

## Report to the Reader

# 1981... AND SO-CALLED DISABLED PERSON

By Carmen J. Viglucci

It was with a bit of trepidation that this newspaper early in 1981 decided not only to produce a special section to note the International Year of the Disabled Person but also to make it a continuing weekly series for the rest of the year.

We knew the stories were out there but wondered if we would be able to find them. The importance of the subject compelled us to take the risk. I use the word risk because we committed the paper to the chore publicly in an editorial.

We wanted to avoid platitudinous stories. Nothing maudlin. No tears. The mental concept was that to be disabled is not to be unable. We wanted to show the capabilities, the contributions and the will to succeed of those described as disabled. We also wanted to package the inspiration for the so-called able-bodied.

We also wanted to show the dedication of the many people and agencies who work with disabled persons — the rehabilitation centers, the hospitals, the clinics, the various foundations, the group homes, and especially the volunteers. We wanted to show what the Church is doing, or not doing — not only here but in other dioceses. We wanted to focus on such problems as accessibility, parking, attitude.

We began with a special section, "These Are the People," in our March 4 issue and our pledge to continue with a story a week for the remaining 43 issues of the year was easy to keep. We far exceeded that goal with multiple accounts in many issues.

What began as one simple file folder, titled "Disabled," ended up 16 folders, six inches thick with clippings.

Of course, we were not alone in the project; indeed it was the United Nations who declared the special consideration as a 1981 theme.

We also had leadership from that

whirlwind of activity, Pope John Paul II, who himself felt the pangs of disability temporarily during the year. We printed several of his remarks on the subject during the year.

Our own Bishop Matthew H. Clark helped us launch the project with a Page 1 article in which he declared: "The Catholic Church must be a visible leader in this ministry, just as Jesus was visible as he walked this earth curing the lame, the deaf, the blind and all persons who needed to be healed."

And the U.S. bishops also spoke collectively on the subject, stating, "In a spirit of humble candor, we must acknowledge that at times we have responded to the needs of some of our handicapped people only after circumstances or public opinion have compelled us to do so. By every means possible, therefore, the Church must continue to expand its healing ministry."

Many diocesans, most notably William Privett of Catholic Charities, encouraged and assisted in the project. If it was labor at all, it became one of love. The entire editorial staff took part — John Dash, news editor; Terrance J. Brennan, photographer; Joan Smith, RapAround editor; Michael Groden, Martin Toombs, Columnists Sister Nancy Burkin and Sarah Child joined the effort.

We all benefited because we learned.

We learned that accessibility is more than a problem with buildings, buses, stairways. It also is how to get to the bus stop in the first place, particularly in our wintry climate. For instance, we mentioned the plight of a quadriplegic, willing and able to work, trying to maneuver his wheelchair through the snow to a bus stop. Thus, the necessity of rehabilitation centers, including customized cars, was pointed up.

We learned about JoAnn Keyser, af-



The Courier-Journal series focusing on the disabled began with a special section on March 4 (held by Carmen J. Viglucci, editor). The Courier continued weekly coverage for the next 43 issues.

flicted with spina bifida since birth, who not only holds down a position at Kodak, but also coaches the Rochester Rookies in track, field and swimming.

We learned about Jean Haney, blind, single and white, who has adopted little, dark-skinned Kendra from India. A photo caught the obvious love shared by mother and daughter.

We learned that if courage is indeed grace under pressure, as Hemingway said, then we live among a great many genuine heroes and heroines who disregard what others may regard as unkind tricks of fate.

We learned the amazing extent to which human beings will go to avoid dependency on others.

We learned that our readers were more than just interested. Many offered suggestions, not only for stories but for attitude. When we offered free artwork of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to disabled persons, the supply of 200 was quickly exhausted.

And as we come to the conclusion of the Year of the Disabled Person and our special series, we learned something else — we had barely scratched the surface. As the problems of the disabled do not end on Dec. 31, neither will the Courier-Journal coverage. We will continue to seek and report on the disabled and their assisting brothers and sisters.

And, as always, we will appreciate readers' comments.

Fr. John Reedy



Looking for the Lord

### A Letter From The Lord

Christmas columns are hard to do.

Everything seems to have been said — so many times that even our most sincere and personal messages slide into familiar formulas about the joy of Christmas... happiness for you and yours at Christmas and throughout the year.

So, I tried to imagine what Jesus might write if he were sitting at this typewriter, addressing his thoughts not to a "mass audience," but directly to you, to the faith which should be at the center of all your Christmas celebration.

He might write:

My brother... my sister: I know that for you these days are hectic, full of pressure to complete all the details on time. There's frustration in wanting to express your love in gifts for those who are closest to you and finding yourself again expressing that love in gifts of clothing or household items which don't really say what you want them to say.

