

## Why we don't publish adoption ads

By Karen M. Franz  
Editor in chief

As you know, many newspapers routinely carry advertisements from prospective parents seeking children to adopt. These advertisements appear under the "Personal" column of such newspapers' classified ads, along with ads from individuals seeking dates and potential marriage partners.

For many years, it has been the *Catholic Courier's* policy to refuse all "personal" ads. It has been our position that such advertisements place parenthood and matrimony in an inappropriately commercial atmosphere, and that doing so is not a proper role for a Catholic newspaper.

Not surprisingly, couples wishing to place adoption ads periodically have challenged that policy. Since the Catholic Church opposes abortion, they argue, Catholic newspapers are obligated to support adoption in every way possible.

We certainly agree that all Catholic institutions must support alternatives to abortion. That is why we cover the activities of such agencies as Birthright, the Problem Pregnancy Help Center and the Crisis Pregnancy Center. Support for alternatives to



### **B**ETWEEN THE LINES

abortion also was the impetus for our publication last month of a cover story on the topic of adoption and foster parenthood.

But we remain uncomfortable with the prospect of including adoption ads in our classified section for the following reasons:

- 1) We prefer to avoid the whole domain of "personal" ads and the negative associations they carry.
- 2) We have no means of screening couples who wish to place such ads.

As our Jan. 26 article noted, adoption agencies conduct multiple interviews with potential adoptive parents, visit their homes, put them through a child-abuse screening process and, sometimes, require them to submit to fingerprinting and FBI screening. Even with such precautions, agencies sometimes have failed to avoid placing children in unhealthy situations. How can the *Catholic Courier* — which has absolutely no expertise in these matters — accept such moral and legal responsibilities?

3) Typically, couples who turn to private adoption have been rejected or discouraged by adoption agencies. We fully recognize that a couple's age is a common reason for private adoption, since spouses in their mid-30s would be well over 40 by the time they reached the top of an agency's lengthy waiting list. But couples seeking private adoption also may have been rejected by agencies for other reasons — including the possibility that they failed one or more steps in the screening process. Is it appropriate for the *Catholic Courier* to circumvent a process — however burdensome — that was designed to protect children?

4) What about the law firms that specialize in arranging private adop-

tions, which can carry costs of \$15,000 or more? How do we as Catholics feel about this burgeoning "industry"?

5) Finally, given that so many other newspapers in the diocese accept adoption ads, what is the advantage of placing such ads in the *Catholic Courier*? Other than religious background, do *Courier* readers share some other characteristic that is especially attractive to adopting couples? If so, should the *Courier* foster whatever belief system underlies such a preference?

These are the questions the *Courier's* staff and board pondered before deciding to maintain — for the time being, at least — our current policy against adoption and all other "personal" ads. (We did, however, decide to include a weekly "announcement" classified ad listing agencies that can assist couples in their search for children to adopt. That ad appears this week on page 18).

What do you think? Although I'm not submitting this issue to a vote, I would like to hear your answers to the questions I put forth above, and to any others you might wish to raise. As always, send your responses to: Between the Lines, Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

## Learn lesson to never jump to conclusions

Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Luke 6:39-45; (R1) Sirach 27:4-7. (R2) 1 Corinthians 15:54-58.

Our blessed Lord said, "Why look at the speck in your brother's eye when you miss the plank in your own?" Just before saying this, Jesus said, "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven."

Ponder those words well. If you judge, you're going to be judged. If you condemn, you're going to be condemned. If you forgive, you're going to be forgiven.

Our sad experience often furnishes us with the tragic truth that we have often been misjudged and often have misjudged others. A classic example of how one could have misjudged is the story of Mary herself. She was betrothed to St. Joseph. He noticed that she was with child. Imagine what a shock this must have been to him. He knew nothing of the Annunciation story. He knew nothing of virginal conception. It would seem that Mary had committed adultery. What other interpretation was possible.

Scripture says that Joseph was a just



### **A**WORD FOR SUNDAY

man. So, not wishing to expose Mary to reproach, Joseph was minded to put her away privately. Can you not imagine how much these two holy souls must have suffered during this severe trial and how painful this perplexity must have been to St. Joseph. Both of these holy souls suffered mental anguish for days, maybe for weeks. Circumstances were such that both were completely helpless.

Humility and modesty forbade St. Joseph to ask Mary for an explanation of what had happened. Perhaps Mary

suffered even more, for neither could she in her great humility and modesty of her own accord tell Joseph what had happened on the Annunciation. The painful situation was aggravated because St. Joseph knew full well that according to the Law, adultery was punishable with death by stoning.

Thus both suffered, until God Himself intervened, just when St. Joseph had decided to go silently away — rather than accuse her and have her condemned. In that critical moment, God Himself intervened and sent an angel to enlighten Joseph on the mystery of the Incarnation. Thus the great trial came to an end.

What a lesson for us never to jump to conclusions, no matter how clear the evidence seems to be.

Christopher Columbus was laughed to scorn when he proposed that he could find a shorter route to India by sailing West. Robert Fulton's steamboat the *Clermont* was called "Fulton's Folly," and he himself, the inventor, was ridiculed and derided. Thomas A. Edison was laughed at by the people of his hometown. He was dismissed from school after only three months and told not to return. They called him addleheaded. His father resented people saying, "That's Sam

Edison's boy." Yet no other inventor has done so much for humanity as Edison, with 1,200 U.S. patents to his name. The list is endless of other great men and women who endured taunts, insults, and contempt because they were misjudged.

How easy it is to misconstrue an action by putting our own mistaken interpretation on it.

An English lady, a self-appointed supervisor of the morals of her village, accused a workman of reverting to drink because, she said, "With my own eyes I saw your wheelbarrow standing outside the saloon."

The accused man said nothing in his defense. That same evening, he left his wheelbarrow outside her door — and left it there all night.

When a tale of slander, or some sensational accusation, comes your way, make it pass this test: is it true? Is it needful? Is it kind?

Throughout the centuries, the power for good or evil of the tongue has been recognized.

"The tongue is but three inches long, yet it can kill a man six feet high" (Japanese). Read Shakespeare's "Othello."

"Keep your tongue and keep your friend" (India-Hindu).

"Whose heart is narrow, his tongue is large" (Hebrew).

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