

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.

Adoration seen as key to vocation

To the editor:

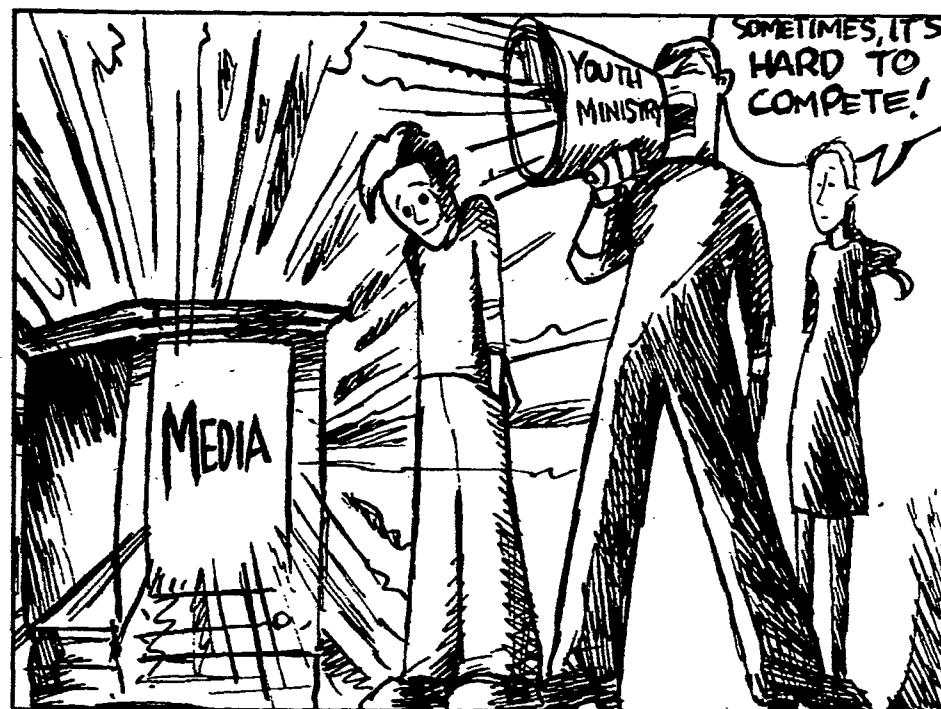
The *Catholic Courier* recently (July 4) highlighted the priest shortage in the Diocese of Rochester with the loss of around 10 pastors this year because of retirement, forced resignation or death and the ordination of only one new priest. This issue has certainly been discussed often in recent years but with the acceleration of this shortage, it becomes more important than ever to find ways to increase vocations to the priesthood in our diocese.

On a visit to Atlanta, Georgia, I was able to see how another diocese is working to increase priestly vocations. The Atlanta area has less of a Catholic population than Rochester yet has an increasing need for priests because many Catholics are moving for work-related reasons to this part of the South. Archbishop Donoghue seems to have found ways to invigorate his archdiocese and increase vocations. According to their archdiocesan newspaper, *The Georgia Bulletin*, eight priests were ordained this year. Foreign priests also have answered the call to serve the Catholics of the area. At the parish I visited, the pastor was from Ireland and the parochial vicar was from Poland. The situation in Atlanta indicates that there are ways to begin solving the vocation crisis of our times.

I personally believe that one element of the vocations success in Atlanta is the promotion of perpetual adoration. Archbishop Donoghue started perpetual adoration at their cathedral as a means to help people draw closer to the Lord. Six other parishes were given permission to have perpetual adoration and others started weekly or monthly adoration. With so many opportunities to spend time with the Lord, it seems only natural that many young people would be able to better hear a vocation call. Adoration certainly does not take the place of the Mass but provides a means to further enter into the presence of the Lord and to take steps towards a growth in holiness. It was good to see the *Catholic Courier* run an article on adoration a few months ago.

Certainly there may be no quick turnaround to the vocation crisis in Rochester. However, we should never accept the false idea that our shortage of priests is "the work of the Holy Spirit" or "God's will." As the *Courier* letter by Joanne Lepkowski (July 4) reminded us, the priesthood is essential to the Catholic faith. Lay people are called to holiness, but, however well-intentioned, cannot replace priests. I believe the Holy Spirit is revealing solutions to the vocation crisis if we just look beyond our local area. Hopefully as a diocese we can humbly admit that our current methods of drawing priestly vocations are not working very well and then look to those areas around the country having success to see what we need to do to improve our situation.

