

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

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 1136 Buffalo Road
 P.O. Box 24379
 Rochester, NY 14624
 585/529-9530
 800/600-3628 outside Rochester
<http://www.catholiccourier.com>
 e-mail: info@catholiccourier.com

President
 Bishop Matthew H. Clark

General Manager/Editor
 Karen M. Franz
kfranz@catholiccourier.com

Editorial Department
 Assistant Editor
 Jennifer Ficcaglia *Finger Lakes*
jficcaglia@catholiccourier.com

Staff Writers
 Rob Cullivan *Genesee Valley*
rcullivan@catholiccourier.com

Mike Latona *Southern Tier*
mlatona@catholiccourier.com

Editorial Assistant
 Louis Litzenberger
llitzenberger@catholiccourier.com

Staff Photographer
 Karin von Voigtlander
kvonvoigtlander@catholiccourier.com

Interns
 Jennifer Burke
 Stacey Staubus

Business Department
 Office Manager
 Mary DiPonzio
mdiponzio@catholiccourier.com

Circulation Manager
 Donna Stubbings
dstubbings@catholiccourier.com

Administrative Assistant
 Arlene S. Gall
agall@catholiccourier.com

Graphics Department
 Graphics Manager
 Kim Parks
kparks@catholiccourier.com

Graphic Artist
 Linda Jeanne Rivers
lrivers@catholiccourier.com

Advertising Department
 Account Executives
 Tracy Moses
tmoses@catholiccourier.com

Donald P. Wilson
dwilson@catholiccourier.com

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.

It's time to face issues, skip stones

To the editor:
 Wow! No wonder I've got gray hair at 38! Having served God through ordained ministry going on 10 years, I search for the reason for certain levels of my own frustration. I thank God for the gift of priesthood daily and wonder why more do not come forward. Wonder indeed! All I simply need do is read the "Opinions" page to find my answer.

One attack after another comes forward from readers blaming the "other" for every conceivable problem that exists in the church. We have a lack of vocations to the priesthood and, indeed, to all ministry. Why? Your readers would say it's the priests' fault! Or we're not praying correctly. Or there are gay men in the seminaries and priesthood. The churches are being "destroyed" through renovations. Why? Again, it's the priests and the bishops with their liberal agenda! Divorces are more common now than ever. Why? You guessed it — it's the priests' fault. We're not preparing people correctly. We got rid of the Baltimore Catechism. To listen to some, you would think that we priests belong to some secret organization whose primary purpose is to ruin the church, disrupt people's lives, spend the money of parishioners aimlessly and corrupt whomever we can. And we wonder why there are fewer and fewer men seeking the priesthood?

Let's stop the scapegoat mentality. Let's stop blaming women, priests, nuns, gays, politicians, the divorced and separated, the "them" for the difficult issues that face us as a faith community today. Let's stop looking for easy answers and sound-bite solutions to our problems. Let's stop condemning segments of society who may live, think, look or simply be different than us. Let's remember that our faith calls us to forgiveness and not indictment. Let's remember that the Eucharist is not the prize for going to confession or being perfect — it's the food for the sinner on the journey.

How I pray that someday stone throwing becomes a lost art.

Father Lee Chase
 St. Thomas More Church, Rochester

Says genes not cause for homosexuality

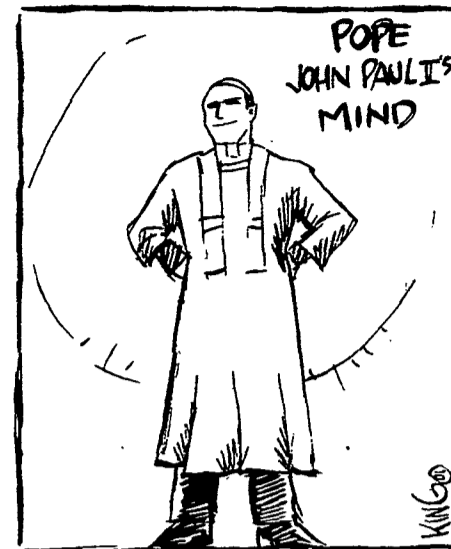
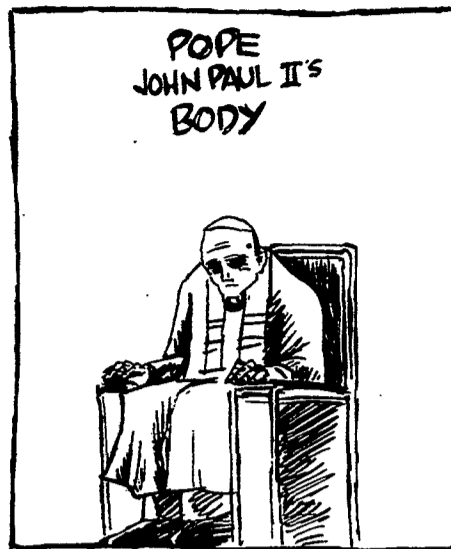
To the editor:
 Father John Harvey, OSFS, is a well-known authority on homosexuality. Father Harvey started counseling the homosexual and gay community in the early '80s. Since that time he has founded the organization called Courage which helps the homosexual live a chaste life.

