

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.

Bishops are 'accountable' for war

To the editor:

Father Charles McCarthy has written, "Think about the Passion of Jesus. ... Every drop of Christ's precious blood is spilled as the result of violence directed towards Him. In His Passion, however, Jesus does not take one drop of any human being's blood in retaliation, revenge or defense against that violence. To think about the Passion of Jesus is to remember violence and homicide ... justified by all parties involved in it, except one, the Victim. ... In actual historical reality it is through Jesus' nonviolent response to violence and homicide that the salvific power of God, who is love, is able to definitively enter history."

In view of this reality, the Church's addiction to violence appears as the gravest dysfunction. Last November, all but four Catholic bishops voted in favor of violent response to the Sept. 11 attacks while ignoring the long, sordid history of U.S. support of violence in Afghanistan, pursued to advance the interests of Big Oil. By their vote and subsequent silence as the U.S. violated just war criteria, the bishops are accountable for Catholic participation in the evils of this war. By Christmas, millions of "Holy Families" had been made refugees facing hunger, exposure, disease and death. Thousands have been killed directly by bombing. Only God knows how many "Holy Innocents" were killed as we tried to uproot the Taliban "weeds" from Afghan "wheat" fields, weeds that we ourselves helped plant. Massive destruction, land mines and cluster bombs are a lasting curse. Only the most stubborn, mulish of bishops would refuse to admit that U.S. actions have also caused many abortions. Most bishops must be accepting these abortions as just war "proportionality!"

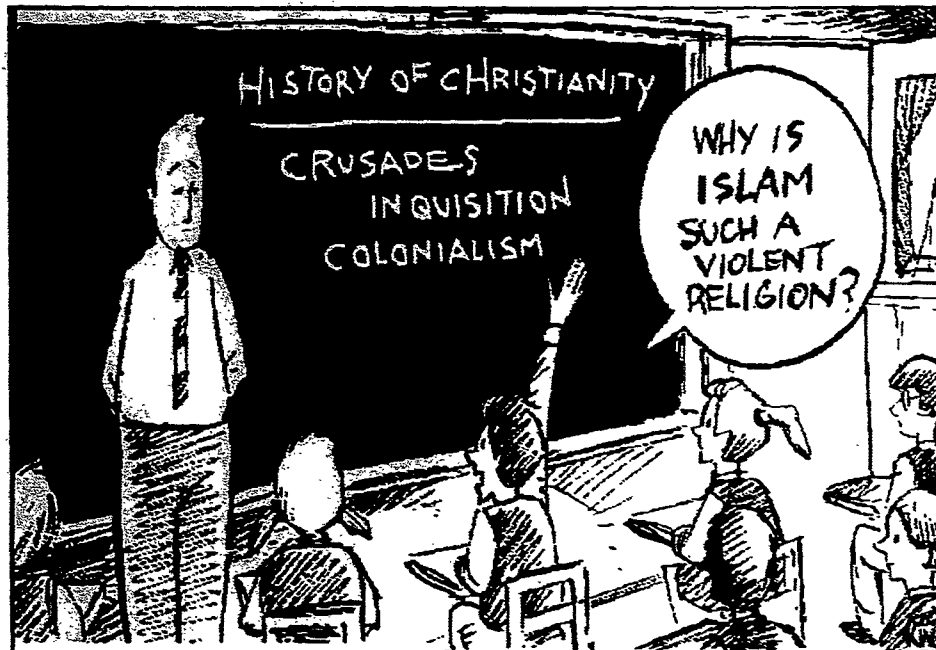
As we think about the Passion of Jesus, it's clear the bishops have cooperated in producing a grotesque counter-sign to the Gospel. Jesus did not envision his followers killing the poorest of poor children and their families for any national "good." The bishops' denial and enablement of the U.S. addiction to violence is far worse than their denial and enablement of clergy pedophilia, serious as that is. Their relationship to the government can only be described as codependent as the disease of violence worsens and the world is threatened with nukes rather than give up our addiction.

Jesus' last Seder, the First Eucharist, must have given him the physical and spiritual strength to walk the last mile on the way of nonviolent love. Faced with codependency of religious leaders and the brutal imperial power, Rome, there was nothing more Jesus could have done to show followers The Way. The Jewish and Roman addiction to violence did not end, but for 300 years, the Eucharist was a celebration of Christian freedom from slavery to means of violence.

