

OPINIONS

Focus media on key trends

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.

Do Americans get the news we need? Two veterans of the news scene in this country say we don't. Last month Walter Cronkite and Richard Cohen publicly criticized their profession for failure to maintain coverage of foreign nations and world developments. Why is this a danger? Because our ignorance leaves us shocked and uncomprehending when events such as the Sept. 11 terrorist attack hit. Moreover, our ignorance leaves us befuddled about the state of the world and easily misled about what can be done to build peace.

Part of the problem is that Americans in general are getting less serious news. And the public is not fooled about the nature of television: It is first a medium of entertainment and spectacle. If news is served on TV, it must be wrapped in dramatic pictures which, as often as not, serve to obscure the real news rather than reveal it. TV cameras, while very good at transmitting immediacy — making us all eyewitnesses to events — do not linger on slowly developing world trends or on the quiet work of those leading gradual evolutionary shifts.

The media gave us plenty of notice that Christian fundamentalism was rising in the United States during the 1980s, but they neglected the rise of other fundamentalisms growing in faraway places. If we had paid attention over the past two-decades we would have noticed a pattern:

The years-long drive by an Islamic government in Sudan to subjugate Christian and animist people in the South of that country.

The attempt by Muslim majority states in Nigeria to enforce Islamic law across the whole country.

The violent effort by Islamic radicals to oust the Algerian government.

The pressures in Pakistan to make Islamic law apply more rigorously to all citizens.

GUEST COMMENTARY

The long guerrilla war by Muslim separatists in the Philippines.

The majority of Muslims around the world, and particularly those in Western nations, do not belong to the radical fundamentalist vanguard. Many, in fact, like and benefit from the freedoms and material benefits of Western secular and democratic ways of living. But there is a worldwide movement within Islam to restore a purity to the faith, to return, in fact, to the ways of the prophet, Mohammed. It is this momentum, this wave of history, that we need to recognize.

The notion of momentum in history should not be surprising to Catholics. Beginning in the early 1960s, the church's momentum swung spectacularly in a progressive direction, largely fueled by the openness of Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council's project of renewal. The way had been paved in earlier decades, however, by a vanguard of theologians, biblical scholars, progressive monasteries and modern-minded bishops. The shock and devastation of World War II had also upset earlier certainties and confidence. The progressive wave in the church carried the day only until the 1980s, however, when it broke on new concern for clear Catholic identity and insistence on renewed discipline.

Catholics, including many bishops, were very surprised by new energy erupting in Vatican II because the media of that era had failed to keep them informed. We have been less surprised by the conservative reaction to the council.

Now, as the media shifts its focus to skirmishes won and cities reclaimed from the Taliban, we still need to learn more about what is really stirring in the Arab and Islamic worlds.

A longer version of this essay originally appeared as an unsigned editorial in the Oct. 11 issue of The Catholic Messenger, newspaper of the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa. It was distributed by Catholic News Service.

Praises event, suggests visit

To the editors:

We of the St. Michael's community were privileged to welcome conductor Michael Butterman and the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra to our magnificent church on Wednesday evening, November 7. The concert was the last of the RPO's "Around the Town" series for this year. This was the first time I have ever seen every pew in St. Michael's filled, with people willing to stand in the back of church to experience this unique musical event. There were more than 1,000 people in attendance.

We are one of the largest, oldest and most architecturally ornate churches in the diocese, located in one of the poorest neighborhoods, rich with diversity and committed faith. Our parishioners were able to enjoy a free RPO concert that they might otherwise never experience. The people in attendance were from the surrounding neighborhood as well as suburban communities in Monroe County and beyond. It struck me how in these uncertain times, the gift of music is a joyful expression enjoyed by all of God's people. I was honored to experience this musical celebration in my chosen house of worship.

Sandy Nucelli
Wimbledon Road, Rochester

Congratulates staff for care at St. Ann's

To the editors:

I would like to commend all the administrators, nurses, aides, receptionists, etc., etc., and all who assist the patients at St. Ann's Home.

Rochester should be very proud of that great institution. The recent blessing of St. Ann's was done in an excellent manner.

Congratulations to all of you at St. Ann's Home, Portland Avenue, Rochester, N.Y.

Grace Calarco-Staffaroni
Kings Court Way, Rochester



Encourages visits to enjoy ongoing parish restoration

To the editors:

St. Patrick's Church in Mount Morris was built in the late 1800s and is deemed worthy of listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The interior is beautifully done also, but over the years it has suffered from a lack of tender loving care. I was a bit leery when a dialogue began about the restoration because of all the turmoil encountered by other churches.

Now I am thinking to myself, "O ye of little faith." The work being done under the guidance and watchful eye of the restoration architect Henry Swiatek is awe

inspiring. As a member of the congregation I invite you to visit the "restoration in progress." Our weekend Masses are at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday and 10:30 a.m. on Sunday or come during the week. You may be fortunate enough to see Henry's daughter Stacey painting the precious symbols of our faith free-hand.

The work should be completed for the celebration of Our Lord's birth. We cordially invite you to view the "before" and "after."

Dolores D. Scura
Barone Avenue, Mount Morris

Rejects representation of 'Catholic' beliefs

To the editors:

I'm writing this letter in regard to the recent ordination of Ms. Ramerman as a priest, and specifically to her statement in regard to her ordination, that "Catholics are ready for this." I take exception to this statement and resent its universal implication. Ms. Ramerman has neither the privilege nor the right to speak for me as

a practicing Roman Catholic. She would do well to begin to reflect on the true meaning and essence of what the Church Doctrines teach and imply. And then and only then could she attempt to represent what I as a Catholic believe.

Don Grace
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