

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 350 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.

In whose family are all equal?

To the editor:

I read with fear and interest Sister Schoelles' column, "Scandal will result in laity assuming rightful role." Sister Schoelles equated the Church to authoritative parents or hierarchy over fearful adolescents or laity. Sister believes the scandal has brought about a "new freedom" for the laity, which will consequently bring about long overdue reforms. One of these reforms will include all baptized Catholics will be equal with authority in decision-making within the Church. I am baptized into Christ's "family" as well as my whole family. I can't visualize what Sister Schoelles is trying to portray. A family where everyone has equal say? I don't know any family that operates this way. Imagine the chaos if the 17-year-old adolescent, who is in an equal authority with his father says, "Dad I'm taking the car today to golf instead of you taking it to work." It's an absurd analogy!

If Catholic laity are as fearful and confused as Sister portrays them, it is of their own doing. In reading the 16 documents of Vatican II, I wasn't able to find the reference to the laity as "second class citizens" that she quoted. It does, however, state in the document "Apostolate of the Laity." "The decree does not use the term 'ministry' with respect to the laity. The council used that term to the sanctifying and teaching functions of the *ordained*." This does not denigrate the dignity of the laity. Earlier in the same document a quote from *Lumen Gentium* was stressed, "that each group in the Church clergy, religious, laity, married persons, workers, the suffering can pursue holiness by fulfilling their duties and seeking God's will in the circumstances of our lives."

I do agree with one thing Sister wrote. There is a new awakening and reform going on, but not as she sees it. It is, however, the laity who are reforming themselves through the many good and holy documents that are readily available. The Catechism, encyclicals, Apostolic letters, and the writing of the early Church Fathers are just a few examples. They are teaching themselves with the help of some holy, dedicated priests. The laity are beginning to see and question the error that exists in our own diocese. The error which specifically deals with disobedience to the Church's hierarchy. My grave concern is that Sister Schoelles holds a position of authority at St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry, where she has the opportunity to promote "her" agenda, thereby misleading those she is charged to teach.

I beseech Sister Schoelles to stop writing about an American church. This concept in itself is confusing. One might think an American church would be a democratic church. There is no American church! There is only One, Holy, Roman Catholic Church with whom we serve out of obedience, the queen of virtues, our King, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is humility, the king of all virtues. The scandal is no scandal at all. Only the King purging the disobedient from His Church, and at the same time protecting His children from these evil disobedient subjects.

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Columnist promotes change

To the editor:

Vatican II seems to be the pivotal point for people today when it comes to defining "Church" and when it comes to promoting one's own ideologies to change the direction of the Church. Some call Vatican II the worst thing that has happened to the Church in their lifetime and they want to return to a pre-Vatican II Church. Others feel that freedom and openness, which they allege was the thrust of Vatican II, has not been implemented and that the Church continues to hold people back. Luckily, these two extreme groups do not seem to reflect the views of the majority of Catholics.

In her July 18 column, "Scandal will result in laity assuming rightful role," Sister Schoelles inappropriately uses the recent scandal as a springboard to promote her position as a staunch proponent of the later interpretation of Vatican II. She reveals her own fears and insecurities with statements such as "Baptized Catholics, though adult and full members of the church, have been treated as if they were adolescents," "For too long, we have endured an atmosphere of fear," "From where I stand today, the time has come for this kind of paternalism to end," and "The Second Vatican Council called for an end to this form of governance, but we have all tolerated an atmosphere of fear and even greater central-

ization of power in intervening years."

Such a biased view of the Church is not healthy for her or for her readers. Her insecurities seem to come from the fact that her picture of the Church falls outside the tradition in which the Church has grown and developed over the last 2000 years and the view of the Church that was reaffirmed by Vatican II. Although there are abuses to be found in any institution, the governance of the Church and the paternalism are a part of the original plan of the Founder as is evidenced in the New Testament and in the life of the Church itself. Legitimate governance and paternalism is necessary for the teaching Church in order to guide the sound and orthodox development of our consciences and to call us to the higher gospel ideals. A post Vatican II Church is not a Church where we are free to do as we see fit and still call ourselves Catholic or a Church where the conscience of the individual is superior to the collective conscience of the teaching Church.

The option chosen then, by those who think differently than the Church, is to promote radical change in the name of Vatican II in the hopes that the Church will ultimately conform to their view of what the Church should be.

Michael A. Gallagher
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Church, AMA lack writer's 'data'

To the editor:

I find the letter from Barbara Fredericks that was published in the July 18 issue of the *Courier* very disturbing. My misgivings stem from the way Ms. Fredericks seems to reference information and then make unrelated leaps and conclusions under the mantle of being "a physician."

She states that Father Harvey has published in his latest book that there is no substantial evidence to support a genetic or hormonal link in determining a homosexual orientation. Then she states that there is a "medical truth" that there is no genetic link. I hope that Ms. Fredericks is able to send her information to the compilers of the catechism and also the AMA, because I do not believe they have this information as yet. Ms. Fredericks also fails to discern between how the church feels individuals with a homosexual orientation should be treated and the church's teaching regarding homosexual acts.

The catechism states in paragraph 2357 that the church believes that with regard to homosexuality, "its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained." In paragraph 2358 it states, "They do not choose their homosexual condition ..." and "They must be accepted with respect ..."

There have been numerous objective studies in search of the genetic, hormonal, and psychological causes of a homosexual versus heterosexual orientation. I believe

that Father Harvey was right; there is no substantial evidence in any direction as to the cause of a homosexual orientation. In fact, the causes may be complex and multiple. No one knows. I do not believe that even Ms. Fredericks knows. While I realize this is a religious publication's opinion page, for someone of Ms. Fredericks reported stature to state her opinions as medical truth, without the objective evidence to support it, is questionable at the very least. I believe that her medical "opinion" should not be touted as truth. I also believe that it is erroneous statements like hers that cause great grief and harm in many family relationships, as well as in the minds and hearts of those struggling with the nature of their orientation.

I have come to believe through prayer, Scripture reading, pastoral counseling, church teaching, and God's grace that I am God's creation, made for some reason, the way I am. As long as the church teaches and believes that it does not understand me, or finds me unexplainable, I plan to remain a Catholic Christian. I and others like me in the church are called to witness to help the church and its leaders understand who we are. Whenever that understanding comes, and whatever that understanding will be, will take place in God's time.

Jim Buckheit
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