

Nurse says Navajo resent focus illness brings

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

FAIRPORT — In her work as a pediatric nurse at the Public Health Service's Indian Health Services hospital in Gallup, N.M., Lynn Lilly has had no direct contact with the respiratory illness that had been linked with at least 22 deaths in the Southwest as of July 12.

But the Catholic University of America graduate has had to deal with the consequences of that ailment, which first surfaced on the Navajo reservation her hospital serves.

Reporters have so interfered with hospital routine, Lilly noted, that employees have been told not to answer questions and to refer the media to press releases being put out by the health service.

In addition, the national media have played up the theory that the disease is caused by a virus spread by rodent droppings. These reports have helped foster the impression that the Navajo Reservation — the nation's largest, including portions of New Mexico, Arizona and Utah — is an unclean place, Lilly asserted.

"I think people are getting upset that the implication is that (the Navajo) live in dirty houses," Lilly told the *Catholic Courier* during a June visit to her parents' home in Fairport, where they attend Church of the Assumption, 20 East Ave.

Indeed, according to news reports, the Navajo Nation Council voted 61-7 on June 30 to approve a resolution blaming the media for sensationalizing the disease and causing damage to the tribe. The council asked tribal and state attorneys to investigate the possibility that the tribe is being discriminated against as a result of the illness.

Publicity about the illness also has

hurt tourism in the area, Lilly noted. And one group of students from the reservation that went to California was even prevented from meeting with their pen pals because of fear about the disease.

As a pediatric nurse, Lilly pointed out, she has not had to deal directly with individuals who have been stricken by the illness. Most of her time is spent treating childhood diseases, gastrointestinal problems and dehydration. The latter problem, she explained, is caused by the dry climate and the fact that reservation residents often do not have running water in their homes, and must haul water from community centers.

The Gallup hospital supplements services provided at clinics and hospitals on the Navajo reservation. The hospital also serves as a stopping point for critically ill patients being transported to larger hospitals.

Lilly has worked at the hospital since June, 1992. She committed to an 18-month stay in return for a scholarship — funded by the Public Health Service — for her studies at Catholic University, from which she graduated in 1992. That commitment ends in October of this year, but she said she will probably continue to work at the hospital after that point.

The kinds of tasks she performs at the Gallup hospital are similar to those she would be doing at any small, rural hospital, Lilly remarked. Working there has helped her to learn to live without some of the sophisticated services and equipment she would have found at a large facility.

"I've learned from the other nurses to be more resourceful, to do with less," Lilly observed.

That emphasis is one she has also learned from the Navajo people, Lilly noted. There is little industry, so jobs are hard to come by, she said. Many of



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer
Lynn Lilly works as a pediatric nurse at the Public Health Service's Indian Health Services hospital in Gallup, N.M.

the Navajo raise sheep or make money through such crafts as jewelry making. Thus, they lead a much more simple life than she was used to in Fairport.

"It's hard to realize people can live without running water, electricity and phones," Lilly said. "People adapt to it."

One aspect that sets the Gallup hospital apart from similar facilities is that the Indian Service hospital recognizes Navajo spirituality in treating patients.

"Frequently, people have medicine men coming in to take part in the treatment of their children," Lilly ob-

served. "They conduct ceremonies and healing services."

Some parents of critically ill children have also requested that their offspring be baptized before being transported to other hospitals for treatment. But because there are no full-time chaplains assigned to the hospital, in emergency situations the staff have had to perform the baptisms, Lilly said.

"I've had a couple of instances where I have helped them baptize their babies before they leave," she explained.

Lawyers' ad draws questioning response from readers

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The June 24 issue of the *Catholic Courier* included a paid advertisement criticizing the diocesan Synod. The advertisement was signed by the St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild's board of governors.

In the days following that issue's publication, several readers contacted the *Courier* wondering about the guild's purpose and its motives for

placing such an advertisement.

Other readers wanted to know why the critical advertisement ran in a diocesan publication of which Bishop Matthew H. Clark is president.

The following article will address some of these questions. Readers should also see pages 17-19 for letters concerning the ad.

Information about the guild and its ad was provided in a three-page statement from Michael DiPrima, president, who faxed his statements to

the *Courier* on Monday, July 12, after he was provided a list of questions on Friday, July 9.

The St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild comprises 220 Catholic lawyers, providing a forum in which the Catholic position on moral and legal issues can be presented. The guild's goals are "to defend positions of the Roman Catholic Church demonstrating our fidelity to the Pope and the teaching arm of the Church, the Magisterium," DiPrima wrote in his statement.

The guild's activities are administered by a 20-member board of governors. Five of the board members served on a committee that prepared the ad "with the assistance of clergy who served as Canon Law advisors."

The committee was "formed several

months ago," and "closely followed the Synod's parish activities," researching legal and historical matters found in the ad.

DiPrima responded to *Courier* questions concerning Father Joseph A. Hart's criticisms of the ad in his July 1 Synod column, headlined "Setting record straight on the Synod." Father Hart, director of the diocesan Office of the Synod, labeled the ad "a terrorist act" that insulted the diocese was violating church law by expanding the scope and content of the Synod beyond that of its last Synod in 1954.

Father Hart's column stated that the diocesan Synod was "governed by the canons of the 1983 Code (of Canon Law), not those of 1917, and so its

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