

Pastor set fine example

To the editor:

My thoughts have been of the late-Father Bart O'Brien of Horseheads at the time he substituted at our parish, St. John the Evangelist, for Father Nellis, some time ago. My prayers are with him since his recent death. As he spoke, I could feel of the Holy Spirit in him. What a holy and pious priest he presented.

For several years, he sent me various pamphlets and Catholic literature extensively. Therefore, I accumulated much more knowledge. His homilies were so specific and in addition, he could be humorous. Certainly, he chose the profession of his liking and proved he was God's messenger. Our pastor stated he had given retreats and missions for some time. What a privilege and honor to have such a priest come to our small parish. Being so close to God, he acted like Jesus was his family or friend. Of course, he raised my spirits, and every day I thank the Lord for being a strict Catholic. In the past I have had many wonderful gifts from God. In my estimation, I believe he was a living saint, also a very good and holy priest and showed a good example to others. Fortunately, I know he is in heaven. May he rest in peace.

Anna Groat Burley
 Lock Street
 Clyde

Seeks policy on screening

To the editor:

I have written before concerning the new policy of the Diocese that requires employees and individuals that work with children sign a consent form so that their backgrounds can be checked. I do not object to this part because it is trying to weed out an individual that might endanger the children of the church. My objections are why we are giving this company authority to go into a person's financial records?

And I wonder why we have to sign a release that no one can sue them? Please explain this!

And I would like to know why they do not have a printed *privacy policy*, or a printed *confidentiality policy*? The Syracuse Diocese has stated that they have such a policy in place, so I ask why don't we have a *privacy policy in place*?

In this day and age, where everyone is scared of an identity thief, it looks like we are giving blanket permission to someone to take any and all our information and use it, or sell it or give it away, maybe for profit to anyone they want.

Can you give us written assurance that this will not be done? Some kind of assurance other than, "They said they wouldn't do that," or "We wouldn't do that."

Ronald P. Polacek
 Lake Avenue
 Wolcott

Educate with truth

To the editor:

In her column of Nov. 6, Therese Borchard states that she has found that when she speaks to a group of young adults about romantic relationships, most were "not interested in details of the church's stance on cohabitation, premarital sex, or contraception." They wanted "practical advice on how to make a marriage work."

How sad that they don't realize that the church's teachings on those subjects are the very key to a successful marriage. They seem to be unaware of the fact that the lifestyle of our secular society has brought devastation to the traditional family. Perhaps we should be doing a better job of educating our future generations with the truth!

Mary Lou Reifsnyder
 Mountain Rise
 Fairport

Lucky nation

To the editor:

I am so proud of President Bush for his strength, courage, and commitment in signing the bill for the ban on partial birth abortion in this country. He is certainly a man of integrity, Godly principles and family values. We, as a country, are blessed to have a man like him in the highest office.

Mary Duewer
 Longview Terrace
 Rochester

Advent is time to accept God's gift of joy

The opening declaration of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells the story of Advent and Christmas in these words, "In a plan of sheer goodness, God freely created us" to help us to share in his joy.

God sent his only begotten Son to teach us wisdom and to guide us through the darkness. He knows our pain, and offers his peace and joy to comfort us. The secret of Christian spirituality is found in our ability to respond to this sacred offer.

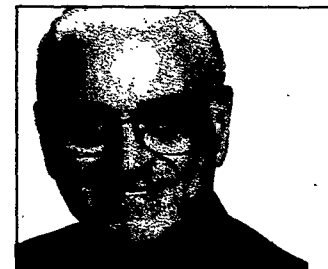
Since the theological foundation of Christian joy is rooted in God's love, it follows that the best spiritual gift you can give God this Advent is to accept his gift and claim the joy he is offering you day by day.

Once I was deeply hurt by someone. It made me angry and resentful. I couldn't seem to shake the bad feelings that welled up within me. I prayed for help, and God sent me a wonderful grace. I understood in a new way that the Lord wanted me to return good for evil.

I realized that if I wanted to be a Christian I had to eliminate my negative thinking and show the Lord that I loved him enough to turn the other cheek. So I began praying for the person who hurt me. I acted as if nothing ever happened and smiled my way through the anger. For about three weeks these negative feelings gradually began diminishing until one day my joy returned.

The lesson for me was simple: Joy prevails over sorrow, but you have to work at it.

When the angel came to Mary his first words were, "Do not be afraid Mary, I have come to bring you tidings of great joy," (Lk 1:30). Jesus said the same thing later in his public ministry: "Fear is useless, what you



Father John Catoir

Spirituality for Today

need it is trust," (Mk 5:36).

Fear is the enemy of joy. I had to shed the fear of being hurt again, and the fear of being thought of as a wimp if I forgave and forgot. "Do not be afraid" is a message that covers a multitude of feelings.

The season of Advent is a perfect time for preparing our minds and hearts for the joy of Christmas. Practically speaking, it means not letting the past drag you down. It means not being afraid of the future. It means letting go of grudges. All you have is the present moment if you are ever going to experience joy. "The secret of happiness and sanctity rests in our fidelity to the duty of living in the present moment" (Father John Pierre de Caussade, SJ).

Mary did this. In her beautiful prayer the Magnificat she said, "My spirit rejoices in God my savior." Isn't that an attitude worth imitating — and praying for?

A friend of mine always seems to project a joyful presence. He says it takes about as much energy to be joyful as it does to be sad, and he is absolutely right. We can change and be more joyful, but we have to will it. At the same time we have to pray for the grace to live the Gospel joyfully day by day.

Father John Catoir is a columnist for Catholic News Service.

The Catholic Courier provides space for readers to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome original signed letters about current issues affecting the Diocese of Rochester. Letters should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the page, and should be addressed to: Catholic Courier, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624 or e-mail to: letters@catholiccourier.com. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for verification.