

# Survey indicates overall satisfaction with 'Courier'

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

A *Catholic Courier* readership survey conducted earlier this year indicates that a majority of the paper's readers consider it an important part of their religious lives and that they would miss the *Courier* if they did not receive it.

The survey also indicates that for many people the paper serves as a primary resource for both diocesan news and news about the church as a whole. In addition, many of the readers surveyed said that they were pleased with the quality of articles written by *Courier* staff writers, and that the most-often read articles were bylined local news and feature stories.

According to Larry Lowe, president of Advertising and Circulation Strategies, Inc., and the researcher who conducted the survey, the results show, "This is an important paper. People are reading it."

The *Courier's* board of directors decided last fall to conduct the survey to get a profile of the readers, noted the paper's general manager, Bishop Dennis W. Hickey. "We wanted to identify the type of reader that we had, how they viewed the paper, how we could more adequately address their needs," he said. In addition, the *Courier* management hopes to use the results of the study to help increase circulation and to boost advertising revenues.

The survey was conducted in January and February, when 2,000 randomly selected subscribers were sent survey forms. The forms drew a response from 535 readers who returned completed questionnaires. The margin of error for the survey was five percent.

Survey results were received from Lowe in March. At their June 7 meeting, the *Courier's* board of directors authorized release of the survey.

The survey revealed that more than 67,000 people read the paper, a far higher figure than had been originally estimated, Lowe said. This figure is due in part to what he described as "pass-around" — a number of readers who pass their copies of the paper on to nonsubscribers.

Readers said the three major reasons they read the *Courier* were to receive news about the diocese (79.6 percent), to receive information about the worldwide church (58.9 percent) and to receive news about changes in the church (57.9 percent).

Respondents indicated that when they need guidance about what they believed as Catholics, 42.1 percent found help through reading the *Courier*. Only prayer (67.9 percent) and parish priests (48.6 percent) were greater sources of guidance.

In response to the statement "I would miss the (*Catholic Courier*) very much if I did not receive it," 61.2 percent of the respondents indicated that they would miss the paper.

The survey shows that of the sections and features in the *Catholic Courier*, the most frequently read sections were bylined local news and feature stories (68.7 percent), followed by the op-ed page (60.4

percent), the columnists' pages (56.9 percent) and the world and nation pages (48.3 percent). When asked about the quality of the articles written by *Courier* staff, 56.7 percent of those surveyed said they considered the articles well-written.

Bishop Hickey said he was pleased to find out that locally written stories were so highly regarded by readers. He also acknowledged that he was surprised that so few negative comments "came through despite the opportunity given to respondents to make their feelings known."

Lowe pointed out that the survey shows, "People are saying, 'Keep up the good work,' by nine to one." The results indicate that some people might have "specific complaints," he said, but that on the whole they are satisfied with the overall quality of the paper. Lowe further speculated that some individuals might be dissatisfied with the paper, but said that these people represent "the fringes" and not the mainstream audience of the paper.

The survey indicated at least one area for improvement, however. Lowe said that the *Courier* serves two audiences: people living in the metropolitan Rochester area, and those living in the areas of the diocese out-

side Monroe County. Lowe noted the survey indicates that people outside the Rochester area feel they do not receive adequate coverage.

According to survey results, 45.3 percent of the overall respondents believe that their parishes and nearby parishes receive adequate coverage, but when those figures are broken down into these two audience groups, 53.1 percent of Rochester residents see the coverage as adequate, while only 37.9 percent of the non-Rochester residents feel that way.

Karen M. Franz, editor-in-chief of the *Courier*, pointed out that the editorial staff was not surprised that the survey revealed dissatisfaction with the coverage of non-Rochester areas. "We had known from the beginning that our coverage (of these areas) was inadequate, but finances and staffing did not allow us to extend the coverage," she said.

Since the time the survey was taken, however, the *Courier* has instituted a policy of regional coverage, with each of the three staff writers assuming responsibility for one of the three regions of the diocese: Monroe and Livingston counties (Rob Cul-

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## SSJs to offer workshop

The Sisters of St. Joseph Spirituality Institute is offering a program, entitled "Creating a New Self Image" on consecutive Wednesdays from July 5-26.

