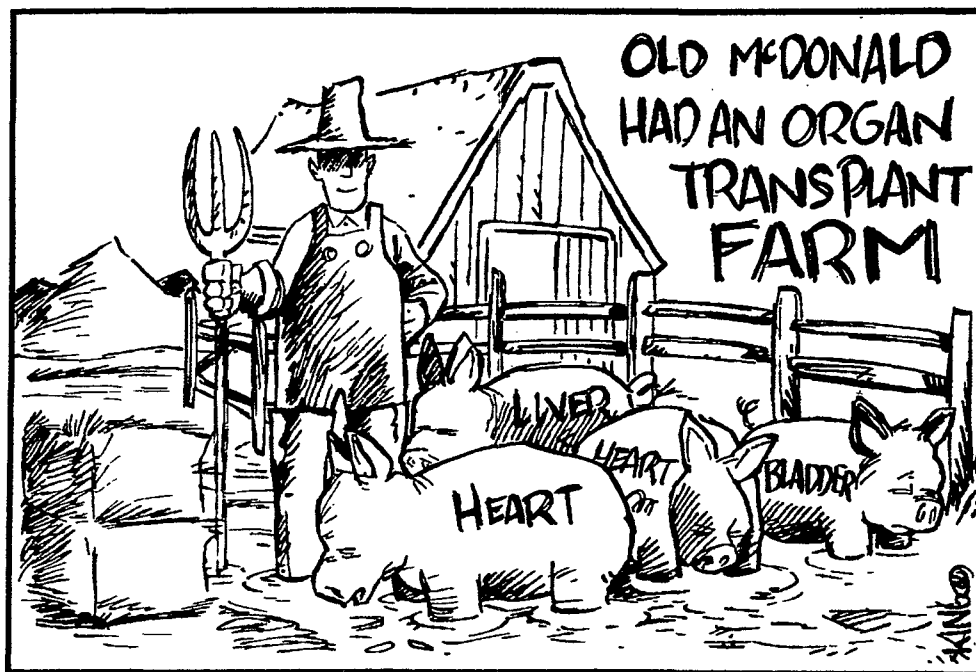
Bishop Hogan's presence at our altar was much more than physical. He was a spiritual and intellectual mountain of a man. His deep, resonant voice communicated a connection with our God and a personal depth that his aging body could scarcely contain. Yes, sometimes his homilies were long. Yet, they never failed to inform our minds and stretch our hearts of faith. Sometimes he would depart from his prepared text, lean his elbow on the ambo and gently wave his right hand in a flowing motion of the wrist. This signaled the moments when he would spontaneously share the depths of his own considerable experience. We would be graced with a story: sometimes a funny tale of human silliness, at other times a historical, biblical or literary gem. But always communicating the message of God's abiding love, the human capacity for goodness and Bishop's own personal humility in their midst.

Bishop Hogan lived among us at St. Patrick's for 23 years. He celebrated Mass, instructed catechumens, participated in the Renewal program, and shared our meals, concerts and other events. He became our dear friend. He touched the lives of many in our community, and allowed us to touch him as well. He was always appreciative of the many parishioners who offered him the help of a ride in the car, the preparation of a meal or a friendly visit. Father George Wiant was especially attentive to his needs.

In 1995, Bishop Hogan moved into the Sisters of St. Joseph Infirmary, where he could receive the care he needed and live in their community. He enjoyed regular visits from St. Patrick's parishioners, asked about the latest developments in the parish and read our weekly bulletin more faithfully than most of us do. When we built the St. Patrick's Parish Center, Bishop Hogan responded with great generosity, as he had always given so freely to our community.

During this week's services of remembrance and celebration of Bishop Hogan's life, those closest to him spoke of several phases of Bishop's life: priest, teacher, bishop, and a man growing old. The people of St. Patrick's were named among those whom Bishop loved, and who welcomed and cared for him. Truly, we were richly blessed to have shared in this phase of his life. He often told me that he prayed for us every day, and I am sure that he still does today. He will remain in our prayers and in our hearts.

