

'Milestones' intended to honor vocations

By Karen M. Franz
Editor in chief

As you may recall from my columns of last autumn, the *Catholic Courier* revised its schedule of supplements for 1995 to better serve the interests of our readers. Your feedback to this column formed the basis of our revision process.

One of the special sections inaugurated through that process was "Milestones," which will appear in next week's edition.

In the past, we have used several two-page installments throughout the course of the year to recognize retiring priests, and priests and religious celebrating jubilees of their vocations. The concept for "Milestones" was to combine these installments into a single supplement — and to incorporate recognition for married couples celebrating significant anniversaries of their vocations as well.

Our intent in creating this supplement was to emphasize the great impact vocations have on our diocese. If you take the time next week to do the math, you'll note that the ministerial careers of the priests and religious being honored add up to more than 3,500 years of service to the Diocese of Rochester!

We think the stories of those being honored will serve as a magnificent testament to the importance of vocations in the church and as an encouragement for young people to consider seriously the vocations to which



BETWEEN THE LINES

they are called.

We were so enthusiastic about this idea, however, that we didn't stop to consider the implications some of our promotional activities for the supplement might have. We have since learned, for example, that some readers of the Milestones "house ad" in our Feb. 16 issue assumed that proceeds from the advertising sales would go to the honorees themselves. That is not the case. Proceeds from Milestones advertising will go to offset our costs (approximately \$2,500) of producing the supplement.

We also learned that some of the sisters whose names were mentioned in that ad were embarrassed — or even offended — about being "used" for promotional purposes. It certainly was

not our intent to "use" anyone. We merely set out to enhance our annual efforts to recognize jubilarians and retirees, and we sought supplementary revenues that would enable us to do so.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge serious deficiencies in our communications to local congregations about the ways in which we might promote the supplement, and we regret any embarrassment we may have caused.

Last month I discussed our ongoing internal debate about publishing classified advertisements from prospective parents seeking children to adopt.

I received only three responses to that column's request for feedback. Kevin Ruster of Fairport called to express his disagreement, saying that in view of abortion statistics we need more positive stories about successful adoptions. Mr. Ruster also remarked that most states require home visitations even for private adoptions, and that this requirement should ease our concerns about the safety of children who might be adopted though classified in the *Courier*.

Joe Leahy of Valois, N.Y., sent a brief note stating, "your viewpoint is correct. Excellent article ..." Thanks, Mr. Leahy, for this and your other positive commentaries on our work.

Linda Lalli Stark of Brighton wrote to say she resented an implication she perceived in my column that "parents who have opted for private adoption

are somehow inferior." She also said that I had "libeled a beautiful, effective way of beginning a family."

Mrs. Stark's comments stemmed from my statement that some couples who seek private adoption do so because they have been rejected by adoption agencies. I did not intend for that statement to imply that all couples rejected by agencies — or even a significant percentage of them — had been judged to be bad parents. I noted, in fact, that many such couples are rejected solely on the basis of their ages, which I consider a poor reason at best. (Next month I'll have to report reactions to that statement!)

Nor did I intend to imply that all parents seeking private adoption do so because they have been rejected. Many couples do so to avoid lengthy bureaucratic procedures, or for a variety of other reasons.

The point of my last column simply was that we at the *Catholic Courier* are in no position to judge prospective classified advertisers' qualifications for adoptive parenthood. We confidently believe that 99.9 percent of couples seeking adoption — whether privately or through an agency — are wonderfully deserving people. It's the one-tenth of a percent — or perhaps one one-hundredth of a percent — we're concerned about.

I'll be happy to continue the discussion next month if you like.

Send responses to: *Between the Lines*, *Catholic Courier*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624.

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