

Some see humor as no laughing matter

By Karen M. Franz
Editor in chief

Two months ago I raised the question of humor — specifically humor in the vein of "Nonsense" and the "Sister Act" films — in the *Catholic Courier*. One reader had written to ask for humor in the *Courier*. The same week, another reader wrote to protest our publication of tongue-in-cheek ads from singer/actress Phyl Contestable, a/k/a "Reverend Mother."

Some of those who have responded to my question — including Elmiran Edmund J. McGarrell Jr. and Father Raymond Heisel — advised against using humor in the *Courier*, not because they personally dislike it, but because their experience had shown it to be a risky business.

Father Heisel, well-known for his wry wit, noted that a previous *Courier* editor once invited him to write a weekly humor column. Doing so, Father Heisel warned, "is setting a dangerous booby trap for oneself."

Ginny Pratt of Dansville summarized the pros and cons of including humor when she wrote: "So if humor is good for the mind and body why not entertain it liberally? We have all embraced humor in our lives, welcoming it like a friend. The problem lies in each person having a different idea of who is a friend, or ... of what constitutes humor."

With specific reference to Phyl Contestable, I received letters from two of her recent clients. Sue Boone of Fair-



BETWEEN THE LINES

port said Ms. Contestable's act was the highlight of her parents' recent 50th anniversary party.

"The act was humorous and tastefully done," Ms. Boone wrote. "In the audience were a pastor of a local church and an ex-nun who in no way found any portion of the routine 'gross or contemptible' (a reference to the original complaint about the ads). On the contrary, they found it delightfully entertaining."

Ms. Boone concluded her letter by asserting, "Humor absolutely belongs in Catholic literature and daily living, knowing that the riddle of life can only be solved with a mixture of prayer and laughter."

Ms. Contestable likewise performed at the 50th-anniversary gala for Pitts-

ford resident Joyce Rooney and her husband. Noting that most of those attending the party were "probably 60 and older," Mrs. Rooney said no one found Reverend Mother offensive.

"When we can't laugh at ourselves anymore, we might as well bury our heads in the sand," Mrs. Rooney stated.

And, *finally*, a woman religious wrote to give her views on the subject. Sister Rosemary Sherman, RSM, observed that "Nonsense" and "Sister Act" can have an evangelizing effect.

Among friends and acquaintances who were not raised Catholic, Sister Sherman said, "I found these shows to be the springboard for many questions and discussion ... Personally, I felt the messages of 'Sister Act I and II' to be very good. I do feel it's unfortunate that we have to find that kind of media raises questions and interest in ways our everyday life and ministry does not. At least people are aware sisters still exist!"

On the other hand, Barbara Fredericks of Rochester observed that the religious do not need "our laughter and crude jokes!"

Questioning my reference to habits as elements of religious life prior to Vatican II, she noted that a thriving organization called The Institute for Religious Life today comprises individual priests, bishops and congregations of fully habited religious sisters.

"Humility, as exhibited by these religious sisters, is *not* to be joked about," Mrs. Fredericks wrote. "Obedience is *not* the material for sarcasm and rid-

icule."

Clearly, the jury's still out on the question of humor in the *Courier*. But, having seen and enjoyed "Nonsense," "Sister Act," "Sister Act II" and Ms. Contestable's Reverend Mother show, I have to wonder if those who criticize them actually have seen them. Is it possible that critics are inferring ridicule and derision where none exists? And, if that is the case, who is disparaging whom?

TWO MONTHS AGO, I promised to discuss the importance of advertising in the *Catholic Courier*. I haven't returned to that topic here — nor to the question of special supplements, which I raised last month — because of staffing developments that will have a significant impact on both subjects.

As noted in the article on page 10, the *Catholic Courier's* advertising department has been revamped. Ray Frey — formerly advertising and business manager of the *Lake Shore Visitor*, newspaper of the Diocese of Erie, Pa. — joins us Aug. 1 as advertising director. In the weeks ahead, Ray and our newly promoted assistant advertising manager, Kathy Welsh, will be working with the editorial department to generate fresh ideas about special sections for 1995.

Your input — both letters I've already received and any comments you'd still like to make — will be a key factor in our planning for next year. I'll keep you up to date as new ideas surface and as plans start to gel.

I should be Ben and Jerry's new CEO

By Gregory F. Augustine Pierce
Syndicated columnist

By now I'm sure you have heard of the contest that Ben and Jerry's Finest, Inc., the Vermont ice cream company, is conducting to find a new chief executive officer.

