

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.

Prof. says actions fail to support intentions

To the editor:

Most of the readers of this letter know me, my family, and my wife, Judy. Some know me from Fisher, others from theology classes at St. Bernard's and some from the management classes in the Catholic School Administrators Program at the U of R. I was Chair of Fisher's Department of Religious Studies this last academic year. During that time I advocated for, among many things, the creation of a B.A. in Catholic Theology and a program of Catholic Studies. I resigned from that position in April. One reason I resigned was that I felt there was no support for the academic study of religion, in particular Catholicism, by the current administration. The article ("Fisher's academic year closes amid disputes," May 16) that claims the administration favors the academic study of Catholicism on campus is, from my perspective, misleading.

I think it is misleading because I find no evidence that money, personnel, and supportive action are given to beginning or continuing Catholic programs on campus. I will suggest a few instances that demonstrate my claim. There are more.

Before I do, you must remember that the major reason for a Union at Fisher is that Dr. Keough is a proactive manager, or to put it another way, she gets what she wants. The union web site reviews some of the negative actions that support this contention. Therefore, when Dr. Keough does nothing one wonders if she wants it. In her memos to me she always says that she favors the academic study of religion. I have seen no action to support those words. Here are some examples of such inaction.

- Sept. 1998: I sent the President and her Development Director e-mails describing ways that Fisher could become the Center of Catholic intellectual life in the diocese, could aid the parishes in remembering their past in a professional manner, and could establish a Hogan/Sheen Chair of Vatican II studies. She and I met for a pleasant and professional discussion about "The Remembering Project." At the end of our conversation, we agreed upon what each of us would do. Nothing was done.

- August, 2001: The Religious Studies Department had five full time tenured members.

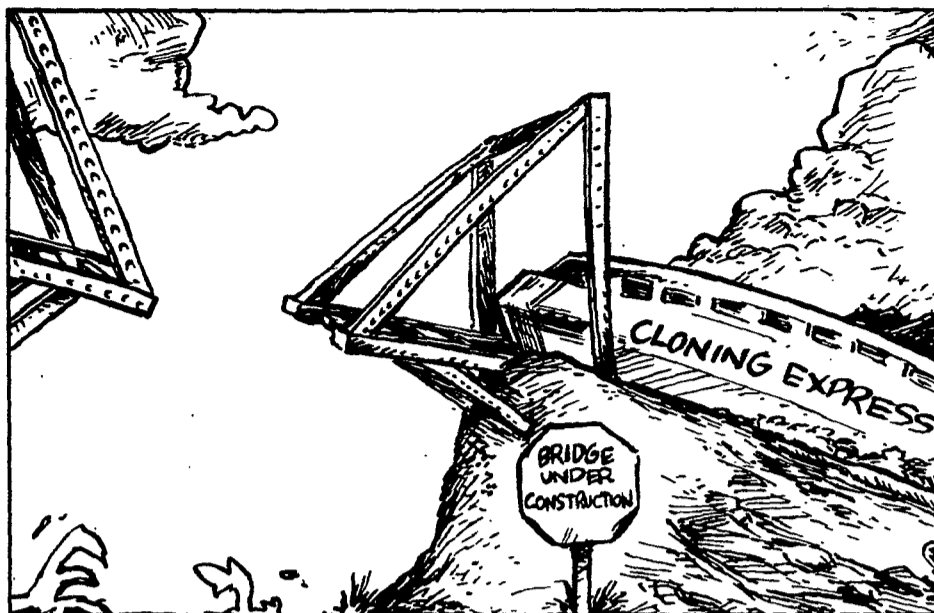
- In September of 2002, the Religious Studies Department will have one full time tenured faculty person and three one year, full time temporary professors. Requests for tenured positions and a multi-year contract were denied. I do not see this as supportive of the academic study of religion on campus.

- September 2001: The Religious Studies Department sent a long range plan to the President for purposes of discussion about the department's future. (Our future as a department was endangered in August, 2001.) We were told to deal with the Provost. The Provost said he would get back to us. We are still waiting.

