

Readership survey indicates positive trends

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

For the second time in six years, a readership survey has indicated that *Catholic Courier* readers consider the newspaper an important part of their spiritual lives.

The new study also indicates that a substantial majority of survey respondents rate the *Courier* as a quality newspaper with accurate and interesting articles; believe the diocese needs the *Courier*; that the *Courier* has improved in the last five years. The study, conducted in December, 1994, also showed that *Courier* readers tend to be better educated and have a higher household income than does the general population.

At the same time, the survey shows that readers outside Monroe County are dissatisfied with the coverage their parishes receive in comparison with coverage of Monroe County parishes.

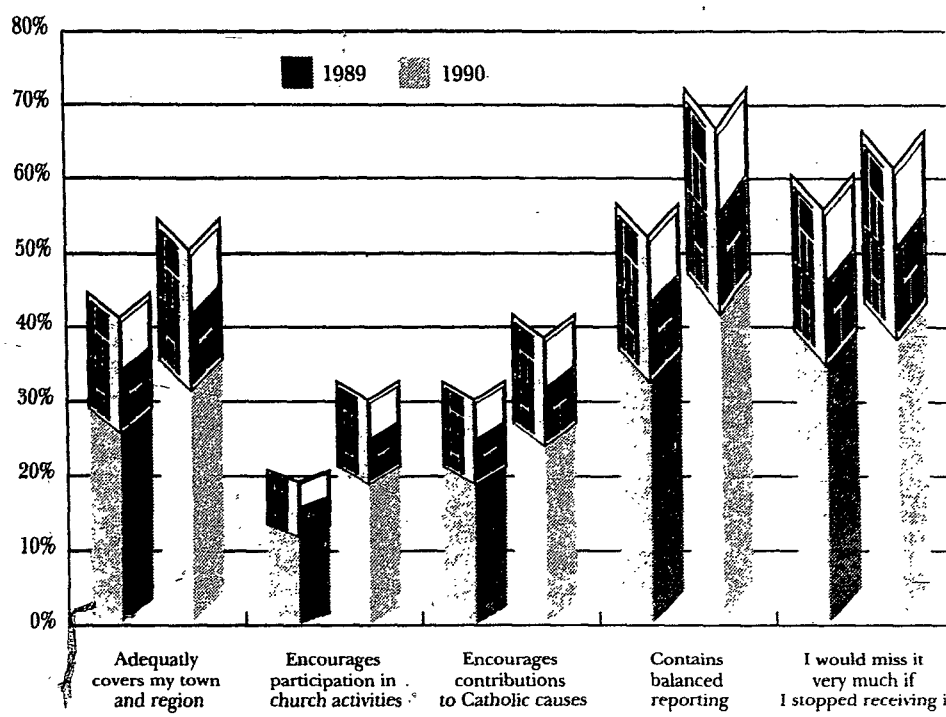
Nevertheless, the study indicates improved perceptions of the newspaper as compared to a readership study conducted in 1989, noted Karen M. Franz, the *Courier's* editor and assistant general manager. Indeed, one of the reasons for conducting the new study was to assess the effects of changes made in the newspaper since the earlier study, she observed. In the 1994 study, 80 percent of respondents said they believed the paper had improved in the past five years.

"That was very heartening to see that statistic come back," Franz said.

Another result that stood out was the fact that although a significant share of respondents believe Monroe County receives too much coverage — some 43 percent of respondents said the paper caters too much to people who live in Monroe County — the study showed some improvement in people's sense of coverage of their areas, Franz continued.

"The other heartening piece of data was 'only' 55 percent say coverage of their area is adequate. The figure was 45.3 percent in 1989," Franz observed.

Do you agree with these statements about the Courier?



Percent responding "yes" in 1989 and 1994

"There's a lot of room for improvement, but at least we're moving in the right direction."

The study was conducted by Patricia Sorce, Ph.D., an associate professor of marketing at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Questionnaires were mailed to 2,000 subscribers, selected to represent the readership of *Courier* according to geographic distribution. Sorce received 447 usable responses — a response rate of 22 percent.

Sorce pointed out that the distribution of responses was representative of the subscriber population: 48 percent of the responses came from Monroe and Livingston counties (which actually comprise approximately 64 percent of the subscribers); 20 percent from the Finger Lakes region; 22 percent from the Southern Tier. The Finger Lakes and Southern Tier each are home to 19 percent of *Courier* subscribers.

"That was a good response to a mail

survey," Sorce said, noting that the response rate was in line with other readership studies she had done.

Sorce added, "We have a great deal of confidence that the sample represents the population."

Among the results of the study: 86 percent of the respondents agreed that the *Courier* is a quality newspaper; 92 percent said it had interesting articles; 85 percent said the *Courier* provides adequate coverage of diocesan news; 72 percent that the newspaper is an effective tool for religious education; and 90 percent felt that the diocese needs the *Courier*.

