

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.

All should share in Mass reductions

To the editors:

With more priests reaching retirement and fewer new vocations, Mass schedules will be reduced — as many parishes have already experienced. Holy Cross in Dryden and St. Anthony's in Groton now share a priest and our weekend Mass offerings have gone from three to two in each parish. We fully understand and accept this change but I am very troubled to learn that we should now plan to go from two to one weekend Mass. My parish, Holy Cross, is not the largest nor the smallest, but even though we have made one sacrifice to help with this problem, we might have to sacrifice another Mass before other parishes make any sacrifice.

I firmly believe that no parish should have to eliminate two Masses until all parishes have eliminated one Mass. The burden of too few vocations should be shared by all — not just the smaller parishes. If smaller parishes alone carry this cross, the smaller parishes will eventually close and we would become a church of urban and suburbanites. Is Jesus concerned more with those in large parishes than those in small parishes?

When we eliminated one Mass, overall attendance and weekly offerings fell. If we eliminate another Mass, this downward spiral will worsen. Does the diocese want this to happen only to the smaller parishes? If not, will the diocese protect those parishes by insisting that other parishes share in this burden? What is the criteria for eliminating Masses and are there any protections that will be put in place for those that have already eliminated a weekend Mass?

Some say Catholicism in the U.S. is deteriorating due to the shortage of priests. If it is, we need good centralized and decentralized planning. Have all of the diocesan planning groups done decentralized planning? Has the diocese done any centralized planning? I cannot find on the diocesan Web site evidence of central planning or specific guidelines on the reduction of Masses. And there is no published rule that says all parishes must carry this cross.

In the absence of centralized policies and guidelines, the current unwritten plan is to let the smaller parishes suffer the most. This may be intentional or it may be an oversight by the diocese. Our leadership should either acknowledge that they want the smaller parishes to carry this burden or they should put into place policies that require all parishes to carry this cross. A web page showing the number of weekend Masses at each parish year by year would help communicate to all how all are sharing in this problem.

I would hope that we would all agree that all parishes should carry the cross of too few vocations and that all parishes that have not yet eliminated one weekend Mass should be planning to do so. Please pray for vocations and for our diocesan leaders.

Joe Piekunka

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Logan's Run, Dryden

EDITORS' NOTE: Information on planning efforts within the Diocese of Rochester can be found at this Internet address: <http://www.dor.org/planning/index.htm>. We include Mr. Piekunka's e-mail address at his request.



What do we really need?

To the editors:

When most people are shopping these days, especially if you have a large family, you have to ask yourself the question, "What do we really need?" Father Vosko has a gift. He is a born salesman. Father Vosko seems to have a love for the liturgy, in particular getting "back to the way they were" when Christ celebrated the first Mass. I take issue with one thing that Father Vosko said on the first night of his talks. Father said that "the liturgy is the single greatest act one can — with the priest — offer to God. This is the sole purpose for the church building." He continued on to say, "Other devotions like Eucharistic Adoration, the rosary or Novenas are nice secondary devotions," but really have no place in church. It's the latter I take issue with. The second night Father Vosko added, "The church should be a great gathering place like in the Middle Ages for pilgrimages, choral performances, and community events." These are conflicting statements! Father was excited about the idea of having all our meetings, concerts, and sales right in the main "gathering space" of the church. Even though we were told repeatedly "there isn't any formal plan yet,"

it's Father Vosko's history to remove the tabernacle from the central body of the church to a more special, "out of the way place."

The center of activity and attention in most parishes is not focused on the Eucharistic Lord. Social activities and financial concerns replace spiritual priorities. If God were to shine forth one single ray from His tabernacle at Sacred Heart, millions of people would come from all over to see the miracle. Christ himself remains hidden there that we may come to Him in faith, drawn by love that is God himself.

Mother Teresa said, "The agony Christ suffered was the realization that the Holy Eucharist would be rejected by so many and appreciated by so few. He saw down through the ages that he would be left alone in so many tabernacles of the world."

"He came into his own yet his own received him not." So again we ask the question, "What do we need?" Renovation? Or demolition of what we hold to be sacred. "Unless the Lord built the house, they labor in vain who build it."

Mary Rita Whitcomb
Fisher Road
Ontario

Impressed by consultant's work on Seattle's St. James Cathedral

To the editors:

Two years ago we attended Sunday Mass at St. James Cathedral in Seattle, Washington — a church which has been redesigned by Father Richard Vosko. Simply put, the church is lovely. An old beautiful stone Gothic structure, its interior is vibrant and welcoming through its spatial arrangement, lighting and liturgical decor. We are very fortunate to have Father Vosko to guide those involved through the redesign process at Sacred Heart.

As for the issue of placement of the tabernacle, we in the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community have, both in St. Mary's (1870) and St. Patrick's (1931), redesigned sanctuaries in keeping with ap-

proved norms of the official church. There has been no diminished respect or fervor in devotion of the Blessed Sacrament in the years since the respective sanctuaries were updated according to the rules of the Second Vatican Council.

Father Vosko is correct in reminding all of us "To quibble over things in buildings is not what Jesus called us to do." Instead let all of us throughout the diocese unite to encourage Bishop Clark, Father Mulligan, the renovation committee and Father Vosko to proceed with the work with our blessing.

Vincent and Eleanor Sementilli
Chemung Street
Corning

'Lovers' of liturgical changes seek tabernacle review

To the editors:

We found Kathleen Schwar's article, "The tabernacle," May 17, 2001, helpful in understanding the thinking behind moving the tabernacle from a central position in the sanctuary.

It is true that this change is a "lightning rod" for frustration among many Catholics. The premise for moving the tabernacle is that its location near the altar of celebration distracts us from realizing

that Jesus is being made present by the action of the Mass. It seems to us that this is a false premise. Our experience is just the opposite. We find that the central location of the tabernacle makes crystal clear what is happening as we celebrate Eucharist.

Studies show that only a minority of Catholics believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Perhaps the movement of the tabernacle is playing a part.

We respectfully ask our diocese and all

the U.S. bishops to call a "timeout" on further relocations of the tabernacle. And then study the effect that moving the tabernacle is having on the beliefs and attitudes of the people in the pews.

We love the liturgical changes since Vatican II. We believe this one deserves further study.

Mary Lou and Ed McGarrell Jr.
Wall Street
Elmira