

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, NY 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for purposes of verification.

Seeks help to stay true to vocations

To the editor:
 Throughout the turmoil of the 1960s, and up until our present day, both marital and religious chastity have been under attack in our culture. The Church, which stands her moral ground, is also under attack in such a culture. Still, it would be ridiculous to think that the members within the Church would be immune to the pressures of this culture. There are sinners within our Church. The serious sin that has crept into our society has also crept into our Church. However, the Body of Christ, as guided by the Holy Spirit, will not crumble. Christ, Himself, promised us this.

So where do we stand now, as the media eagerly reports allegations of the sexual misconduct of the Roman Catholic clergy? Even one incident of the abuse of a child is too much. People who have done this must be kept out of circumstances where this could be done again. Bishop Clark, and many other Church leaders have said as much. However, as we embark on our journey to Calvary with Jesus, we must also remember that Jesus died to forgive all sins, even the most heinous. To follow Jesus, we must also forgive. We must still deal wisely — or we are guilty of perpetuating sin — but we must forgive.

The sexual abusers are disordered individuals; the celibate priests, who truly live their vocations, are not. This is a crucial difference. When the earlier priests went out to evangelize pagan warlords, they took with them the strength of their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. ... The warlords wanted to know why these strange men did come. What did they want, if it was not to subject the native people. The Good News resounded with power, when spoken by those who wanted no gain for themselves.

Throughout the Old Testament, we see how the priesthood was handed down through family lineage. It had become a dynasty, where bad children inherited the priestly ministry from bad fathers. Even good fathers had bad children, who eventually subjected God's people. The Books of Samuel show good examples of this. With our Catholic priesthood, there is no such dynasty. There is a call from God. And we are further fortunate to have fathers who won't play favorites with their natural children, over their spiritual children.

While a few priests have done the unthinkable, the vast, vast majority of priests have deeply loved and protected us. In this age when we make heroes out of immodest, immoral, overpaid, poorly behaved, and selfish sports and entertainment stars, we have an army of men — and religious women — who have given up everything to follow Our Lord and tend His sheep. These are our real heroes. We must pray for them and guard their vocations. After all, they work for us. The priests alone bring us Our Lord in the Eucharist. Father God, please send us more men to serve Your Son, the High Priest, in this most holy ministry. Help us all to be true to our vocations, whether they be in the ministerial or the universal priesthood. Amen.

Mary Vazquez
 Virginia Avenue, Piffard



Envisions 'regatta' of faith

To the editor:
 The Catholic Church as of late has been taking quite a beating in the media, rightly or wrongly. It makes me wonder who might be behind all of the bad press. This past week our parish has hosted a terrific Lenten Retreat, and a week earlier Father Leo Reinhardt held a faith formation presentation on the Shroud of Turin. The topics covered, in addition to many other things in my life lately, have given me cause to realize the importance of the teachings, the guidance, the traditions of our Faith. I would like to thank all of the staff at Immaculate Conception, Father Leo, Sister Edna, Deacon George, Greg Wesley, Rich Rasmussen and Mary Ann Kozak for presenting such great talks!

To me the Roman Catholic Church is analogous to a beautiful ship out on the ocean. ... Each of us is a sailor, responsible for one of the sails on the many masts. You can probably guess that these sails in fact are extensions of us, in fact they are our souls! Some souls are main sails, some jibs, some are spinnakers... It doesn't really matter the size of the sails; the important thing is they were the ones God entrusted to us, and we are responsible for keeping them intact, and utilizing them, together with the other sails to get back Home. Our goal is to strive to be trimmed just right to maximize the full extent of the Holy Spirit. Our helmsman is none other than St. Peter, a

fisherman himself, well-trained and appointed by Christ to help bring us all Home, to our one port of call, the Port of Heaven, that is, of God!

That is not to say that there aren't other ships out on the ocean. Some believe St. Paul is their helmsman, others St. John, or St. James. Others may have Martin Luther, or John Knox, Buddha, Mohammed, and the list could go on and on. The important thing for Catholics as far as I am concerned is that we have been entrusted with all of the Tradition, Dogma, Teachings ... so that we may possess, the best Moral Compass to help us reach our Destination. The other ships might well have the instrumentation to also get there. To that end we should all pray that not one single ship, not even the tiniest rowboat should find itself dashed upon the rocks.

Rather than setting up a competition amongst the ships, envision a regatta, with all ships sailing in unison, tacking and turning with the Wind, and at one magnificent moment letting out all spinnaker sails at the same precise moment of time! This is how I picture the impact and importance of the Roman Catholic Church. For all the tossing and turning of late I believe by God's Grace, Jesus will help us the "calm the storm" and to "lead all souls into Heaven". God bless.

Pat Ober
 Genung Circle, Ithaca

Finds columnist right yet wrong

To the editor:
 Father McBrien in his March 21 column is correct that the "status quo" responses to the current crisis are not adequate, that it does have something to do with the current lack of vocations, and that strong leadership will be required to lift the church out of this morass.

However, instead of impartial examination of the causes of and possible responses to the current crisis, he misrepresents the facts of the matter in support of his own views on "Church reform."

First, the problem is not one of pedophilia. The vast majority of these cases deal with teenage boys being molested by their priests. The problem would seem to be a prevalence of unchaste homosexuals within the priesthood. This in itself is the result of the vocations "crisis," but not the same one of which Father McBrien writes.

That aversion to a celibate, male priesthood caused the current lack of vocations

is pure fiction. What evidence we do have would, in fact, seem to show the opposite: that when orthodoxy surrounds teaching about priesthood, vocations abound. See Michael Rose's comments ... in his book "Goodbye! Good Men."

Father McBrien is right, there is a problem of leadership among the American bishops. But he fails to see that the healthiest dioceses in the U.S. are orthodox ones; those in which the bishops have taken pains to answer the kind of open-ended dissent and heterodoxy he presents with strong orthodox responses, in both word and deed. He also fails to see that his attempts to "reform" Church practice are in many ways only part of the problem.

Yes, strong leadership will go a long way to healing the Church in the U.S. But one doubts that it will be the kind of leadership Father McBrien would like to see.

Marc Lewandowski
 Jefferson Avenue, Fairport

Father Dave Bonin had marvelous attitude, was a 'priests' priest'

To the editor:
 The article about Father Dave Bonin in the March 21 issue of the *Catholic Courier* brought back memories to me.

I met Father Dave in 1986 when he came to Cluster Parish St. Anne's, Palmyra and St. Gregory's, Marion. Here he met Father Lou Vasile, and they became very good friends. Whenever I saw them together

they were laughing. He had a good sense of humor. One year they peeled apples for the pie bake and had a good time doing it. Despite his many health problems he had a marvelous attitude. Father Dave's and Father Lou's visit to my daughter in the hospital one time left her in good spirits and laughing. Father Dave followed up with a visit when she returned home.

I heartily agree with Sister Catherine F. Theiss, "you know we have lost a great man, but we have also been blessed by his presence."

"He was a priests' priest."
 Rest in peace, Father Dave.

Rena B. Camblin
 Meadow Drive
 Palmyra