Bob Pizzutiello
Parish Road, Victor



Elections test our character

To the editors:

The approaching elections are perhaps among the most vital and urgent for some time, considering the range of issues, their life and death implications, and their global and environmental reach. More than ever, we are challenged as Catholics and as citizens of the world to enter the voting booth prayerfully and knowledgeably, with appreciation for the depth and complexity of the issues and choices. The *Catholic Courier* can be of much assistance in its coverage of candidates' positions, which reflect the spectrum of concerns that our Church considers of importance, from war-making to the death penalty, economic justice to the environment, abortion to health care.

It is thus disappointing to this reader that since July 13 *Courier* articles have significantly mentioned only one issue — abortion — with the August lead feature a recent example. Additionally, August 3's headline, "GOP platform pleases delegates," refers only to one plank of its platform, its abortion stand, with no equivalent comment on its position on war, defense spending, the raising of the minimum wage, health care, or environmental protection, on all of which the Church has spoken eloquently and repeatedly. An August 10 article discussed Senator Joseph Lieberman's positions as having "mixed reviews" from Catholics, with an emphasis on his abortion stance. No similar article was published on Richard Cheney with a Catholic analysis of his anti-poverty program oppositions or his strong support of Iraqi sanctions or his author-

ship of the war "Desert Storm." When one issue alone — this case, abortion — is used as a measure, there is the possibility that some may conclude that Church approval is given one particular candidate or party, a conclusion both unhealthy and unfair, given the numerous threats to life and human dignity we currently confront.

If our long-standing and laborious efforts to promote the consistent ethic of life have been valid, only thorough and careful coverage of all the major views of candidates can be presented: their attitude to water and war as well as to workers' rights, their stand on the death penalty and racial justice as well as gun control and partial-birth abortion. The old "pro-life" position that only abortion takes the largest number of lives is no longer true, and there is questionable virtue in saving unborn life today if four years later that same life will perish from lack of food or medicine, or be destroyed as "collateral damage" by a smart U.S. bomb.

The coming elections are a test of character, yes: but not the character of any candidate so much as of our own national character, and whether we are ready to move beyond a single issue to the much harder, more morally mature, choice of the common good over narrow interests, the lives of the many over the vested success of the few. Perhaps the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin said it best, "Our moral obligation to protect life does not end the moment a baby is born."

Judith E. Kiehl
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We need saints for average people

To the editors:

Just as Roman Catholicism was moving forward and gaining increased attention for its initiatives toward inclusiveness and improved relations between Christians and Jews, we have taken an unfortunate step backward by formalizing the canonization process for Pope Pius IX. Undoubtedly, the powers that be chose Pius IX as an alternative to Pius XII, whose reign during the period of the holocaust had a controversial nature. Yet, as recent news reports have demonstrated, Pius IX is not the ideal candidate for sainthood.

In some respects, perhaps Pius XII would have been a better choice. While he could have done more to decry fascism under Hitler's reign, we must at the same time give praise where praise is due, such as the heroism and compassion shown by countless priests and nuns throughout Europe who sheltered Jews in their respective parishes and convents. I like to believe that Pius XII at least gave silent approval to these acts of compassion. However, the history of Pius IX indicates that we need to rethink the qualifications for sainthood.

To the credit of John Paul II, Pope John XXIII is also being beatified. We not only owe Vatican II to this kindly leader of our

Church; he also paved the way to our present understanding of a common Judeo-Christian ancestry.

In addition to John XXIII, I would hope that the Vatican gives increased attention to Fulton J. Sheen as a candidate for sainthood. While Sheen had a conservative agenda in terms of his theology, which was rooted in Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle, he was also very progressive in his own right and embraced such issues as improved relations between Christians and Jews and increased roles for the laity. For those interested in my support of Sheen's canonization, I have a web page dedicated to the cause. It is www.angelfire.com/ga2/religious/sheen.html.

If the issue of sainthood is to be taken seriously, we must continue to seek out those who can be role models for the average person in the pew. John XXIII was such a role model, Pius IX was not. Other role models we can identify with are Oscar Romero, Mother Teresa, and Fulton J. Sheen. If we are to attract young people to the Church, we must offer candidates for sainthood who provide meaning and direction in our complex world.

Raymond A. Grosswirth
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