- Recently, I sent an e-mail to the Fisher community asking whether they would support a Catholic Studies program. Many faculty offered support. Top administration did not respond.

These examples demonstrate that Fisher needs to do more about the academic study of Catholicism on campus. I would hope the administration would help us do so with both money and personnel.

Dr. Nathan Kollar
West Lake Road, Canandaigua



Catholic identity not issue

To the editor:

As a member of the Class of 1955 of St. John Fisher College, a Catholic member of its Faculty for 36 years and a member of the Faculty's "Ex Corde Ecclesiae" committee, I must respond to certain statements made by certain self-styled "orthodox" Catholics in last week's front-page article on conflict at the College.

First, it is odd that such Catholics rarely, if ever, attend the Baccalaureate Mass each year. None were present this year. But a number of non-Catholics attend. Nor do these Catholics participate in any way in the campus Catholic Faith Community.

Second, the problems that many faculty members have with President Keough — despite her many notable successes —

do not in any way involve the Catholic identity of the College.

Third, the document, "Ex Corde Ecclesiae," was turned down by the faculty committee for very good reasons, as outlined in my paper which appears on my Web page and also in a document of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

Fourth, the statement regarding the number of faculty who are "anti-Catholic" is gratuitous and untrue. None of the earnest faculty discussions of these complaints have included anything about Catholicism. The Faculty Assembly vote called for a funded committee to undertake a serious study of Fisher's Catholic identity.

Donald L. Muench
Smallwood Drive, Pittsford

U.S. Bishops should let sun shine on investigations of sexual abuse

To the editor:

By now we all know about the horrible acts of deception and coverup perpetrated by the Boston Diocese. Cardinal Law had direct knowledge of sexual abuse inflicted on innocent children by Priests in his Diocese, and not only failed to act to protect potential victims, but openly promoted the priests as being in good standing with the church. Such cowardice — and, yes, criminal — acts underscore the systemic nature of the problem. The church hierarchy's main focus is that of preservation of their entrenched power structure. With little or no accountability to the parishioners, and little legal pressure to pry open the church files, there is no reason for the Bishops to open themselves to scrutiny. So it is up to us,

Catholic and non-Catholic alike, to insist that all cases of suspected abuse be turned over to civil authorities that have the means and the objectivity to investigate such matters. We can no longer tolerate these matters being hidden behind closed doors. It is grossly unjust to all the victims that the very men that would have the most to lose would be the judge and jury of their accused brethren. Would we let the KKK conduct a hate crimes trial in secret of an accused white man — of course not. Nor should we let the Bishops do the same when are children are at risk. Open the doors and let the sun shine in — so we can all see what the Bishops are afraid to reveal.

Dan Courtney
Liberty Street, Palmyra

It's time to praise, pray for priests

To the editor:

The church, our diocese, our priests have certainly been receiving some bad press lately. Much — if not all — of it has been valid. So, I am not trying to sweep anything under the rug, nor am I suggesting that some in authority have not been guilty of ecclesiastical cover-up.

What I am saying is that I experienced 12 years of Catholic education, and never knew any abuse, either personally or on the part of any of my classmates. What I did know, and continue to know is the friendship and acquaintance of many dedicated and caring men who have remained faithful to their vows, to their church, and to Jesus Christ.

What I am suggesting is that I am not alone. What I am further suggesting is that you people out there, including you teens and college-age people let others know of your positive and healing moments because of our priests. Perhaps, we should even use names.

So, let us put our hands and hearts to-

gether in prayer. Let us seek justice, yes! But let us also "now praise famous men." Our church needs to hear us; our bishop needs to hear us; our priests need to hear us.

Robert P. Cirre
West Meadows Drive
Rochester

Questions freedom of alleged abuser

To the editors:

Thank you, again, for facing a controversial story by putting the firing of David Higbee by St. Thomas parish at the top of the front page.

I am troubled, however. If Mr. Higbee's guilt is so obvious, why is he still walking our streets, a free man?

Marjorie McMahon
Knickerbocker Avenue
Rochester