

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.

'Sad' that teen holds 'militaristic' perspective

To the editor:

The July 4 issue of the *Courier* featured a full-page article by Mike Latona about young John Ayers, his participation in Boys' Nation, his military "vocation" and his militaristic views. Nowhere in the article is there any expression of what such militarism has to do with Jesus and the Gospel.

How sad that John expresses no pride in following Jesus' thrice given command to "Agape your enemies." How is it that John, a lector and Eucharistic Minister at St. Jude's, never had occasion to ponder the words of St. Cyprian, a bishop: "Adultery, deceit, and taking of life are mortal sins ... after partaking of the Eucharist the hand is not stained with blood and with the sword." John is so awed by his commander-in-chief that he is willing to follow human orders to do what Jesus is unwilling to do in this Sunday's Gospel: "No, pull up the weeds and you will take the wheat along with them." In following President Bush's orders to "pull up weeds," "Christian" military personnel have killed the poorest of poor people along with countless preborn babies.

Father Charles McCarthy, a former Marine, has dedicated his new booklet, "Christian Just War Theory: The Logic of Deceit," to those countless millions of Christian men and women who killed and were killed, who maimed and were maimed in war over the last 1700 years, and who were denied knowledge of the Nonviolent Jesus of the Gospel and His Way of Nonviolent Love of friends and enemies by their bishops, priests and ministers." This "knowledge" has also been denied by Catholic journalists. We pray that all our pastoral leaders will stop rejecting Jesus so no more of our youth will be included in the "countless millions."

Mark Scibilia-Carver
Cold Springs Road, Trumansburg



What's rush to exit church?

To the editor:

I am a parishioner at a Catholic church in Rochester. We have recently formed a new contemporary Christian music group of which I am a part. We are a small group of about 11 people who are dedicated to serving the Lord and the parish we sing for. We work hard every week practicing songs that will encourage worship and praise of our Lord Jesus Christ. We hope and pray that through our music people will become closer to Jesus and be a part of a wonderful spiritual experience.

As a part of our dedication to God, our veterans, and those who currently serve our country, we worked hard to learn the song "God Bless the USA," by Lee Greenwood, for the Fourth of July. It is a very powerful and spiritual song. On July 7 we performed the song at the closing of the service. It was a wonderful experience and most of the parishioners stayed to the end of the song, even after the priest left. The congregation and the music group all clapped at the end of the song to honor our service men and women. The congregation also clapped because they were appreciative that we performed such a beautiful song for the holiday. As a member of the music group, it brought tears to my eyes when the church was full at the end of the song and people were clapping for the glory of God. This is how it should

be every week.

On July 13 we performed the same song at the closing of a different service. Again, it brought tears to my eyes, but in a negative way. People started leaving the church before the first verse was complete and the church was empty before we completed the song. This happens week after week at every service. Why are people in such a rush to leave church? It is supposed to be a time of worship and praise of our Lord Jesus. Who cares if the service goes over an hour? It is one day a week that the community comes together to worship and praise together. Why the rush to get out of the parking lot first? It is both frustrating and discouraging when a music group works so hard week after week to perform songs only to have the church empty before the song is even half over.

Jesus sacrificed his life for us. He died for our sins on the cross. Why can't we sacrifice five or 10 minutes of our time at the end of the service and sing to our Lord? Stay and sing with the music group. Do not leave because the priest walks out the door. Church is not about time and being worried if service goes over an hour. It is about worship and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ. Give him that time and forget about the clock.

Daniel Giancursio
Crows Nest Lane, Macedon

'Under God' is consistent with founders' intentions

To the editor:

In Sister Pat Schoelles' column "Wording of pledge might contain pitfalls" (*Catholic Courier*, July 4), she states that in the 1950s, "... 'God' was added to the pledge to help us express our opposition to the godlessness of communism" and further states, "With respect to religion, the government adopts an attitude of 'benevolent neutrality.'"

Her comments about the reasons for the addition of "under God" to the pledge may be true, but I have always viewed the addition as completely appropriate. While the government struggles — sometimes foolishly and to society's detriment — to maintain neutrality, it also struggles against our founding fathers who were anything but neutral. These men were Christians and could not help but place into the foundations of our country their Christian ideals and beliefs. Like it or not, this country had Judeo-Christian roots, and the words "under God" fit perfectly into the Pledge of Allegiance and align themselves with the "Creator" mentioned in the Declaration of Independence.

This prayer appeared in last Sunday's parish bulletin:

"Almighty God, we make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in Thy holy protection; that Thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens...to entertain brotherly affection and love for one another...and that Thou wilt dispose

us to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation" — George Washington, 1783.

A closer look at our founding fathers

may reveal much about their vision for this country; a vision much in keeping with their Christian foundations; a vision much more complex than the "separation of church and state" philosophy that one hears so often today.

Robert F. Carson
Walker-Lake Ontario Road
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Former Aquinas principal fostered vocations

To the editor:

I have known Mrs. Vilma Goetting, principal emerita of Aquinas Institute, for over 20 years. Vilma is a truly dedicated Christian and is the essence of what Catholic education is all about. I had the honor and privilege of working beside her as a 21-year-old Basilian associate and student teacher at Aquinas in 1985. She taught my little brother Mark and proved to be an excellent Christian role model to so many students, parents, and faculty alike.

When I returned to Aquinas in 1991, Vilma was serving as assistant principal. Her tender care and Catholic professionalism continued to be an inspiration to me as I prepared for ordination. A year later, as a freshly ordained priest and Campus Minister, I worked side-by-side with Vilma on retreats and liturgies, as well as with students with special needs. Her personal attention to the individuality and person-

hood of each student has been inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So much of what the Church has called for in the work and dedication of the Catholic educator has been encompassed in Vilma's ministry to thousands of students at Aquinas. I consider Vilma to have made a tremendous contribution to fostering my vocation as a Basilian priest, and no doubt she has contributed to the vocation of many dedicated Christians of today. May God continue to bless her, may many more continue to be inspired by her, and may Catholic education in Rochester and elsewhere find in her example many more suitable for such an important ministry.

Father John B. Huber, CSB
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