

Editorial

What Do You Think of Faith Today?

Within the next few weeks, we will complete the current series of Faith Today, the four-page supplement to the Courier-Journal that focuses on religious education. As we approach the end of our contract, we are considering what is best for our readers, what they prefer and what they are most likely to read and use.

First of all, we should explain a question many people have asked about the link between the addition of Faith Today and the elimination of Rap Around. When Faith Today was added to the Courier-Journal, the popular youth section was dropped. At that point, the paper simply could not accommodate both features. Many people have suggested that Rap Around be reinstated, and we plan to comply with that wish to some extent when the next academic year begins. Instead of running Rap Around in its entirety, we plan to pick up some of its best features — such as the youth opinion column called Speaking Out — and replace the Winner's Circle feature with a youth photo contest (see Page 2 for details on

this.) We also hope to add new features for grammar school and high school students.

Therefore, our decision on Faith Today is a completely independent one, and will have no effect on youth coverage. Faith Today is an expensive feature — one we purchase from National Catholic News Service with grant assistance from the Catholic Church Extension Society — and before we decide to renew, we want to make sure the money is being well spent.

For that reason, we are asking you to answer the following questions and mail your responses to our offices (114 S. Union St., Rochester 14607) as soon as possible.

1.) How often do you read Faith Today? Weekly _____ Once or twice a month _____ Once in a great while _____ Seldom _____ Never _____

2.) How often do your children read it? Weekly _____ Once or twice a month _____ Once

in a while _____ Seldom _____ Never _____

3.) On a scale of one (1) to five (5) with five being most important, how important do you believe Faith Today is as a supplement to the Courier-Journal? _____

4.) What do you believe to be Faith Today's greatest value? _____

5.) Do you believe the Courier-Journal should continue to carry Faith Today? Yes _____ No _____

6.) If not, what would you prefer to see take its place? _____

7.) Please list the ages of all Courier-Journal readers in your family. _____

8.) To which parish do you belong? _____

9.) How long have you been reading the Courier-Journal? _____

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey. We will publish the results and our decision within the next few weeks.

and Opinions

Writer Disputes Tone of Upstate Article on Bishop Clark

To the Editor:

Please permit a comment on the recent article on Bishop Matthew H. Clark presented in Upstate magazine of the Democrat and Chronicle. The piece was written with impeccable clarity and reserve, but with little logic, by political columnist Michael Clements.

I direct this letter to the Courier-Journal as a more limited outlet for the expression of a "family complaint." Discretion suggests a little more privacy that the secular press preserves.

Some loyal and thoughtful Catholics of this diocese will have found the Upstate depiction of Bishop Clark painted with the broadest strokes of pious journalistic adulation. Others, given to dissecting the reasoning presented in such essays, must find the article a patent non-sequitur presentation. Considering the real issues that the bishop has either avoided, committed to sundry officials, or answered consistently with antique and authoritarian counsels to humble, blind acceptance by his sheep, the conclusion to his exceptional pro-populo modernity seems unwarranted.

The article indicates that the bishop has joined a few of his clerical fellows in expressions of iconoclastic sentiment — more participation of women in the activities of the ministries, deeper welfare and economic commitments, anti-nuclear demonstration support — all, admittedly, well-anchored in conscience, but also taken generally as rather safe adventuring.

More notably, the article cites the recent dispute that ended in a mass exodus of very professional staff from the offices of the Courier-Journal. That that controversy has not come "to a harmonious resolution" together with the secrecy that enveloped the issues, indicates little of skillful diplomatic negotiation. And the article's comment that the bishop's summary assertion was that he "retains the ultimate authority," helps little to establish his bottom-line respect for genuine collegial, lay counsel, except where it promises to be relatively safe.

Those defections from the C-J staff remain unclarified for those local Catholics who are captive audience to the C-J by reason of the marketing mandate visited upon parishes.

Then there is the formidable group of sincere and altruistic parishioners at Mother of Sorrows, malcontent at what they perceive as a pastor schooled to material extravagance. Despite lame and hazy Gannett reports of the turmoil in the past, author Clements failed to investigate the formidable unrest over alleged extravagances of renovation of their church.

Consider, as well, the case presented

recently by local attorney Ronald F. Chapuran of the Catholic Family Center Board. The public perception here is that of a man fully dedicated to the service of his church, his diocese and his bishop, who must have recourse to the public, secular press to feel properly satisfied with his obligation in conscience to register a legitimate complaint. Again, the bishop should have found a way to dispel that destructive perception with both charity and truth.

**Clarence Amann
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EDITOR'S NOTE: This letter is printed here — albeit with considerable editing to remove extraneous sarcasm and personal attacks — not so much for its own merit as to allow for a statement from this newspaper.

In a cover letter accompanying this essay, Mr. Amann insinuates that the new staff members of the Courier-Journal are nothing but pawns in some diocesan chess match, and have neither the courage, integrity nor independence to publish anything critical of diocesan affairs.