Today, after 1,700 years of just war in the Church, we live in a country that is No. 1 in war, abortion and terrorism. We have somehow forgotten that the joy of Easter and the empowerment of Pentecost are not to be separated from the Passion of Jesus. These holy seasons are gifts meant to enable us to face and resist the violence and evil of our own times by fulfilling the command of Jesus to "agape your enemies" (Luke 6: 27, 35 and Matt 5: 44). May our bishops soon abandon just war theories and return us to this reality.

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Restore holiness to church

To the editor:

A summit in Montreal that is addressing the vocation crisis in America, is seeking new ways to attract people to the priesthood and religious life.

Clues to our vocation crisis can be found in noting the changes in both the Church and in society. Technology and wealth have caused people to feel so self-sufficient they no longer need God. Hollywood has dramatically reshaped our morality and has become the standard for most Catholics. Our busy life, full of noisy distractions, has destroyed our intimacy with Christ.

The Catholic Church failed to address the dangers of this increasingly Godless climate. Instead of warning more rigorously against the evils of our time; it became immersed in social/political issues that distracted priests and nuns from their primary duty of promoting love of God and salvation of souls.

The latest poll of Catholics in the U.S. reveals that barely 30 percent of our Catholics believe in the Real Presence, but have adopted the Protestant idea of "symbolism" instead. One must question the faith and zeal of our priests in face of such devastating statistics, for the laity is a reflection of the faith of its priests.

The effects of a clergy teaching us to ignore Christ by talking in Church, has taken its toll and ultimately worn away our reverence, love, and belief in the True Presence. This is a significant factor in the vocation crisis. Why would a young man want to be a priest if "IT" is just a piece of bread? Why would any girl want to be a nun and spend hours in chapel before the Blessed Sacrament if God weren't really

there?

The tragic misuse of General Absolution has also affected vocations. Private Confession where the priest works one on one with a soul has always been the best way to cultivate sanctity and foster vocations. It was the fertile ground where the precious seed of a vocation was often planted. But the majority of young people today have never experienced a "second" Private Confession. One has to wonder why bishops and priests promote this impersonal, ineffective method so rigorously and whether or not they themselves have abandoned the benefits of Private Confession.

Abandoning the Roman collar and religious habit eliminated one of the most influential effective advertising vehicles for vocations. During WWII, the first thing the Germans did was forbid the habit because they knew its power to attract people to God. The clerical garb also discouraged improper behavior.

Lastly, the troubling condition of seminaries causes priests and parents alike to become reluctant to encourage vocations. Perhaps the grave scandals plaguing the Church today will force seminaries to a higher standard of morality and stimulate greater emphasis on Catholic Truth, personal holiness, and prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

Hopefully the Summit will address these issues, as well as the many success stories taking place in some dioceses and religious houses, rather than just creating a Hollywood glitz campaign. Restore holiness to the Church and vocations will flourish.

Janet Schwenkler
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Seeks diocesan Masses for the deaf

To the editor:

On Saturday, March 23, 2002, Bishop James Moynihan celebrated Palm Sunday Mass with the Catholic deaf community of the Diocese of Syracuse at Christ the King Retreat House followed by a fellowship dinner. My son, who is deaf-blind, was able to actively participate in this annual event along with other deaf Catholics. Through a newsletter, The Sign of Christ, a website, e-mail, and a dedicated staff, we are grateful to be kept informed of activities for Syracuse deaf Catholics.

With the Diocese of Rochester being located within the largest deaf community in the United States, why can I find no information on activities for deaf Catholics within my own diocese? Information is unavailable on the Diocesan website, in the Catholic Courier, or in any newsletter as to which churches offer an interpreted or signed service and at what time, when Bishop Matthew Clark might celebrate a Mass for deaf Catholics, and other fellowship activities.

Perhaps the needs of deaf Catholics are being met within the city of Rochester, but for those of us who live outside the city and on the fringes of the Diocese, it is both sad and ironic, considering the large deaf population in Rochester, that I must go outside my own diocese in order that my son may partake of his Catholic faith.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: We would suggest one's own parish as well as Emmanuel Church of the Deaf, 75 Ernestine Street, Rochester, as resources for obtaining services for the deaf within the Diocese of Rochester. The church can be reached at (585) 235-3244, voice and TTY. Father Ray Fleming, pastor at Emmanuel, informs us that a Web site will be launched in the near future and that plans have begun for the creation of a diocesan ministry to the deaf. Bernard Grizard in diocesan Parish Support Ministries is the contact person for this developing ministry. He can be reached at 585/328-3210 or 800/388-7177, extension 337.