

Readers' feedback sought to chart future

By Karen M. Franz
General Manager/Editor

Several months ago, we reported to you the results of the readership study we conducted last December. You may recall that the study showed most readers were happy with the *Catholic Courier* and believed it had improved in the last five years. Yet the survey also showed the newspaper needed to improve its regional coverage and its content appealing to young families.

We recently held the first in a series of staff meetings intended to derive from these reports a list of practical action steps, prioritize them, allocate resources to them and put them into effect. We considered what content and format changes we could implement to make the *Catholic Courier* more appealing and useful to all our readers.

We identified five basic areas in which the *Catholic Courier* should either expand its current coverage or provide coverage that currently is lacking. We also brainstormed a number of possible actions to fill these needs.

The next phase of this process will be to prioritize these actions and determine what resources would be required to accomplish them. Then we will identify which resources currently being used for other activities could be reallocated for this purpose.

Moving into these next phases assumes that the five coverage areas we identified and the actions we listed below them are, in fact, what our readers were calling for in their responses to the readership survey. But the survey data really are not specific enough to fully support such an assumption. That's why I'd like to get your feedback on what we've done so far and on any



BETWEEN THE LINES

areas we may have missed.

Before I list the five areas and the myriad actions, let me pose a couple of questions for you to consider. Do you think some other coverage area — either in addition to or in place of one of those listed here — deserves a spot on our list? Within each of the coverage areas, can you suggest any action steps that would enable the *Catholic Courier* to better provide this type of coverage? And what existing features or coverage areas could be reduced or eliminated to make room for the additions?

Here's the list of five coverage areas and possible actions to achieve them:

1. Profiles/human-interest stories on priests, religious and lay people.

Create a person of the week/month feature.

Create a recurring "Day in the Life" photo feature on various individuals.

Survey parishes for the names of interesting parishioners to profile.

Create a "Sunshine Box" for every-

day good news.

Create a contest in which readers would nominate Good Samaritans for recognition.

2. More news and feature coverage of all parts of the diocese, including more names and faces.

Create separate regional editions — one each for Finger Lakes, Southern Tier and Monroe/Livingston regions — in which a few pages of the regular edition would be replaced by content prepared specifically for and about that region.

Increase photographic coverage of events outside Monroe County.

Reintroduce an "Around the Diocese" page compiling brief news items from various areas.

Add social and/or community news.

Create a "Person on the Street" feature in which individuals at an event would be photographed and respond to a question.

Create a recognition box (like "Extra Credit" on the youth page) for each section of the paper.

Create a "Reader Beat" feature.

Hire "stringers" (local writers) to report on their local regions.

Put photos back on the calendar page.

Publish more stand-alone photos (not with a related story) of events around the diocese.

3. Coverage of young Catholic families or topics of interest to them.

Add a monthly parenting column containing advice and/or stories, perhaps written by a senior citizen.

Add a family life column.

Create a feature interviewing families on how they handle various situations.

Create a children's activity calendar

or column.

Add a column showing how faith fits into family life.

Create a "Day in the Life" feature on families.

4. Emphasis on faith in action.

Do more articles on ethics and morality in the business world.

Show how people can live their faith through their spending decisions.

Create a series illustrating various aspects of faith.

Create a reader call-in/write-in feature offering thanks to someone who did excellent work or provided exemplary service.

Do more stories on the effect of drugs and other challenges in society.

Profile celebrities living out their faith.

Regionalize faith-in-action coverage.

Develop some feature for single young adults and for college-aged Catholics.

5. Catechesis/faith development.

Make one cover story each month deal with a catechetical question.

Clearly label catechetical material as such.

Ask readers and pastors to suggest catechetical topics needing explanation.

Create a question-and-answer column.

Provide two weeks' notice to pastors/parish staffs of upcoming catechetical articles.

Develop a series of articles on current devotional practices, new church rules.

Publish listings of the daily readings for each week.

Provide a means for readers to obtain the full texts of encyclicals and other important church documents.

Mass allows one to endure 'life in the valley'

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 9:28-36; (R1) Daniel 7:9-10; 13-14; (R2) Peter 1:16-19.

Why do you come to church on Sunday?

One person said, "I come to church to get motivated by God's word and to be strengthened by the bread of life so that I can live a better life in the real world."

In this person's view, Sunday is a time to get the energy to go back to the "real world," where faith is to be lived.

I think this point of view is key to the Transfiguration story. The Transfiguration is the story of withdrawal and return — a dynamic found throughout the Gospels.

Jesus leads Peter, John and James up a mountain, which affords the best soli-



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

tude for prayer. He went up to pray. Prayer, transfigures. "While he was praying, his face changed in appear-

ance and his clothes became dazzling white."

Then Moses and Elijah appear, speaking about Jesus' "exodus" about to happen in Jerusalem (His passing over from death to life). Luke constantly stresses that the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah) testify to Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.

The voice from heaven confirms Peter's confession of faith that Jesus is the Son of God. But remember, after his glorious profession, Peter protested against Jesus' prediction of His coming death. So the voice goes on to say, "Listen to him." There can be no Christianity without the cross.

The mountaintop experience happens on the way to the cross. Jesus' life, ending on the cross and with the scattering and disillusionment of the apostles, is transfigured by this burst of light before the encircling gloom.

Still, the talk of the passion between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, the shining epiphany, the Father's voice confirming the Son's authority is brief, for a moment, then all is gone; it's back to the world of reality. Nothing is changed, but the apostles are changed.

So we withdraw from the world each Sunday, we go to the mountain only to return to the valley. We return to an unchanged world, but we ourselves are changed.

Without such precious times of withdrawal, renewal, and vision, such as God gives us at every Sunday Mass, we would not be able to endure life in the valley, the road on the way to the cross.

That is why Sunday Mass is so important. To miss it deliberately frequently will cause the loss of faith.

For us, the mountaintop experience must be both prayer and the Sunday Mass.

“
It's barren prayer
that does not go
hand in hand
with alms.”

St. Cyprian



Placing a classified ad in the
Courier is as easy as dialing
716-328-4340.

Just one call to our advertising
department is all it takes. We'll
put you in touch with more than
50,000 families in the diocese.

Call and say "hello" to
Courier Classifieds today!
All major credit cards accepted.

**HART
MONUMENT
COMPANY**

Since 1856

Monuments, Markers
and Cemetery Lettering

2301 Dewey Avenue
(OPPOSITE HOLY SEPULCHRE CEMETERY)

(716) 865-6746



**ARNDT
FUNERAL HOME**
Family Owned & Operated

**RONALD JOHN ARNDT
ROBERT J. ARNDT**
Funeral Directors
225-6350
1118 Long Pond Road
(South of Maiden Lane)