In Father's most recent book, *The Truth About Homosexuality*, he writes that so far, there is no substantial evidence that genes or prenatal hormones determine homosexual orientation.

As a physician I can only say that this is the medical truth. Though the individual's reasons for becoming homosexual may be many, one of those reasons is NOT that it's genetic!

The Church has never changed its teaching on homosexuality. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states unequivocally that, "Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered" (#2357) and, "Under no circumstances can they be approved" (#2357). This is what the Church teaches. Those who disagree are in error.

Barbara Fredericks
 Birr Street, Rochester



NY state violates freedoms

To the editor:
 An article in the June 20 issue of the *Catholic Courier* reports passage of the Women's Health Bill in the New York State Assembly and Senate, by an overwhelming vote in both Houses. If signed into law by Governor Pataki, this bill will force Catholic-sponsored hospitals, schools, social service agencies, etc. to include coverage for contraceptives and abortion producing devices in their health care insurance plans. The parish rectory would be about the only Catholic organization exempted.

This action on the part of the State is in violation of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits government from interfering in the affairs of religion. Publicity to this threat was given in *Catholic Courier* articles; otherwise very little was done by the Diocese to sensitize Catholics to the threat posed by this legis-

lation. Now Catholic institutions have tough choices: they can swallow hard and provide the coverage against the tenets of the Catholic Faith; they can drop their health care plans; they can close; they can sue the State; or let the State sue them. The bill would permit an organization, such as Catholic Charities, for example, to exclude the offending coverage if the majority of its employees is Catholic and serves a population that is predominantly Catholic.

Three of 10 Senators who voted against this bill represent districts in the Rochester Diocese and are deserving of our respect and appreciation. They are: Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-Fayette, Seneca County; Sen. James Alesi, R-Perinton; and Sen. John R. "Randy" Kuhl, R-Hammondsport, Steuben County.

George E. Perrin
 Oakmonte Boulevard
 Webster

Bishops gave in to media demand

To the editor:
 A front-page story in the *Finger Lakes Times* June 25 questioned the fate of a Seneca Falls priest in light of the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People." One interviewee commented, "I don't know what happened to forgiveness." I think we must all ask this of the bishops, "What happened to the Good News of the Forgiveness of Sin on your way to Dallas?" We look to the civil government to protect us from, and to punish, our enemies. In its frenzy, the media demanded the same action by the bishops. The bishops acquiesced.

It was these same bishops who had taught us the radical message of Jesus. In word: Forgive us as we forgive. In deed: Almighty God himself, Jesus became in-

carnate to suffer for our sins to show us how to love our enemies more than life itself, as he died for his enemies, namely, ourselves, out of love. Admittedly, most of us only have to forgive the nicks and bruises suffered in the daily routine by our inflated egos. Nevertheless, the message of love of one's enemies, taught us by the bishops, was truly radical, or so it seemed. It applied to those who suffer real evil and cruelty. It applied to St. Stephen. It applied to St. Maria Goretti. In light of Dallas we now know, the bishops did not believe it. It turns out, that in their version of the Gospel, forgiveness is to be applied and taught only when the going is easy.

Robert E. Drury
 Pre-Emption Road
 Geneva

Promise Keepers, men's conference worthy

To the editor:
 Thanks for the coverage (*Catholic Courier*, June 20: "Promise Keepers pledge family values") of the recent Promise Keepers event in Rochester. I was there and agree with the men interviewed in the article that coming together with several thousand men to pray and praise the Lord is a powerful and spiritually rewarding experience.

On the previous weekend I attended the 2002 Catholic Men's Conference at Franciscan University of Steubenville (www.franciscanconferences.com). While the

numbers are smaller, generally fewer than 1,000 men, the experience of praying, singing, and praising God combined with wonderful talks by Catholic men, Mass every day, opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and Benediction make for a powerful spiritual "recharge" needed to deal with daily life. There are also conferences dealing with Apologetics, Biblical Studies, and for priests, women, and youth. It's well worth looking into.

Robert F. Carson
 Walker-Lake Ontario Road, Hilton

Chilean Mercy sisters send thanks for aid

To the editor:
 Greetings from the beautiful country of Chile. Greetings and many thanks to our friends of the Diocese of Rochester for your generous support of our mission here. As you may know we are 10 Rochester Sisters of Mercy — five native Chileans and five from Rochester. Your support enables us to serve the poor in four different regions of Chile: Copiapo, in the North,

Vina del Mar, on the coast, the metropolitan region in Santiago, and the southern region of Portezuelo.

Your generous gift to us each year leaves us free to serve the poor in each of these different areas. Thank you again for your help. Know that you and your intentions are in our prayers.

Hermana Maria Ines Olguin Caro
 Sisters of Mercy in Chile