

## Editorial &amp; Opinion

## Facing the inevitable reality of the vocations shortage

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Recently, I have often thought that it would be interesting to compile a list of the news articles, feature stories and columns about vocations and ministry in the Church that have appeared in the *Courier-Journal* during the past five years. The list would be quite extensive, I believe, and would be noticeably longer if it included those stories even indirectly related to the vocation theme.

The extent of the coverage is in large part due to the notable decline in the number of new vocations to the priesthood and religious life in recent years, and to the growing participation of the Christian faithful in ministries of services once carried out almost exclusively by ordained persons.

This theme came to mind once again because last week we observed Vocation Awareness Week in our diocese. During that week we tried to reflect prayerfully on the dignity of our baptismal life and our shared call to worship and service. In addition our hopes for the week were that 1) those who have already made vocational choices might have a special opportunity to reflect on their vocation as a source of growth in personal holiness and as a daily gift to the community, and 2) those who were undecided about vocational choice might consider the ordained ministry

## Along the Way



of religious life among the possibilities open to them.

I know that I enjoyed the week's special invitation to prayer and thought about my call to serve the community as a bishop. Through the week I found myself reflecting often on the way the Lord has kept me alive and growing through these years.

If the observance of a special week was one source of such musings, a second was the reminder I have had on more than one occasion recently that the immediacy of the problem has not hit home in many of our people. I have a growing sense that, while many may give a nod to a growing shortage of clergy, too few appreciate the fact that sooner than later I shall have to say much more frequently than I would like, that we

have no priest available to serve as resident pastor for your parish.

We have many people working on ways to meet changing needs. We continue to encourage young men to study for the diocesan priesthood, to encourage young women and men to consider religious life. At the same time we are considering possibilities like lay pastors and administrators, further inter-parochial pooling of pastoral resources, and making greater investments in the initial and ongoing formation of lay persons for full-time ministry in the Church.

These initiatives and/or any others we might take in the future will succeed only to the degree that 1) a broad segment of our faith community recognize that we have a common problem, and 2) we are all willing to make the difficult adjustments, which, I believe, inevitably face us.

I will not go into all of those here. For now, let me ask you to think about the issue and be willing to share your thoughts about it with your family, friends and neighbors. If you do that, you will contribute to the kind of awareness and pooling of concern and wisdom that has always been a strength in our local Church. Each of us must do her or his part if we are to move ahead as lovingly and creatively as I believe we can.

Peace to all.



## 'Tortured disciple' laments columnist's culinary indulgences

To the editor:

As a regular reader and tortured disciple of Father Paul J. Cuddy, I am compelled to comment on a disturbing and recurring sub-theme of almost every one of his "On the Road" columns. I'm referring, of course, to the scandalously erotic tones with which he describes his culinary adventures across the Diocese of Rochester and beyond.

Quite frequently, the blush of shame rises to my cheeks while reading the inevitable "food lust" passage. I don't think we can underestimate the level of Father Cuddy's obvious and voracious appetite or its possible detrimental effect on his ministry. Even when writing on non-related issues, his obsession never wanes. Recall the now legendary "Father Curran Rhubarb." His most recent column "Pilgrimage to Piffard" is a perfect example. Recalling an earlier trip, he writes, "The cheerful Brother Kristen was the cook. I recall thinking that if his spiritual life were no better than his cooking, he would enter heaven with difficulty." Still reeling from that, I read, "We left, loaded with God's grace and sacks of the monks' famous bread. We had made reservations at a dandy restaurant ..." He compared cooking ability with virtue and God's grace with "sacks of bread," and no sooner had he said his final Amen that he was off and running to a local "superb" eatery, an excursion which read like a rather urgent and long-awaited trip to a brothel.

Frankly, I'm puzzled and a bit offended. Is there no limit to Father Cuddy's longings and,

if not, is it necessary to subject the reader to his lack of control? After all, whatever happened to mortification and asceticism? I believe I'm beginning to understand the gravity

## Letters

of the threats to the Church's stability in the wake of this modern age ...

I'm making a retreat to the Abbey of the Genesee in a few months, and I can't help but

wonder and worry about what kind of ravisher the trip will make of me. In the end, sex, drugs and theological dissent can't hold a candle to the danger of the hunger pain and its grip on the human soul.

Might I suggest a diocesan-wide day of fasting and prayer for Father Cuddy's soul? Or should his column be changed to, more appropriately, a review of the restaurants of upstate New York?

Martha A. Kelch  
18 Westway  
Rochester

## Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester thank donors for assisting congregational mission in Brazil

To the editor:

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester thank you — the people of the Rochester Diocese — for the continued support you give to our efforts among the people of Brazil. Your generous offering made at the time of the May Diocesan Mission Appeal has been received by us recently.

Our mission among the Brazilians in the sparsely settled rural areas of the states of Goias and Mato Grosso and the crowded city areas (favelas) on the outskirts of the cities of Uberlandia and Goiania calls us to accompany those people in a journey of faith characterized by involvement in their daily struggle. The continued interest on the part of the peo-

ple of the Rochester Diocese gives strength, courage and hope, as well as needed material assistance to our Sisters and to the people of Brazil who know about the spirit and generosity of the people of Rochester.

Be assured of our prayers. You are especially remembered by our 17 sisters now serving in Brazil, among whom are four Brazilian women.

Muito obrigada e Deus Thes pogue — Thank you very much and may God reward you.

Sister Elizabeth Anne LeValley  
Superior General  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester

## Time to reinflate the 'peace balloon'

I've been thinking a lot about peace initiatives — or the seeming lack thereof — since I returned from the recent conference of the Catholic Press Association's Eastern Region.

During that gathering, CPA members had the privilege of hearing Baltimore's Auxiliary Bishop Francis Murphy trace the development of the U.S. bishops' 1983 peace

## The Editor's Desk

pastoral from its inception to final draft (see story, page 5).

Although the bishops undertook the pastoral with enthusiasm and a sense of urgency, *The Challenge of Peace* has failed to sustain broad interest among Catholics or U.S. citizens in general, Bishop Murphy observed. "In my view, the air has gone out of the peace balloon," he said.

Those comments could not have seemed truer to me than they did this Monday as I read reports of the U.S. attack on two Iranian oil platforms.

Now, before my ideological opponents jump on that comment as an opportunity to educate me on the subtleties of military strategy, I'll freely admit that I'm no expert on Middle Eastern affairs. When I double-majored in political science in college, I stuck to comparatively uncomplicated political situations — like Central America.

Nevertheless, I am frightened by the Iranians' announcement that they consider the attack to be a declaration of war. I am concerned that the attack may have been motivated less by genuine defense objectives than by a desire to take revenge for earlier Iranian attacks. And I am disturbed by news commentary that focuses not on the potential for escalation but on the attack's possible role in sparking Monday's "meltdown" on Wall Street.

I can only hope that a real meltdown will not occur in the Persian Gulf.

— Karen M. Franz

## C-J Letters Policy

The Courier-Journal wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome all signed, original 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 opinions of the letter writers.

We reserve the right to edit all letters. Mail them to: Courier-Journal, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY, 14624. Please include your full name as well as telephone number and complete address for verification purposes.