He states: "I do not expect you will publish this; 'Too long' will be the easiest out." He continues to goad us: "Will it be too intimidating to say this (the letter) will obviously try your mettle?" and asserts that if the letter is not published in these pages, he will be forced to take his case to the secular press.

It is not our custom to cower before such threats; moreover, it seems to us that Mr. Amann's primary complaint is that the tone of the Upstate article — full of "pious journalistic adulation" — conflicts with his own perception of Bishop Clark. If so, we encourage Mr. Amann to take his case up with Mr. Clements or his editor, because we are not in the business of playing critic to every article the secular press publishes on diocesan affairs. Nonetheless, it seems necessary at this point to use the occasion to make our own case.

First of all, we must note that the spirit of Mr. Amann's entire correspondence to us indicates he has some deep, personal grievance for which he has found a variety of additional justifications. The Courier-Journal is a forum for the objective discussion of issues relevant to the diocese and the Church as a whole. It is not a forum for airing personal grievances.

Secondly, the fascination with the staff changes at the Courier-Journal continues to amaze us. Would it be a matter of such lasting speculation if an editor and business manager of the Democrat and Chronicle were to resign over a conflict with manage-

On the Right Side

with Father Paul J. Cuddy

There Is Danger in Delay

Deacon Leo Kester is a deacon at Holy Trinity Church in Webster. He took early retirement from Kodak — where he was a structural engineer — to give more time to his deaconal apostolate. Every Monday he visits our sick in the Rochester hospitals. (Father Michitek once estimated that it was 52 miles to cover all the Rochester hospitals. However, we visit only the hospitals where we have patients.) Our deacon prays with the sick, indicates concern of the parish for them, gives them courage and, of course, always brings them our newsy parish bulletin. He is knee-deep in many parochial works.

Our deacon preaches well. His delivery is interesting, and our people can hear and understand him. I hear complaints from people in many parishes who say: "Our priest does not enunciate well, so we miss half the sermon." "They don't use the microphone right, so we lose most of what is said." or "Why don't they raise their voices so we can hear? You'd think they were having a conversation with the front pews."

Deacon Kester uses apt illustrations. His doctrine is orthodox, and he has a special sense of relevance for the people. I suppose that since he is the father of 13 children (three boys and 10 girls) and is assisted by a wonderfully cooperative wife, Helen, who is as deeply committed to the faith as her husband, religion is no flight into theological speculation, but is applicable to the trials and joys and needs and understandings of daily life, in their relationship to God, Our Lady, the saints, and the people on this earth.

His homilies have the grace of a gentle humor that makes the point and prepares the minds of listeners to be receptive. What good is preaching if the congregation is non-responsive? In a recent homily, he told this story: "In the fourth grade religion class, the teacher was explaining about not putting off doing good, not procrastinating. She realized she had used a big word, 'procrastinate.' So she paused

and asked: 'Kevin, do you know what "procrastinate" means?' 'Well, I'm not sure exactly, but I know that the Catholic Church has always believed in it'

Here is a list of things about which most people tend to procrastinate:

1. Making wills or updating the ones they have.
2. Paying debts or bills. It is strange the number of people who do not repay loans.
3. Visiting a sick or housebound person.
4. Making a needed appointment with the doctor or dentist.
5. Returning borrowed books, whether borrowed from individuals or the library. (I knew a family whose members kept many books so long they accumulated fines of more than \$80.)
6. Inviting some friends for a luncheon, or an evening, which I have intended for ages.
7. Getting the plumbing (or windows or electricity or whatever) in the house fixed.
8. Writing a letter they've been neglecting.
9. Making that telephone call that can lighten a heart or mend a fence.
10. Going to confession.
11. Making a retreat — which is vitally important to the spiritual life.
12. Acknowledging with thanks a gift or a hospitality.
13. Going to Sunday Mass regularly, or daily Mass occasionally, if possible.
14. Checking their children or grandchildren on their prayers and religious knowledge. An excellent book for First Confession and First Communion is "Jesus and I" by Heeg (\$1).
15. Writing to the bishop about things you appreciate or not — things you believe unwise or wrong — and saying why you commend or regret. He welcomes the input of the people.

Father Byrne of Ithaca used to say: "Do it now! There is danger in delay."

ment? We think not. Would Gannett Rochester Newspapers feel obligated to make public the intimate details of what is truly an internal disagreement? Certainly not.

We do not accept Mr. Amann's argument that because of the Courier-Journal's subscription policy we are obligated to make public the details of the recent staffing transition. The staffing change has, in our opinion, not reduced the quality of the Courier, but has instead enhanced that quality by providing for more input from the community, more active reporting from our staff, and for a fresh approach to the news.

Moreover, it is a fact that Bishop Clark "retains the ultimate authority" for the

Courier-Journal, but at least during our tenure here, he has not exercised that authority. He does not censor or pre-read any material published although, as publisher, he clearly has the right to do so. He has not demanded that any articles be included, or more importantly that any be omitted.

That is the sole reason for this angry letter's appearance here — to dispel the notion that diocesan authority in any way restricts our ability to perform as the news professionals we believe we have shown ourselves to be.