In response to a question about what they like most about the *Catholic Courier*, the most frequently mentioned part of the paper was Bishop Clark's column (cited by 19.3 percent of the respondents), followed by columnists in general (15.2 percent), news of the church and diocesan news (14.5 percent), Father Shamon's col-

umn (12.8 percent), and regional news and coverage of local parishes (12.2 percent).

Among the topics most frequently cited as areas for potential improvement were regional/local coverage of parishes and the possibility of adding regional editions of the *Courier* (29.1 percent) and more religious instruction (15.1 percent).

In addition, 36 percent of respondents agreed with a statement that the newspaper does not cater enough to the interests of younger Catholic families.

Franz noted that the *Courier* staff has endeavored over the past few years to provide more regional and local coverage. The calendar has been regionalized. Each staff writer has been assigned a region. And the paper has begun bimonthly parish profiles highlighting cluster and individual parishes throughout the diocese.

Among options currently being explored are regional editions for the Finger Lakes and the Southern Tier. In such editions — actually four-page regionalized sections — some content geared to Monroe County would be replaced with local content for distribution in the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier. These sections would allow more room for local advertisers.

Franz also said she has been looking at columns related to families. "But I'm not sure," she said, "that a column will counter that perception and fulfill that need."

Sorce said survey respondents tended to be better educated than the general population of New York state, with 45 percent of having at least a college education as compared to 30 percent of the population in the state. Of the respondents, 40 percent had household incomes of \$45,000 or more. Sorce said the closest comparable figure available to her indicated that in the U.S. as a whole, 26 percent of households earn \$50,000 or more — indicating that the people who responded to the *Courier* survey tend

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Catholic woman to sponsor program denying Holocaust

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

SENECA FALLS — A Catholic woman in this Seneca County village has become the sponsor of a program denying that the Holocaust ever happened.

Lucille Povero said she is attempting to get the program called "Another Voice of Freedom" on Finger Lakes Television's cable-access channel.

Produced by Ernst Zundel, a German immigrant now living in Canada, the program denies the occurrence of the Holocaust, in which approximately six million Jews died at the hands of the Nazis.

Povero said she wants to sponsor the program because she believes in free speech. In addition, Povero said, "I think the guy has a point."

And "the point," she explained, is that "the Holocaust propaganda is an elaborate hoax" intended to gain billions of dollars in war reparations for Israel.

Povero's decision to sponsor the program is one more development in the producer's long battle to get the show on Finger Lakes Television's cable-access channel.

After airing last fall, the program was pulled when station officials learned that they were only required to carry programs submitted by New York state

'All anyone has to do to exercise the right of free speech is to change the channel.'

—Lucille Povero

residents. When Jack Wikoff, a Scipio Center resident who supports Zundel's views, emerged as a possible sponsor of the program, the cable company asked the New York State Cable Commission whether it had to carry the program if the sponsor lived outside the viewing area.

Following news reports that the commission had ruled March 8 that the cable company was not obligated to air public-access programs submitted by people living outside its viewing area, Povero — who lives within the viewing area of Finger Lakes Television — came forward.

Susan Joyce, Canandaigua's assistant city manager, said the Ontario County city — which administers the contract for the access channel — had not received official word of the decision.

Once officials receive the decision, they will take time to review it. The program will not be aired until after the decision has been studied, she said.

Meanwhile, local diocesan and Jewish officials appear to be keeping some distance from the debate.

Deacon Brian J. McNulty, coordinator of the diocesan Department of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, said he will follow the lead of Jewish leaders.

The Jewish position is not to try to refute what Zundel is saying, Deacon McNulty explained. "When you try to refute (the claims), you give this guy legitimacy."

The best response, the deacon added, is to simply say, "You are wrong. That's a reasonable position to take."

Linda Saiger, director of community relations for the Jewish Community Federation, noted that, in an interview with the *Finger Lakes Times*, Povero said, "If blacks, Japanese and American Indians can rewrite their history, why can't the Germans?"

"To me, that said it all," Saiger said. "It's not a desire for truth."

Saiger added that, "Our big contention is that what they are saying is simply wrong. It's clear to any thinking human being."

At the same time, Jewish leaders are still discussing what to do about the pro-

gram.

"It's clear to us we may be the community right now where this is happening, but there are other communities where this will happen in the future" and they will be looking at how the Rochester-area community responded, Saiger explained.

Povero is certain that her point of view is clear. She became involved in Zundel's movement after writing a letter to the editor in the *Finger Lakes Times* claiming that Jews control the media.

"My God, there were like seven letters in response to mine, including one by a priest," Povero said. "They called me names, but not one of them disputed the fact that Jews control the media."

After doing some investigating into

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