

## Readership survey is on the way

By Karen M. Franz  
Editor

Next week, 2,000 of you will receive a "special edition" from the *Catholic Courier*. That mailing won't contain the latest diocesan news or photographs of parish activities. Instead, it will contain questions — 32 of them, to be exact — about you, our readers, and your opinions of this newspaper.

We conducted our last readership survey in 1989. The results of that study we had embarked upon several months prior to the study, and helped our advertising and circulation departments design their marketing efforts for the next five years.

As you know, the *Catholic Courier* has changed quite a bit since 1989, and we suspect that patterns among our readership may have changed as well. So our staff will be very interested in learning how far you think we've come during the last five years, and how far we still have to go to produce the best-possible newspaper for the people of this diocese.

Our editorial department is posing questions about why you read the



### BETWEEN THE LINES

*Courier*, what features you read regularly, what you like best and what you think needs improvement. We're especially interested in gaining information about your perceptions of our cover stories and sports coverage.

As important as such information is to the *Courier's* editors and writers, the readership survey may be even more critical to our advertising staff. You may not realize it, but advertis-

ing accounts for more than one-third of this newspaper's annual budget. Without advertising revenue, we would be forced to raise subscription fees by nearly \$7 per year!

And as we steel ourselves against a promised postal-rate increase of 15 to 20 percent in January, 1995, we anticipate leaning even more heavily on the efforts of our advertising department. (Mail delivery of the *Courier*, by the way, already accounts for nearly 20 percent of our annual budget.)

At one time, Catholic-owned and other businesses often purchased advertising in Catholic newspapers as a donation to the newspapers or as a means of generating goodwill within the Catholic community.

That doesn't happen anymore, which is both a blessing and something of a hardship. It's a blessing because we'd much rather *earn* our advertising revenues than accept them as donations. But it's a prove — often battling biases against non-daily newspapers and religious media in general — that advertising in the *Catholic Courier* really works for the advertiser.

More than 35 newspapers serve the

people of the 12-county Diocese of Rochester. Amid such competition, the *Courier's* advertising sales representatives need data they can use to create a reader profile for advertisers' review. Such a profile shows prospective clients how advertising in the *Catholic Courier* can help their businesses grow.

The 2,000 subscriber households that will receive the survey were selected at random from our 50,000-subscriber mailing list. That means each family responding to the survey will represent not only its own opinions but, statistically speaking, those of 24 other families as well.

That's why we hope those of you who receive our readership survey will take the time to complete the entire questionnaire — including questions about your family income and buying patterns. I personally guarantee that no one on our staff — myself included — will be able to hear of the responses of any given household. And the composite survey data will be held in strict confidentiality for use only by the *Courier* staff.

We look forward to hearing from you!

## Undergo a transformation this season

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

**Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 21:25-28, 34-36; (R1) Jeremiah 33:14-16; (R2) 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2.**

In the Gospel our Lord says, "Raise up your heads, for your ransom is near at hand." That's the joy behind Christmas: Jesus is born to ransom us.

If a person were sold into slavery, the only way that person could gain freedom was to pay a ransom price or have someone else do that for him or her. Ransom is payment for a life that would otherwise have been condemned to bondage or death. St. Paul said that we have been bought with a price from the slavery of sin and the powers of darkness so that we can now live in freedom as children of God.

One of the most marvelous occurrences in nature is the caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly. The caterpillar is a hairy worm. It eats green things and has no interest in beautiful flowers. It makes no effort to fly; it is content to crawl around. As winter approaches, the caterpillar



### A WORD FOR SUNDAY

weaves a cocoon around itself. And there the caterpillar encloses itself for the entire winter.

When springtime comes there emerges from the cocoon, not the ugly worm-like caterpillar, but a beautiful butterfly with colorful wings and a remarkable tongue to draw up nectar from flowers.

Scientists do not know how this

metamorphosis is accomplished. All we can say, with St. Paul, is "How deep are the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God."

What is wonderful in the insect world is even more wonderful in God's ways with us. Ransom, or redemption, is a transformation in us every bit as miraculous as that of a worm into a butterfly.

A few years ago there was a so-so movie called "Johnny Lingo," which featured a beautiful story. The story was set on a South Sea island, where one of the customs included the husband buying his wife. For three cows a man can get a good wife; for five cows an even better one. There lived on the island a 19-year-old girl named Mahana who was so homely her father would have taken one cow to get her off his hands. But there were no takers. Poor Mahana wasn't worth a cow.

But along comes Johnny Lingo. The villagers thought he had temporarily lost his mind when he offered to pay, not one cow, but eight cows for the unwanted Mahana to be his wife. The islanders couldn't believe it. Why

would the shrewdest and most handsome man on the island, pay eight cows for the ugly Mahana? No one could figure it out, including Mahana.

Well, the marriage takes place and Johnny Lingo and his homely bride leave the island for an extended honeymoon. In fact, it is some months before they return home. When they do return, the villagers can't believe what they see. Mahana is no longer an unbecoming, awkward and shy girl. Instead she has become a young woman, radiant with poise and charm. Johnny's love for Mahana has ransomed her — transformed her from a nobody into the most vivacious woman on the island — so much so, that Mahana's father was so Johnno, that Mahana's island was not worth just eight cows; she's worth 10 cows now.

What a nice parable of God's redeeming love to us. In one of his Christmas sermons, Leo the Great says, "O Christian, know your dignity. Realize who you now are." So at the beginning of Advent, "May God strengthen your hearts, making them blameless and holy before our God and Father and the coming of our Lord



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