

# OPINIONS

## 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.

## Good tabernacle hits you in the eyes

To the editors:

I thank the honorable Bishop Matthew H. Clark for speaking clearly as regards cathedral renovation ("Along the Way," March 29). Few would disagree: things get old, bathrooms are needed. But the Bishop plans to do more.

The cathedral needs to be restored so that it can "conform to the norms of our church" says the Bishop. What has been removed from the cathedral in the last few years so that it is no longer a worthy sacred space?

And as to those norms: Which ones apply? And where are they found? How have the shortcomings of our worship space hindered us so that we failed to "experience the Risen Christ." And why are we not invited to experience the Crucified Christ? The two go together in the mystery of faith.

The honorable Bishop would have us believe that included in these norms which would "restore Sacred Heart" there is a universal mandate to remove the Blessed Sacrament from the center of the sanctuary. There is no such mandate. Thus speaks Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger in the journal *AD2000* (Oct. 1998) There are only recommendations. For example the Papal instruction (*Eucharistic Mysterium*, no. 53) recommends that the Blessed Sacrament be put in a chapel. Recommended is not mandated. The former is helpful, the latter prescriptive. Granted that the Bishop is the final arbiter for renovation. But in this removal he does not have the universal mind of the hierarchy, nor, as the three thousand signatories demonstrate, does he have the mind of the faithful.

Concerning tabernacle placement, Canon Law states (938.2): "The tabernacle in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved should be sited in a distinguished place in a church or oratory, a place which is conspicuous, suitably adorned and conducive to prayer." Other than lighting, the sanctuary of Sacred Heart Cathedral fulfills these requirements.

Why move the Blessed Sacrament at a time when respect for the Real Presence is waning? Will this increase respect for the Creator? I think not; nor will it glorify Him. What is the "metaphorical equation," to use the liturgical consultant Father Vosko's terms, for this removal? The only one that comes to my limited brain is "out of sight - out of mind - out of prayer life." When the Blessed Sacrament hits you right in the eyes as you enter a church, you know you are not in a mere meeting hall.

In your home you place your best treasure in the most conspicuous location, not around the corner. Whatever is not in the central axial arrangement of the church is secondary. Right now the Blessed Sacrament is central. When one enters some of these renovated churches you get a crick in your neck trying to find the tabernacle around the next corner. Soon we might wander round the church like Mary Magdalene, lamenting (John 20:2): "They have taken the Lord ... and I know not where they have laid Him."

Jan E. Fredericks  
 Birr Street, Rochester



## No change for change's sake

To the editors:

After reading Robert Pokalsky's March 29 letter to the editor, "Cathedral should reflect holiness," I felt that I had to extend my thanks to him for so eloquently capturing all of the key concerns that many of us Catholics share relative to Cathedral renovation. These include the separation of "renovation" from "normal structural upkeep," and the need for a clear explanation of the rationale and proven benefits of any proposed changes to the worship space.

My biggest personal fears are "change for change sake," being misled relative to what is and is not required under the norms expressed in the liturgical documents, and any wasteful destruction of truly beautiful artifacts and symbols, based on the argument that they are not

important or detract from community worship. What proof source is there for that?

Despite the reassurances that no plans have been predetermined, any reasonable person can assume that when "renovation experts" come to town, they bring with them a history and pattern of behavior that ought to be viewed as fairly indicative of what we can expect.

I continue to pray to the Holy Spirit for true enlightenment of all those involved throughout this process. And I hope that, just as renovation opponents may be accused of being "close-minded," those making the decisions will sincerely listen to the concerns of the people with an open mind.

Barbara Colucci  
 Winding Creek Lane, Rochester

## Choosing a religion is different from choosing social organization

To the editors:

I'd never suggest that I think it's OK for Catholics to behave like slobs and idiots; they shouldn't, any more than anyone else should. Still, I think the gentleman who was said to have shunned Catholicism because he observed some Catholics behaving like slobs and idiots (*Opinions*, March 29), missed the point and missed it badly.

The only good reasons for embracing any religion are that you love and have faith in its God; you want to keep His commandments, if any; and you hope to wind up in whatever heaven He promises. A religion is not a card party, where all that matters is the fun you're having and the people you're having it with, a brief exercise that you leave in a few hours and go home. It's a serious business that should substantially define one's life and, maybe, one's afterlife too. I can't think of any issues more important than those that most

religions try to address, indeed exist to address, and yet everywhere today religious activity seems to focus on what benefit the parishioner is supposed to get out of it, how it's supposed to make him feel, fill up his life, solve his problems, help him to get along, and be happy.

Such concerns, along with the more formal social trappings of religion - the church suppers, youth groups, bingo games, adult societies and gatherings - are all OK, but they are not essential, and neither is feeling good. What is essential is somehow coming to serious grips with the enormous, impossible questions that religions ask and attempt to answer and trying to find an honest way of living faithfully a life devoted if not to God then at least to a diligent search for whatever immutable meaning life may have.

Peter Dzwonkoski  
 Westmoreland Drive, Rochester

## Church must find way to use lay vocations wisely

To the editors:

It was with rapt attention that I read the Bishop's words regarding the future of the diocese and the shape of future parish ministry. There are some serious challenges to all of us - lay and ordained. Perhaps, as he says, a married clergy and female clergy, both of which I support, will not solve the problem. But I hasten to add that the increase in other vocations to pastoral administration and ministry among the laity

is evidence that vocations thrive in this diocese. Some of these ministries are full-time and some are part-time.

Picture a possible scene: some of these people as ordained presbyters, sharing their gifts with us as presiders at the Eucharist and forgiving sins in the name of the Church. Picture our presbyter as a person whose full-time employment may not be in the Church, much the way it is with our deacons, and with a few of our priests.

I commend the extraordinary devotion to service that our present priests show! They are remarkable. They are committed to that service. How many of us lay folk

would stay in the same "job" with the same "company" for 50 years? Yes, although the Church is not a model employer, it isn't going out of business or down-sizing or outsourcing.

The vocations to serve are here now. Now, we as Church have to find the best way to use them. The Bishop's policies are the beginning of the step forward into the future. It's not a bad future to behold. Any future in the embrace of our God and His Son and Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is a wonderful future.

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