

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.

In Eucharist, Christ takes away sin

To the editors:

On Sunday March 11, we prayed: Lord, make us holy. May this Eucharist take away our sins. This is the theme of every Mass.

In Catholic belief, we recognize the Mass as truly the singular historical act of divine forgiveness, the sacrifice of Calvary in unbloody form. As a reconciliation, the Mass has two elements: 1) the removal of an impediment to union, and 2) the union consequent upon that removal. In the Mass, the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world, removing the impediment to union of God and man. He then completes the reconciliation through Holy Communion in his glorified body.

Neither element can be understood in isolation. Communion is not an add-on. It is the consequence of the Lamb's sacrifice in propitiation for our sins. The consecration is not a preliminary, the preparation of the food for the Lord's Supper. It is the necessary sacrifice, which works the forgiveness of our sins, removing the impediment to Communion.

Current canon law proscribes the answer to the Mass prayer of March 11, in that it provides for the forgiveness of sins, exclusively in a forum separate in place and time from the Mass.

A recent circular letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments referred to "the Lamb without blemish offered for our sins" and stated "Through a mysterious sharing in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, the Sacrament of Penance overcomes the division between man and God caused by sin..." Current discipline further obscures the mystery. It reserves the sacrament solely to a forum separated in time and place from the Lamb's taking away of sin of the world in the Mass. The Church has the unconditional authority to forgive and retain sins. Yet, it would be appropriate to make coincident the forgiveness by the Church with the singular, eternal act of divine forgiveness in the Mass.

By maxim, New Testament events are superior to the Old Testament events, which they prefigure. Yet, looking upon the Lamb of God in the Mass is inferior to looking upon the bronze serpent on the pole erected by Moses. In the Israelite camp, an individual, bitten by a serpent, was healed when he, himself, looked at the bronze serpent on the pole. The act effected the healing of the individual person. Today, an individual in mortal sin, bitten by the serpent, Satan, is not healed by looking upon the Lamb of God in his sacrifice in the Mass. The analogy, cited by Jesus (John 3:14), fails in its applicability to the individual, due to current canon law.

It would be seriously disproportionate to argue that our venial sins are forgiven in the Mass, but our mortal sins ought to be forgiven only in a forum totally separate from the sacrifice on the Cross of the Lamb without blemish.

Robert E. Drury
Pre-Emption Road
Geneva

Missed obituary in paper's March 29 edition

To the editors:

Among the obituaries appearing in the March 29 issue of the *Catholic Courier* I looked for some mention of Ms. Maureen Nielsen.

Newspaper reports extol Ms. Nielsen's character and humanity. "Very like Mother Teresa," one suggested, for her selfless charity and loving kindness to those less fortunate — whether inmates or orphans. And it was orphans that drew her to Haiti where she was slain March 23.



Wishes some were included in invitation to Lord's table

To the editors:

The Gospel of the Prodigal son as sermonized at St. Mary's, Elmira, by their mission priests gave an insight to modern-day thinking. How would the sibling react if the wayward son called first to find the father's thoughts? Would he have been charitable? As the sermon progressed, I wondered, "Why doesn't the Church(es) apply the Gospel to their 'prodigals?'"

The Church's "prodigals" are invited to the preparation of the feast. The ceremonial repast is prepared for all in attendance. When the time comes for being invited to the table, however, the "prodigals" are prohibited from the feast. Are they not also the ones who've been found, thought dead and returned? True, but the "prodigals" are condemned to be denied, thrown into the darkness, left to

cry and gnash their teeth as another proverb stated.

The question begs an answer: When will the Church(es) acknowledge their "prodigals" instead of forcing them into alternate faiths to worship God and Christ? Other faiths welcome the "prodigals" saying "welcome, baptized one, to our repast." Yet, for many they yearn for their own customs and worship God in the ways they were taught.

There are many "prodigals" in religions today. What will God say when judgment is given? "Be gone, you've broken the rules of life as espoused by prophets" or will it be "Welcome to your home, your place has been provided."

Just asking.

Robert L. Landschoot
Meadow Lane, Pine City

Seeks liturgical information

To the editors:

In the March 29 issue of the *Catholic Courier*, Robert Pokalsky wrote of liturgical consultant Richard Vosko: "He has a particular vision of what a worship space should consist of and this vision in many ways goes against what is required by the liturgical norms of the Church." Father Vosko has been hired by the Diocese of Rochester as a consultant for the proposed renovation of our cathedral.

I'm am wondering in what ways Mr. Pokalsky thinks that Father Vosko's ideas contradict the liturgical norms of the Church. With this in mind, I would like to see the *Courier* run a series of articles on

Catholic worship, so that readers can learn what the liturgical norms actually are. During a time of multiple liturgical disputes, such a series would be a great service to Catholics in our diocese.

Shirley B. Zabel
Lyndon Road
Fairport

EDITORS' NOTE: Mr. Pokalsky called last week to point out an error that inadvertently was created when his letter was typed into our editorial system. Rather than saying Father Vosko's ideas go "against" what is required by the church, his letter as submitted to us said his ideas go "beyond" what is required by the church. We regret the error.

Consider disease's moral aspects

To the editors:

Alcoholism is not a moral problem in the sense that persons addicted to alcohol are any less morally upright than others. Under the influence of this drug, they are not free — and God's gift of freedom is essential to moral action.

Is there a moral dimension before the

alcoholic takes the first drink? Yes or no, depending on the degree of freedom — which only the alcoholic can really know.

But what is the morality:

- Of advertising a product that is a deadly drug to 10 percent of its customers, without labeling it as such?

- Of the liquor industry's deriving substantial profits from the small proportion of consumers, without devoting significant sums to the prevention and treatment of the disease their product causes?

- Of government's neglect, on a far wider scale, to establish research, hospital and educational facilities from the billions it collects on liquor taxes?

Alcoholism is both a personal and a social problem. Each of us has a responsibility before God to ease the anguish it causes.

Eugene C. Fuerst
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Rochester