It seems that Ben is retiring, and rather than go the normal route most companies take to find a new leader, Ben and Jerry's is holding a nationwide essay contest, with first prize (supposedly) that the winner is named the company's new CEO.

Ben and Jerry's has always been an iconoclastic, irreverent and innovative business, so the "Yo! I'm Your CEO" contest makes some sort of weird sense, and being a businessman who



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is attracted by this sort of thinking I decided to enter.

The rules are simple. I had to write — in 100 words or less — why I want to be the new CEO of Ben and Jerry's Finest, Inc. (Oh, yeah, I also had to enclose a pint lid from my favorite flavor of Ben and Jerry's ice cream. They may be iconoclastic, but they are still excellent marketers.)

The contest turned out to be a truly spiritual exercise for me, because it forced me to reflect not only on why I might want to be the CEO of a company like this, but also on why a company like this might want me. I figured that they would get plenty of funny applications, so I opted for the serious approach: one that I thought might speak to people who are really

searching for a leader who thinks about work in a different way.

Here is my entry (exactly 99 words): "Is work a burden or a blessing?"

"If you think work is a burden — the punishment for Adam and Eve's sin, mere toil that must be endured so we are free to do other things that are more fun, fulfilling or fruitful — then it really doesn't matter who your CEO is, and I'm not interested in the job.

If you think work is a blessing — a way that we become fully human, participate in the ongoing creation of the universe, discover the meaningful and transcendent in life — then I can help you operate your company as if this were truly so."

If I win, I'll treat you all to a free ice cream bar.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	BINGO TIMES & LOCATIONS
	St. Charles Borromeo St. Mary	Holy Apostles Our Lady of Mercy St. Stanislaus	The Aquinas Institute Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual	Help St. Anne St. James St. Michael's	St. Stanislaus St. Cecilia's	St. Mark's Good Shepherd St. Michael St. Thomas the Apostle	Aquinas Institute 1127 Dewey Ave. 254-2020 Wed. 8pm Bishop Kearney 125 Kings Hwy. S. 671-1065 Wed. 8pm Good Shepherd 3288 E. Henrietta Rd. 334-3518 Sat. 7:30pm Guardian Angels Church 2051 E. Henrietta Rd. 334-1412 Wed. 7:30pm Holy Apostles 6 Austin St. 254-7170 Tues. 7:30pm Holy Family Church 895 Jay Street 328-3110 Sun. 7:30pm Holy Family Home School Assoc. 899 Jay St. 328-4800 Wed. 7:30pm Our Lady of Mercy 600 Denise Rd. 865-0775 Tue. 7:30pm Our Lady of Perpetual Help 923 Portland Ave. 467-2725 Wed. 7:30pm St. Anne 1600 Mt. Hope Ave. 271-3250 Thur. 7:30pm St. Boniface
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Theodore St. Stanislaus	St. Charles Borromeo St. Mary	Holy Apostles Our Lady of Mercy St. Stanislaus	The Aquinas Institute Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual Help	St. Anne St. James St. Michael's St. Stanislaus	St. Cecilia's St. Mark's	Good Shepherd St. Michael St. Thomas the Apostle	15 Whalin St. 271-1468 Sun. 7:30pm St. Cecilia's 2732 Culver Rd. 467-4266 Fri. 7:30pm St. Charles Borromeo 64 Maiden Lane 663-3230 Mon. 8pm St. James 119 Brockley Rd. 482-9796 Thur. 7:30pm St. Mark's 54 Kuhn Rd. 225-3710 Fri. 8pm St. Mary Lyceum Hall Auburn 315-252-9545 Mon. 7:30pm St. Michael's 859 Clinton Ave. N 325-4040 Thur. 7:30 & 9pm St. Michael's 320 S. Main St. Newark 315-332-2297 Sat. 1pm St. Rita's 1008 Maple Dr. 671-1100 Sun. 7:30pm St. Stanislaus 1150 Hudson Ave. 467-1472 Sun. Tue & Thur 6:15pm St. Theodore 170 Spencerport Rd.
Holy Family St. Ambrose St. Boniface St. Rita's St. Theodore St. Stanislaus	St. Charles Borromeo St. Mary	Holy Apostles Our Lady of Mercy St. Stanislaus	The Aquinas Institute Bishop Kearney Guardian Angels Holy Family Home School Assoc. Our Lady of Perpetual	Help St. Anne St. James St. Michael's	St. Stanislaus St. Cecilia's	St. Mark's Good Shepherd St. Michael St. Thomas the Apostle	
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