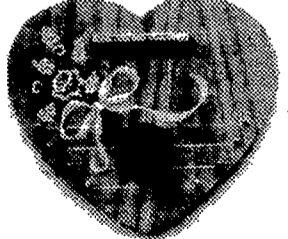
The four-part series, which will be led by Dr. Julie LeVeque, SSJ, D.Min., will take place from 9:30-11:30 a.m. at the motherhouse, 4095 East Ave., Rochester.

Each session will attempt to increase spiritual awareness — from a psycho-theological perspective — by exploring the call to mold oneself into the image and likeness of God.

To register, call Sister Ann de Porres, SSJ, at 716/586-1000, ext. 68.



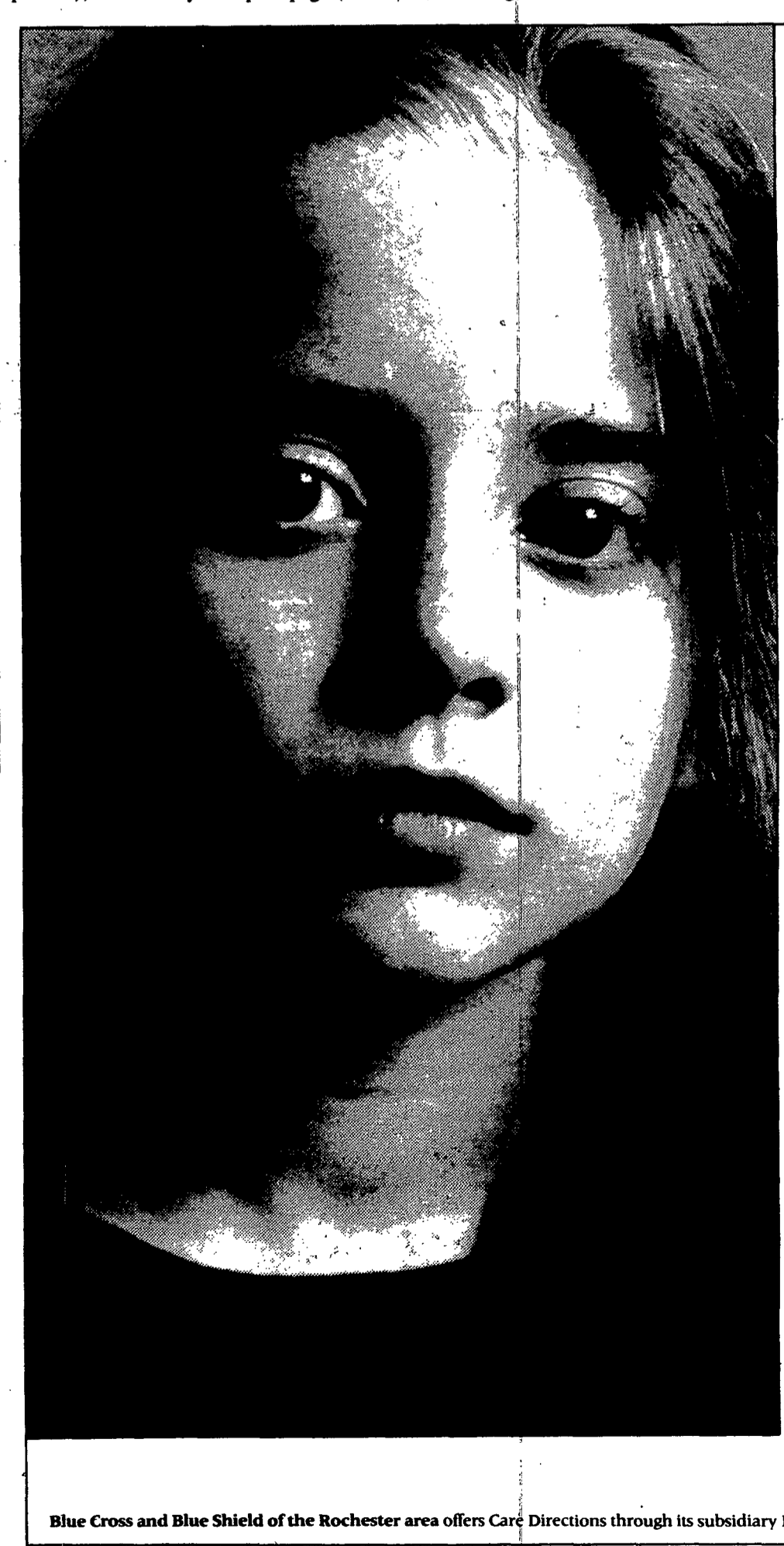
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