

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.

Resentment remains after renovations

To the editors:

This is with reference to your renovation articles (Nov. 30 and Dec. 7). Having lived through changes that modernized St. Patrick's Church in Owego, may I respond to several statements made by the renovation experts.

It is understandable that changes to a church built in the 1950s would "not disturb a congregation." However, St. Patrick's Church is 100 years old. It is listed on the National Historic Register. True, this is after the fact, but one wonders how, in this age of historical preservation, approval was given to allow modernizing rather than preserving and restoring a church which was a cherished old treasure.

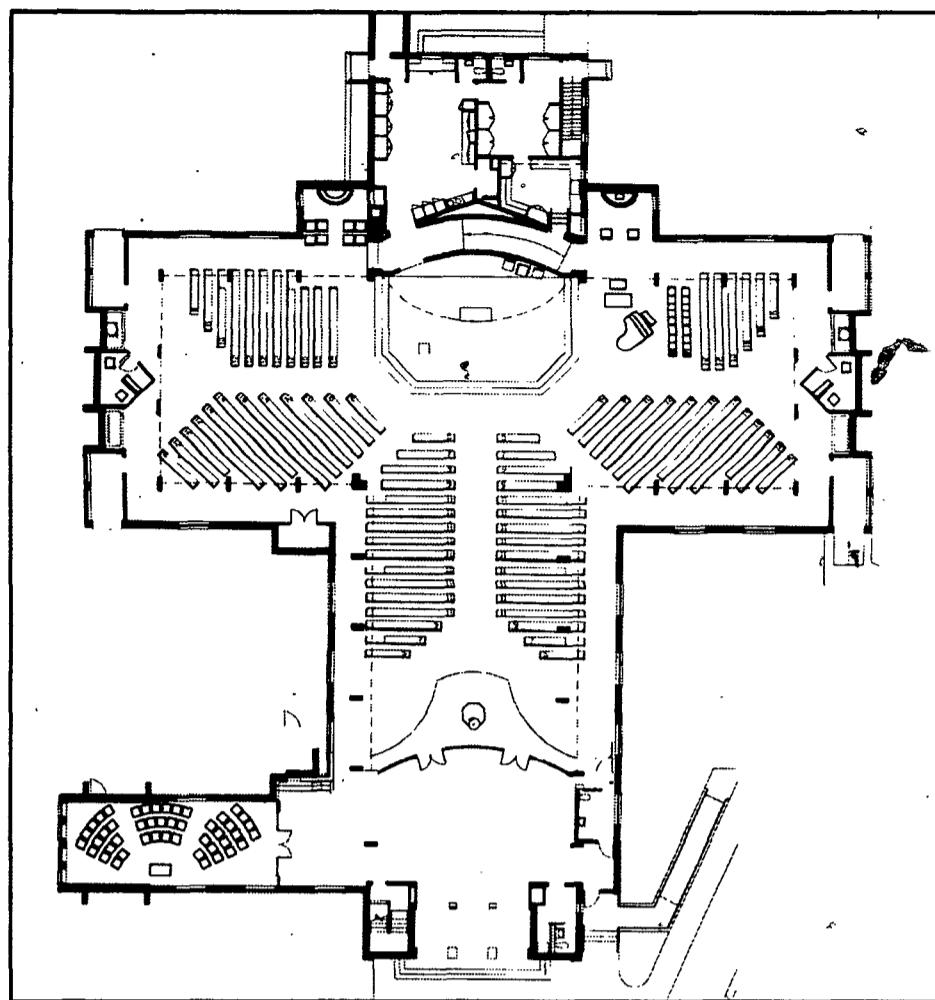
Regarding seeing the "backs of heads," we did not even notice them since we were so focused on the Mass in process at the altar. No matter how the pews are turned around there will always be backs of heads to contend with. Now, since our pews are in the round, we face so many faces there is a disconcerting self-consciousness that, regrettably, disturbs and fragments one's focal attention which should be on the Sacred Mysteries unfolding at the altar. We also contend with awkward traffic pattern during Communion time, weddings and funerals. In highlighting the social aspect of Eucharistic celebration, liturgical experts are, sadly, sacrificing the spiritual dimension.

