

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.

Jesus is with us in darkest moments

To the editor:

On Good Friday, approximately 150 of us gathered at McQuaid Jesuit High School to pray in reparation for abortion. We peacefully processed to a doctor's office where abortions are performed. Along the way we prayed a social-justice oriented version of the Stations of the Cross.

We prayed for the aborted children, those who sought the abortions, the medical personnel who performed them. We also prayed for the victims of euthanasia, war and the death penalty; the persecuted; refugees; the poor; prisoners; and for ourselves.

At the service, we read the 22nd Psalm.

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus quoted these words of the Psalm as he hung upon the cross.

On the surface, Jesus' plea to God seems like a cry of despair. But Jesus to the end is actually teaching us all a lesson in faith and trust.

For Psalm 22 is ultimately a prayer of thanksgiving.

The Psalm is told from the perspective of one who has already been delivered, and so knows the outcome of his plea. Yes, he suffered, but he turned to the Lord in his dark hour. Ultimately, God responded to his plea. "For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help."

Jesus knew this as he quoted the Psalm. His message was that even in the darkest moments, God is there. Just as the psalmist wrote knowing the outcome of his plea, Jesus knew as he spoke the outcome of his suffering.

The paradox is that Jesus is himself God's response to his suffering people. On the cross, he took on the sufferings and the sins of all humanity.

He bore the sufferings of the aborted children.

He bore the sins and the sufferings of those who conceived those children.

He bore the sins and the sufferings of those who ended those children's lives.

He bore the sins and the sufferings of a society that permits the killing of the unborn.

He bore the sins and the sufferings of all of us who have by word and deed created a climate that drives women to seek this tragic "choice."

He bore the sins and the sufferings of the poor and those who exploit the poor; the victims of crime and the perpetrators; the condemned and their executioners; the victims of war and those who make war; the refugees and those who drove them from their homelands; those who seek early death and those who administer it.

And in bearing all he became the sacrifice that proclaims God's saving grace.

Thus even in the midst of all the sin and suffering in the world, it is no wonder we call it Good Friday.

Lee Strong
Downsview Drive
Rochester

EDITOR'S NOTE: Strong was on the staff of the *Catholic Courier* from 1987 to 1999.



Tributes miss Fr. Ehmman's spiritual, Christlike nature

To the editor:

The letters of tribute about Father Benedict Ehmman miss one important dimension of his spirituality. He was deeply influenced by Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement, and committed his life to practicing works of mercy and promoting justice for the poor.

I got to know Father Ehmman when he lived in retirement at Holy Apostles. After my father died my mother had anniversary Masses said in his memory on Saturdays so I could attend. Father Ehmman most always said these Masses. After Mass mom would say, "Emmett, go up and talk to him." You didn't disobey my mother, but I loved talking to him.

One of my daughters had worked as an assistant in a L'Arche community for two years. One time I spoke with Father Ehmman about the beauty of L'Arche, where the handicapped members are called "core members" because they make up the core, heart or center of community life. Of course he already knew about it. He said he believed the church

should always work to bring the marginalized to the center. This was the way he lived his life.

When he was living alone in a house next to Holy Apostles rectory, indigent people would come at night, ring his bell asking for money or food. He would provide for them from the little he had. On one occasion late at night he was mugged when he came to the door. The people loved him dearly but thought he was acting foolishly and vulnerably, which by human standards he was. But Father Ehmman acted in the divine economy, within the framework of the reign of God. Mom said some people at Holy Apostles were saying, "That will teach him not to be opening his door, giving to the poor in the middle of the night." But it didn't. Father Ehmman was like Christ, at all times and in all situations manifesting the divine goodness especially to those living on the margins, even those who might mug him.

Emmett Neary
Bakerdale Road, Rochester

Priest's soul 'flourishing' at home

To the editor:

An Ordination is only as good as the man. And I'm here to tell you that Father Benedict A. Ehmman was a refined, polished man and priest.

There is not enough room in this paper to write every detail about Father Ehmman whom I met in 1994. Luckily, in 1996, I was granted an exclusive one-on-one interview with him about his life. He was 91 at that time.

Born on January 3, 1905, in Rochester, New York, Father Ehmman at a young age was taught to play the violin by his dad who was a violinist at the Lyceum Theatre as it was known years ago. On Saturday mornings, via a city bus and with only two quarters in his pocket, nine-year-old Father Ehmman would travel to the home of

his piano teacher, Philip Kreckel, for his weekly piano lesson. Father Ehmman was fluent in English, Latin and Spanish, with a flair for conversational French and German.

Father Ehmman often joked about his having lived so long.

One of his quotations was, "Yes, I am truly amazed at many years of life as a priest when I call to mind how rather sickly I was as a preschool child."

Father Ehmman didn't like being lionized, but to me was a man committed to the learning and outreach of the Word of God. Father Ehmman has not died - his soul is now flourishing in the home of his choice.

M. Cathy Helmes
Ronald Drive, Rochester

Abused by teacher as a child, he now promotes forgiveness, prayer

To the editor:

I stand behind the Catholic Church, its leaders, the pope and God. As you know this is a troubling time for the Catholic Church and for the world. The pope calls for peace and an end to animosities. This can be a time for healing. There are a few priests who betrayed our church, their roles in the church, the innocent children and our God. I ask for each person to pray for the innocent children who suffer and to forgive those dishonored priests as

well as to pray for them. As a child I too was an innocent victim of sexual molestation. The scout leader and teacher was a child molester. I held much hate inside and it dominated me. I discovered that I had to forgive in order for my own healing to take place. And yet I was neither completely healed nor able to forgive completely until I began to pray for my enemy. Jesus taught we must not only forgive each other but also to pray for even our enemies. Jesus prayed for those re-

sponsible for his passion, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." These qualities of forgiveness and prayer bring about healing and love. And these are the qualities which separate God's people from the ungodly. In Luke 18:8 Jesus asked, "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" My answer to the Lord's questions is "yes." What is yours?

John S. Nicholson
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