

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.

Marriage, litigation not answer

To the editor:

Each day brings more bad news, more sadness, regarding the scandal involving some clergy. Cardinal Law is a regular on the evening news. During his courtroom testimony he had over 30 "senior moments" when he "did not recall" incidents from the past. Shameful; he must resign, period. My feelings run the full gamut of emotions. Anger toward the once trusted priests and their protectors, sympathy for the victims, fear for the future of the priesthood. What trying times these must be for the thousands of good, devoted priests that we all know and love. May God be with them.

I can certainly understand why victims are "coming out." The pain and unwarranted guilt they have lived with must have been horrifying and now they have a camaraderie with so many others that maybe, by sharing their stories, the healing can begin. Pray for them.

I don't, however, understand how money can make the pain go away faster. Lawsuits always seem to be the answer. Some are puzzling and many questions go begging. For example, former seminarians bringing charges against priests or teachers who made sexual advances toward them, ending in a relationship. Are not most seminarians men in their 20s and wouldn't those relationships, deviant as they were, be considered consensual? This cannot be on the same level as pedophilia, where some children were attacked right in the house of God, more specifically the Confessional. Truly the work of the devil incarnate. But when adult men have an affair, why the lawsuits? The lawyers, while piously demanding "justice" for the victims, are loving this almost as much as the media. What's to become of our Church? The money to pay the litigants and their lawyers will not fall from the skies. Lets put a face on it. It will come from their fellow parishioners, from our already strapped Catholic schools, from the poor and hungry around the world who depend on us for their very existence. A bankrupt church? Will that make it all better? Some lawyer suggested we sell off the Vatican and Church artifacts, to pay the bill. Yeah right, perhaps we should sell all the furniture too. There are many levels of sexual abuse and attempts to juxtapose the two examples I've cited are way off base; compensation and punishment should be commensurate with the level of offense.

Exposing the abuse and the cover-ups will most assuredly bring about needed changes. Remember, we are judging the actions of those in authority 20 or more years ago using today's standards. I'm not talking about flagrant abuse as happened in Boston but maybe other priests were re-assigned after receiving treatment and assurances from therapist that they were "healed." I'm not making excuses for them; there are none that will suffice. A zero tolerance policy will become the norm. Anyone who abuses children should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law and in the case of priests, banned from serving forever. Beyond that, defrocking a priest for an indiscretion with another adult 20 years ago should be heavily weighed.

In closing I'll say that sexual abuse is prevalent in all walks of life, not only the priesthood, as the evening news would have us believe. And pedophilia, the most abhorrent form of sexual abuse, is not a disease of Catholic priests and if it were, a married priesthood would not be the antidote.

Gene Martello
California Avenue, Seneca Falls



No longer trusts the church

To the editor:

I have been a practicing Catholic all my life. I have never been more ashamed of the leadership of the church as I am now. The lack of commitment to its followers, and the families that supported the church financially and spiritually is more than sinful. I applaud the Pope for taking a firm stand on the issues and having zero tolerance. The U.S. Cardinals continue this doctrine of cover up and hide. It suggests this pedophile tolerance is covering up individuals who represent the church at a very

high level. Perhaps they are covering their backsides. There are some many people who have served the church faithfully for their entire lives. This lack of commitment by the leaders of the U.S. Catholic Church dishonors them and their accomplishments. I will always be a Christian and a Catholic, but I will no longer trust the church leaders as long as they tolerate these crimes.

James Carroll
Maple Street
Scottsville

Will we adhere to spirit of norms?

To the editor:

I must admit that I read the May 9 article "Bishop issues liturgical norms" with interest. It is a focused reiteration of the Church's direction on lay preaching for the Diocese that was delivered on April 24. It cited the relevant Canons, and was offered as a "clarification" to the Diocese and an attempt to make a reform to an abuse that has existed here for many years. Lest someone call this a tempest in a teacup, canon law has always been very clear on this matter, with an emphasis on protecting the deposit of the Faith from misrepresentation and abuse. Local leaders have been openly permissive, looking the other way because of the "wonderful, rich experience of lay preaching" which, in my opinion has too long placed heavier emphasis on the attributes of the speaker than the message spoken. As recently as May 9, Pope John Paul II said that the involvement "by the laity becomes a form of clericalism when the sacramental or liturgical roles that belong to the priest are assumed by the lay faithful, or when the latter set out to accomplish tasks of pastoral governing that properly belong to the priest."

The "norm", we are told, will be in effect as of July 1, and is to be taken seriously. A great article! But then the writer went on to provide the local spin when several

of the priest participants provided "opportunities" for the continued use of lay ministers to preach. Just don't call what they do a "homily." Let the priest give a "homilette" or a brief "reflection" on the Gospel, and then give way to a lay person. It is clear that there is a stated intent on adhering to the letter of the direction, but not its spirit.

If the people of this Diocese really want the return of the Liturgy to the norms and direction of the Church, this is a time for action. Pay attention and don't accept anything less than adherence to the direction that is being given. I believe that there are a number of Liturgical "norms" that will have to be reiterated as the new GIRM is finally implemented. For example, a set of "Norms for the Celebration and Reception of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States" was approved for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on March 22 (<http://www.usccb.org/liturgy/current/norms.htm>). They became effective on April 7, and for some parishes will require some degree of reform of the Communion Rite being used. I haven't seen any recent reporting of this in the *Catholic Courier*.

David Coriale
Conifer Cove Lane
Webster

Saddened by policy on preaching at Mass

To the editor:

I was very saddened and discouraged to read about the new policy curbing lay preaching in the May 9 edition of the *Catholic Courier*. I am a woman who withdrew from the Catholic Church some 20 years ago and only found my faith newly reinvigorated when I found a wonderful, spirit-filled parish community where three female pastoral associates take a large role in the liturgy, often delivering homilies. I can't tell you how much it has meant to me and to many of my fellow parishioners to have women preaching from the altar during Mass. These gifted lay preachers create deeply inspirational homilies, often by linking events from their own lives such as the death of a spouse or the difficulties of raising a child to the day's Gospel reading. Such homilies serve to facilitate worshippers' meditation on the Gospel message. The active participation of lay preachers along with the celebrant during Mass enriches the worship experience for everyone in the

church.

The comment of acquiescence that appeared in the *Catholic Courier* article was rather telling: "We have had for more than 25 years a wonderful, rich experience of lay preaching in this diocese. ... But the local church ... has to stay connected with the greater church." I think the very last thing local parishes should be doing at the moment is quashing wonderful, rich preaching in order to conform to the wishes of a church hierarchy that is increasingly out of touch with the people who make up the membership of churches — who, from my very rudimentary understanding of theology, represent the Body of Christ. One of the things the Catholic Church needs most of all right now is wonderful, rich preaching that deepens parishioners' connections to God. ... It is also no coincidence that most of the pastoral associates who will be silenced by this new policy are women.

Monique Valcour
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