Do the experts really believe that the Tabernacle, in its old location high above the main altar, distracted from what was happening during Mass at the altar? We may be sheep but we are not stupid. Since the relocation, our Tabernacle cannot even be seen from the pews in the church proper. It has been relegated to an extremely small area into which three doorways of traffic open: to the confessional, to the daily Mass chapel, and to the storage area. We would gladly invite architectural renovation experts to again relocate our Tabernacle to a more dignified, respectful, reverential, prayerful atmosphere in which one could "contemplate the Creator" undisturbed by the traffic.

Our active, vibrant parish community of 1992 was devastated and financially burdened by the unnecessary modernizing renovation. Most of the people who have put this behind them are the ones who left and joined other parishes. Some of those who remain have a sense of resignation. Yes, there are those who have wholeheartedly accepted the changes. Still, there are residual resentments that, regrettably, are rubbed raw when diocesan architectural/liturgical renovation experts give smug opinions about changes necessary for "the liturgical needs of the people," while they are totally insensitive to the spiritual needs of the people.

At times we the people of this beloved Catholic Church feel helpless and powerless because, more often than not, our majority opinion and desire is ignored or rejected by the overruling power of pastoral authority.

Joanne Lepkowski
Ross Street
Owego



Why no changes in Rome?

To the editors:

I have been following the local newspaper articles and this past week's issue (Nov. 30) of the *Catholic Courier* of Rochester. As a result I feel I have to at least send my opinion to you on this issue.

I am a convert to the Catholic faith. I have been a Catholic for over 50 years, so I have been "with the faith" longer than most "real" Catholics. During that time I have seen the many changes that have happened with the Catholic Church. Some of these changes I have liked and some of them I have not cared for. I entered the church when we used a Latin/English missal — and truly enjoyed it. So I am really an "old" Catholic. However to be true Catholic I have gone along with all the

changes.

However I feel that much of the physical changes being made by many of our Catholic churches in the diocese are uncalled for. It seems that for the most part we are changing our churches into meeting halls. This probably accounts for the inattention to the tabernacle and what it houses before Mass begins.

I was in Rome during the month of April and found that the churches there were just the same as they were when I first became a Catholic — 50 years ago. Why is this? If the Catholic Church is truly universal, why are WE so different?

Kenneth R. Harris
Evergreen Road
Brockport

Surprised by quotation from priest

To the editors:

It is puzzling to me how a good priest of Father (Norman) Tanck's stature could cause such confusion and misunderstanding regarding the nature of our Catholic worship when he states, "it's not the space that's sacred...What makes it sacred is when the people are here." I was always taught that what makes our Catholic churches truly sacred, holy ground, is not the presence of people but the true presence of our immortal God, Jesus Christ in

the Blessed Sacrament. I can remember my father driving by many dark, "empty" Catholic churches, teaching us as children to pray, "Oh Sacrament Most Holy, Oh Sacrament Divine..." Father Tanck's theology that we, the people, are the sacred is foreign to me. Yes, we are the people of God, privileged to dwell in His holy temple made sacred by His divine presence.

John Maurer
Washington Avenue
Rochester

Dismayed by exodus from altered churches

To the editors:

It deeply saddens me to hear that people have left their parish because of renovations to their church. My own parish will begin renovations soon, including the relocation of the Tabernacle. After Mass, it was explained to the parishioners what the relationship is between the altar and the Tabernacle, and it makes perfect sense why the Tabernacle will be moved.

Change is inevitable, and in many cases, for a reason. To ponder that these materi-

al changes have significance upon the presence of our Lord in the church is shameful. Leaving a parish because of renovations is unthinkable! Let us all consider "God is now, always has been, and always will be" — no matter where we gather, or how it is decorated.

May all parishioners find peace and meaning in their churches' renovations, today and in the years to come.

Mary Kay Helffrich
Diana Drive, Scottsville

What changes would occur if everyone read Vatican II documents?

To the editors:

I believe that the greatest activity of the Holy Spirit in the 20th century was the convening of Vatican Council II and the documents that flowed from it.

It was especially heartening to me to

see your paper run as a front-page story the item in which Pope John Paul II urged the Catholic laity to get and read the Council documents (Nov. 30).

Just think of the positive radical changes that would occur in our world if

the Catholic laity were to read and implement the document "The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World."

Tom Fogarty
Walnut Street, Auburn