

Staff endeavors to 'get it right'

By Karen M. Franz
Editor in chief

The April 16 issue of *Editor & Publisher* contains the essay "Getting It Right" by Keith Shelton, who offers a set of "commandments" intended to help stem a trend toward inaccurate reporting.

Shelton's tips may serve as a refresher for our editorial staff members, who always have put a high priority on getting it right. But I was more interested in Shelton's assertion that even the most minor inaccuracies seriously weaken respect for the press.

His argument caught my attention because of a few readers' reactions to mistakes we have made. Last month, for example, we published an Associated Press photo showing a statue of St. Teresa in the background. In its caption for the photo, the AP said the statue was of the Blessed Virgin. Someone at the *Courier* typed up the erroneous caption without looking at the photograph, and the caption later was edited, also without referring to the photo.

We weren't surprised to hear about the mistake, but we were taken aback by the tone of one or two responses. They varied slightly, but the basic idea was: "Aha! I caught you dummies in a good one this time! You work for a Catholic newspaper, and you can't even tell St. Teresa from the Blessed Virgin!"

Another subscriber recently took the "Courier-Journal" (our name prior to 1989) to task for a Last Supper engraving used in an ad. I hadn't counted



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until I received the note, but the engraving — which came from a book of public-domain art — depicts only 10 apostles. I understand Judas' absence, but I have no idea why the 11th apostle is missing. "Please, be right," the writer pleaded. "Such a mistake, really."

I generally don't have much trouble admitting that everybody at the *Courier* — including me — makes mistakes. But comments like these tend to elicit a defensive response. I'm inclined to mutter that the *Courier* makes fewer typographical and other errors than does newspaper X or Y, and that we always run correction notices as soon as we become aware of mistakes.

When the defensiveness fades, however, I think it's more productive to acknowledge that our method of han-

dling images is not as fail-safe as our system for handling articles. Since images make their way through our system toward the end of the production schedule, they probably don't get the same degree of attention that other material receives. We'll work on it.

LAST MONTH, I discussed *Courier* sports coverage and asked readers to respond to my comments.

Judging from one reply, I started that column with a misleading statement. I noted that sports coverage was the "most common" source of criticism made to Bishop Clark and to me during the past six months. That is true not because vast numbers have complained about sports, but because of the wide variety of the other comments. By my count, fewer than a dozen people have complained about sports coverage in recent months.

Last month's column prompted five more responses. Three writers — including two who previously wrote to the bishop — favored reducing or eliminating sports. All three anti-sports responses came from the Southern Tier. Two writers supported sports and other efforts to foster teen readership.

Since anti-sports comments already have been quoted in Bishop Clark's column, I'd like to take an excerpt from the letter of Mrs. Jacqueline Iekel, whose daughter graduated from Nazareth Academy last year. She wrote:

"I must tell you that every week the sports section was one of the first viewed at our home. Even when I would pick my daughter up from school

(*Courier* in hand), I would be told, 'We already saw the article.' ... Even though my children are no longer in high school, I still find it of interest to read about their former high schools and note what they are doing in sports as well as other areas. Please keep the sports page alive — for the young people as well as parents."

Four of the five writers asked that we expand our youth-page coverage. The fifth suggested that both youth and sports be moved to a separate section that could be "skipped" by readers who were not interested.

We were pleasantly surprised to read a suggestion from Diane Brooks of Arkport because we had been considering the very same idea. Ms. Brooks suggested that expanded youth coverage include an "involvement" column highlighting youth efforts and successes.

We've been putting "people notes" about teens in the "Recognizing" column that appears periodically on the diocesan news pages. But in upcoming issues, the youth page will carry its own Recognizing-like column especially for teens. We'll also look into expanding youth coverage to two pages, but I can't make any promises at this point.

I CAN PROMISE a new bi-monthly column beginning with next week's issue. "The Moral Life" by Sister Patricia Schoelles, SSJ, Ph.D., will address questions of morality in everyday life.

Please send your comments to: "Between the Lines," c/o Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY 14624.

Adversity doth best discover virtue

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) John 15:1-8; (R1) Acts 9:26-31; (R2) 1 John 3:18-24.

Life consists of relationships. Prose does not suffice to express the deep, intimate relationship of love. We need the imaginative, romantic language of poetry, which is simply the expression of deep thoughts and feelings in figurative language — language marked with figures of speech.

Take, for example, the following similes: "as lonely as a merry-go-round without children," or "as nervous as a mailman at a dog show." In Sunday's Gospel, Jesus uses metaphor, a comparison without the use of "like" or "as." He says, "I am the true vine."

The key word is "true." For Israel was God's vine. A golden vine was embossed on the great door of the Temple, symbolizing Israel clinging to her God. The Old Testament prophets spoke of Israel as God's vine-



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yard and berated her for not producing fruit.

Jesus implied the same thing in saying "I am the true vine." He was saying that Israel was no longer the true vine. Clinging to Israel would not save. Being a Jew was no longer enough for

salvation. Salvation will be found only in union with Himself.

So Jesus said, "Apart from me" — not "without me," for God is always with us — but "apart from me," for we can cut ourselves off from Him.

"Apart from me, you can do nothing;" not you will do nothing, but can do nothing. It is not a question of not wanting, but of inability. Apart from Him we are not able to do.

"Apart from me you can do nothing;" not you will do little, but nothing. Apart from Him we would produce zero regarding salvation, just as the branch separated from the vine withers and dies fruitless.

So seven times Jesus says, "Live on in Me ... Live in Me ... Stay part of me ..."

How can we do this? Grapevines need trellises or supports. We need to have orderly habits of life — spiritual discipline. Grapevines need pruning. Dead branches, shoots, and suckers need to be cut away. Vine wood is good for nothing but the bonfire. The church can become weighted down

with deadwood — nominal Catholics. Often God sends storms of persecution, trial and temptation to purge the deadwood. "He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored."

The living branches, on the contrary, are trimmed to make them more fruitful. Often the pruning knife is affliction. Francis the Thompson asked, "Must Thou char the wood, ere Thou canst limn with it?" The artist cannot make a charcoal drawing until he first chars the wood. So whom God love He chastises, not to punish, but to purify. Adversity doth best discover virtue.

Finally, the grapevine is the most perfect of plants: it has no thorns; it does no harm to whatever it clings, rather it provides shade; its leaves are edible; from its grapes come the wine that delights man's heart and that God changes into His own body and blood, so that we too might be changed to produce the fruits of joy everywhere by our loving-kindness.

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