Robert Pokalsky
Five Mile Line Road
Penfield



Many are victimized by hate

To the editor:

It is disheartening to read the angry sarcastic criticisms heaped upon Father Shamon regarding his (column) on homosexuality. Most of Father Shamon's columns are instructive, reflective and inspirational. Nobody is 100 percent all of the time.

Can anyone deny that this is a highly controversial issue? "Always Our Children, A Pastoral Message" contains controversial statements, with which not all Bishops agree.

Homosexuals are not the only ones "hated by some" or have harm done to them. There will always be those misguided individuals who are hating and hurting somebody. During that awkward age of growing from childhood to adulthood, everyone, that is everyone, feels "different." Certainly, for many and varied reasons, everyone has felt being the target and the sting of ridicule, of rejection, of not belonging.

The unfortunate Matthew Shepard case

was highly publicized. However, there have been just as ugly evil crimes committed by homosexuals against heterosexuals, yet deliberately kept off the front pages of newspapers.

Nobody is denying that homosexuals are children of God. But must they be constantly in your face about their sexual orientation? Please explain why anyone must advertise how or with whom sex is preferred? It profanes the very mystery of human sexual expression which once was so personal, so precious and so very private.

As for the sexual orientation of priests, it should not be an issue. One definition of celibacy is "abstaining from sexual relations." Celibacy/chastity, obviously, must be nurtured, developed, ingrained and lived during seminarians' priestly formation. The vow of celibacy is not specifically for heterosexuals. It is a vow, in the fullest sense, for the homosexual priest as well.

Joanne Lepkowski
Ross Street, Owego

Bishop's post-Dallas reflections demonstrate willingness to listen

To the editor:

After the maelstrom of sexual abuse charges which contributed, not so much to a crisis of faith as to a crisis of credibility in the U.S. Catholic Church's leadership, with ominous implications for the future, and which led to the fateful Dallas conference of the bishops, June 13-15, it is reassuring to read Bishop Matthew Clark's "personal reflections," poignant and measured in his familiar "Along the Way" column of June 20 ("Faith needed as Dallas decisions implemented").

The experience of Dallas, as he confesses, "powerful" in itself, evoked in him a variety of emotions, and it was the realization of the presence of the Holy Spirit that enabled him, as it will us, to control the strong feelings that otherwise would dominate us.

In a kind of "pledge" to his diocesans, Bishop Clark, perhaps by way of helping to repair what the presiding bishop at Dal-

las had termed "a rupture in our relationship as bishops with the faithful," promised not only to listen to the review board and to implement its policy but also, somewhat daringly, to invite the laity to critique his response. He knows that a policy is no better than its enforcement.

After Dallas, whether or not modifications will be made to the Charter, things will not be the same. As the Jesuit editors of the weekly *America* concluded, "the bishops need to bring the same transparency, accountability and lay involvement reflected in the charter to the making of other decisions in the church ... (they) will need to spend much more time listening than speaking." And Bishop Clark, in his humble and irenic ways, has demonstrated over the years that he can listen to his people.

E. Leo McMannus
Sail Pointe Circle
Venice, Fla.

Ask parishes to join U.S. bishops in Aug. 14 day of prayer, penance

To the editor:

The recent scandals in our Church have deeply saddened us. But we were heartened to hear that the Bishops of the United States have imposed upon themselves a day of prayer and penance for August 14. Our Church is desperately in need of healing and reconciliation for the grave offenses committed against the Lord. We believe that the first step to take in remedying the situation is to offer sincere prayer and reparation to the heavenly Fa-

ther in order to beg His forgiveness. What better way to do that than by community prayer.

2 Chron. 7:14 tells us "... if my people, upon whom my name has been pronounced, humble themselves and pray, and seek my presence and turn from their evil ways, I will hear them from heaven and pardon their sins and revive their land."

We would like to suggest to *Courier* readers that they ask their pastors to

stand in solidarity with our Bishops by having a day of prayer and penance in their individual parishes on August 14. "Now the body is not one member, it is many. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:14-16).

We urge you to pray that Jesus who "lives always to intercede for us" (Heb. 7:25) would present our prayers and good works to the Father.

Ann and Tom Kirchoff
Sturbridge Lane, Pittsford,