

CATHOLIC COURIER

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NY

Vol. 104 No. 2

Thursday, October 8, 1992

75¢

20 pages



Americans struggle with changing social structures

by Mike Latona
Staff writer

To accompany an Aug. 31 article about "family values" and the presidential campaign, *Time* magazine published a series of photographs depicting the dominant trends in U.S. family life during each decade of the 20th century.

The image selected to represent the 1990s bears this caption, "Alternative life-styles: a gay couple care for two AIDS-infected babies they have adopted."

Some might assert that the values espoused by the two men in that photo are diametrically opposed to the ideals for which the Holy Family stands. Others might contend, however, that because the two men love and care for the ailing babies, they constitute a legitimate family.

But from either perspective, the photo makes one point clear: families of the 1990s are far different from those of any previous generation.

"I think one thing we're facing is, 'How do you define a family?'" observed Maribeth Mancini, director of Evangelization and Catechesis for the Diocese of Rochester. "The family is now defined in a different way than the 'Leave It to Beaver' or 'Father Knows Best' families. Those are nuclear families, where the father goes off to work and the mother stays home with the children."

Mancini noted that single parents raising children because of divorce or choice, adults from former marriages, and multi-cultural marriages should also come under the definition of family.

Americans' departure from the traditional family unit can also be seen in such highly pub-

"I go along my own way with the simple wisdom I inherited from my home. These were chiefly the teachings of the Gospel and the dictates of a Christian life."

— Pope John XXIII

POLITICS and the FAMILY

licized controversies as the Murphy Brown baby and the affair Woody Allen conducted with the adopted daughter of ex-lover Mia Farrow.

Issues like these make for lively debate in an election year, so it's not surprising that Gov. Bill Clinton and — particularly — President Bush have focused on family values throughout their respective campaigns.

And, since so many topics can tie directly and indirectly to the question of "family values," it's difficult to determine which of the two campaign agendas would have the most positive effect on family life in this country.

"When you talk about either candidate, you have to consider a whole spectrum of issues — who reflects the things we hold dear, respecting life in all its forms, and supporting families in the many ways that they're configured nowadays," Mancini remarked.

Abortion has garnered considerable attention, and is the area in which Bush, a pro-life advocate, and Clinton, a pro-choice supporter, are clearly on opposite sides of the fence.

At the same time, children's rights are of special concern on Clinton's side. Hillary Clinton, wife of the Democratic nominee, serves on the board of the Washington, D.C.-based Children's Defense Fund and is that group's former chairperson.

The Children's Defense Fund joins with the Catholic bishops of the United States in supporting many of the child-related planks in the Democratic platform: family and medical leave

Continued on page 18