I understand the strange mixture of happiness — at all the sounds and sights of a festive season — and strained nerves and irritation

at having too much to do in too little time.

And I also understand the slight sense of guilt which lies deep in your heart as you feel that you should be giving more time and thought to the real, religious meaning of Christmas. But there never seems enough time; there's always something else that needs to be done.

I don't want you to feel guilty about this — especially at this time. I want you to enjoy the happiness of your family gathering, the warmth of friendships remembered.

Our God, Our Father wanted you to know that He understands and accepts all these human emotions, efforts, frustrations. His sign of that understanding and acceptance was my own coming to be one with all your human experiences.

But most of all I hope you will be able to experience some of that profound joy and relief that should fill your life as you grasp the truth I came to reveal.

You know the joy; the sense of worth that comes from recognizing that another human being — a man, woman or child — really loves you. My coming was to give you that same joy, that same sense of worth, at a much more profound level. I came to offer the evidence of how

deeply the God of the universe loves and cares for you.

Our Father's love for each of us is mysterious. At times it is very hard for you to believe that the Creator of the sun and the stars loves you personally — when He allows your life to be marked with pain and suffering, especially when He allows you to fail, to sin.

And your world today also makes it difficult for you to recognize the Father's love. You see a world scarred with poverty, with violence, with economic problems, especially with fear of weapons that can destroy all the lives He loves.

But Our Father's love is mysterious. You can't recognize it by seeing everyone enjoying a land of milk and honey, by seeing the lion and the lamb lying down together. You must accept it through faith.

It was this faith I came to give. This was my gift to each of you on that First Christmas. It was my gift to you in my teaching and healing. It was the same gift I offered as I hung on the cross, and especially when I rose from the tomb on Easter morning.

If you are able to accept me as God among you, as the beloved Son of the Creator, you should be able to realize that Our Father's mysterious love was with me in spite of all the failure and suffering which was present in my life.

Suffering, failure, sin — none of these obstacles of human life can ultimately overcome the love of the Father on Whom our faith rests.

### Work Sought for Youths

Horseheads — The Youth Employment Service (YES) of the Youth Bureau is trying to

match people with jobs to be performed with youths looking for work. YES services the Elmira and Big Flats

areas and says it has "good, reliable" young workers available. Anyone interested should call 739-3517.

## FUNERAL DIRECTORS

THOSE WHO WISH TO HAVE ARRANGEMENTS CARRIED OUT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE IDEALS OF THEIR FAITH CAN RELY UPON THE FUNERAL DIRECTORS LISTED TO PERFORM THEIR DUTIES WITH SYMPATHETIC CARE AND ATTENTION.

### ROCHESTER

**Ashton-Smith Funeral Home Inc.**  
1210-1218 Culver Road  
Rochester, NY 14609  
(716) 482-6260

**Corbett Funeral Home, Inc.**  
Roger G. Blakeslee  
109 West Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14611  
(716) 235-2000

**Crawford Funeral Home Inc.**  
R. Kenneth and David P. Crawford  
495 N. Winton Road  
Rochester, NY 14610  
(716) 482-0400

**Younglove-Smith Funeral Home**  
1511 Dewey Avenue  
Rochester, N.Y. 14615  
458-6200

### PENFIELD

**Nulton Funeral Home**  
Malcolm M. Nulton  
1704 Penfield Road  
Penfield, NY 14526  
(716) 381-3900

### GREECE

**Younglove-Smith Funeral Home**  
1511 Dewey Avenue  
Rochester, N.Y. 14615  
(716) 458-6200

**Vay and Schleich Funeral Home Inc.**  
"Greece's Largest and Most Complete Facilities"  
2692 Dewey Avenue  
Greece, NY 14616  
(716) 663-5827

**Thurston Funeral Home**  
2636 Ridgeway Avenue  
Greece, NY 14615  
(716) 227-2700  
John L. Lioi  
William Pomeroy Cass II

### IRONDEQUOIT

**May Funeral Home (Formerly Miller Bros.)**  
George L. May Jr.  
2793 Culver Rd.  
(716) 467-7957

**Edward H. Dreier Funeral Home**  
Edward H. Dreier  
1717 Portland Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14617  
(716) 342-8500

**Schauman Funeral Home Inc.**  
Edwin Sulewski  
2100 St. Paul Street  
Rochester, NY 14621  
(716) 342-3400

### HILTON

**Thomas E. Burger Funeral Home, Inc.**  
Thomas E. Burger, Pres.  
735 East Avenue  
Hilton, NY 14468  
(716) 392-7100