

# 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.

Effective Sept. 15, 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.

## Simplify seminary screening

To the editor:

In the July 18 Opinions page of the *Catholic Courier* Father Lee Chase of Rochester reminds us that our faith "calls us to forgiveness and not indictment." The intention behind his letter, I gathered, is to give the lie to several misconceptions which have led the laity to blame priests for the current "vocation crisis" in the North American Church. And while his aim is noble enough, I believe some clarification is needed. Surely, the inherent problems with the ways in which seminaries are run must be examined, if we are to experience a renewal of priestly vocations in our young men. Seminaries, as I'm told by many a seminarian, are in large part dominated and driven by psychological screening procedures — developed by secular psychologists — which have little to do with ascertaining whether or not God has called the applicant to His service as a priest. Now, the problem is this: every seminarian who goes on to the priesthood should be decidedly abnormal — that is, in excess — in his spiritual desire to do God's will. This desire cannot be truly identified for what it really is, in a psychological exam. In fact, it will only skew the results toward psychological abnormality, when in fact the subject may be a perfectly healthy person who is on fire with the holiest of fervors. It is up to the superior of the seminarian to do his limited best in judging the integrity of this spiritual state, and no more. An aspirant to the priestly vocation should be psychologically healthy, but not necessarily psychologically average. The greatest of the Catholic saints would have likely been less than pleased with the weight given to such testing, had it been such in their pre-ordination training.

I began by quoting Father Chase, and I agree with him that if mistakes have been made by the Church and have led to our relative lack of vocations, forgiveness is called for. However, as we forgive those responsible, we must not forget to track down the roots of the problems. Indictment of those problems is an essential element of reform in the Church and always has been. We must be precise and we must not hide our errors. I believe that a de-emphasis on spiritual growth and an over-emphasis on pseudo-mathematical psychological testing have been major contributors in the decrease in realized vocations, which has led to greater evils such as the closing of churches and inconstancy in the administration of sacraments. The object of faith is God, not psychoanalysis. Nowhere has this distinction been more lost than in seminaries. We must trust God to bring good men to the priesthood of their own accord, and we must let go of our tendency to try in vain to manipulate His works. I do not advocate an "open-admission" policy where no screening exists at all. However, a reform of the screening process in the seminary, involving a major simplification, is long overdue.

Gabriel Rossettie  
East Second Street  
Corning



## Carry WYD spirit to march

To the editor:

What a joy the August 1, 2002 issue was to read! The various articles on World Youth Day were awesome! You could feel the continuity of the Catholic Church — the Catholic Church has spanned the centuries and includes all ages and nations. The numbers of people in attendance at WYD — various counts being 500,000-plus or over 800,000 — alone are inspiring. The camaraderie, common belief, and hope are such a binding force.

This once-every-few years' occasion is not the only event that invokes such feeling. January 1992 was the first time that two young teens in our family attended the March for Life, Washington, D.C. Held annually as a protest against *Roe vs. Wade*, it is a remarkable testimony! Since 1992, our family-been to all but one of the marches. Thousands of people from all over the USA come to make their presence visible — witnessing to the value of human life. The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception hosts an evening vigil the night before but the BIG Mass of the March Day starts at 7 a.m. with a packed church. There are other services throughout the city culminating in a rally at the Ellipse. The March — really a walk — up Constitution Avenue is so memorable! Thousands of people of all ages (grandparents, children in

strollers and front/back carriers, teens, college students), all abilities (healthy, handicapped), all vocations (single, married, priests and religious, in and out of habit); all Faiths; all socio-economic strata and races are in attendance. People are singing, talking, praying until we end in front of the Supreme Court wherein lies the reason for our gathering.

The Rochester Diocese has been pathetically represented in the past. NOW is the time to change that. See how changed people have returned from World Youth Day. That renewal can come about with the March for Life. All those people are such an inspiration! Colleges from around the country send more buses and people than our diocese does! The Pittsburgh-southwest area of Pennsylvania — similar to Western New York — sends 100-plus buses. High schools send buses — it is so "cool" to see the teens marching and cheering for LIFE.

Come be a part of the March for Life this January. Encourage your friends, family, parishes. Buses can be scheduled. Church groups — Men's Club, Knights of Columbus, youth groups, etc. — can provide financial assistance or do fundraisers. Our family makes a family vacation of the event. It has become a tradition — starts yours this January!

Maureen J. Gallagher  
West Church Street, Fairport

## Ministry is inspired by document

To the editor:

Regarding your recent spate of letters concerning gay and lesbian members of the Catholic Church, Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry (CG&LFM) has for 10 years been concerned with the oft-ignored and diverse needs of these members of our Catholic community. This ministry, on behalf of our Diocese, takes its inspiration, hope and dedication from the United States Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family, in their pastoral letter titled most appropriately, "Always our Children."

On this episcopal document we model our service: "This message has been an outstretched hand to your parents and families inviting them to accept God's grace present in their lives ... now we stretch out our hand and invite you to do

the same. ... We need one another if we are to grow into Him, the Christ. ... Do not walk away from ... the Christian community, from all those who love you. In you God's love is revealed. You are always our children."

"Always Our Children..." How apt. Should we continue to cast them out? We believe not. Should we regret their "walking away?" We believe so. For they are children of us all. In our love and embrace, they are, simply, "our children."

CG&LFM is happy to send a copy of "Always Our Children" to any interested reader. Contact us at [cglfm@aol.com](mailto:cglfm@aol.com) or at CGLFM, P.O. Box 18271, Rochester, NY 14618-8271.

Mary Ann O'Brien and  
Father Gary Tyman  
on behalf of CG&LFM

## Return focus to Jesus to find solution to current church problems

To the editor:

Let us look more closely at the action of St. Peter in Matthew 14:22-33, as soon as Peter took his eyes off Jesus he started to sink in the water.

Now there have been numerous letters published in both the *Courier* and the *Democrat and Chronicle* offering solutions regarding both the sexual abuse cases and the shortage of priests. All of these so called solutions seem to be centered

around: zero tolerance, permitting priests to marry, women priests, or importing priests from foreign countries.

If one examines the last 20 centuries, the many internal and external problems that the Catholic Church has faced, it would appear that the reason for these problems would be, that like Peter, during the periods we have taken our eyes off Jesus. Therefore, the real solution, as in the past, would be to again focus our at-

attention on Jesus, by both the Religious as well as the laity. By practicing our Faith more intelligently and fervently by becoming better informed in the Truth and more holy in Spirituality. The result would be to set an example, as Jesus did, that will attract more to the Religious life as well as to the Faith.

Leon G. Bartle  
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