

# COLUMNISTS

## 'Courier' continues efforts to meet readers' needs

Those of you who are regular readers of this newspaper know that this column is a periodic look at what's going on behind the scenes at the *Catholic Courier*. Over the past year or so, I've used "Between the Lines" to discuss content and format changes being considered or implemented by our staff, solicit reader feedback to ideas we were pondering, and answer questions from readers.

This week, the *Catholic Courier* is being distributed not only to its 50,000 regular subscribers but also to about 80,000 non-subscribers who may not have seen the paper in several years. So I hope regular readers will bear with me as I use this installment to acquaint non-subscribers with the many changes that have taken place over the past several years.

Since I became editor 11½ years ago, the *Courier's* staff has focused on reinventing the paper to better serve its readers and the diocesan community at large. We've moved from five narrow columns to a more comfortable four-column format, increased the size of text type, and added more photos and graphics — all to ease reading and make the experience more enjoyable.

Some of the most noticeable changes



between the lines

By KAREN M. FRANZ

took place on the newspaper's front page. In addition to changing the paper's name from *Courier-Journal* to its more common designation as *Catholic Courier* in 1989, we also moved to a magazine-style "cover story," focusing each week on some issue of major significance to the Catholic community.

In response to readership surveys and focus groups conducted among diocesan pastors, we have made some other significant improvements just during the past year. We've designated at least one cover story per month as a "Focus on Catechesis" and added a listing of daily Scripture readings to Father Albert Shamon's "A Word for Sunday" column. Our publication this week of Bishop

Matthew H. Clark's Pastoral Letter "From East to West a Perfect Offering" is another example of the *Courier's* emphasis on lifelong learning.

We have put greater emphasis on generating news and features from the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions of our diocese, designating staff writers Mike Latona and Kathleen Schwar, respectively, as the contacts for those regions. In addition, we have reformatted our weekly calendar to make it easier for readers in those regions to find events of interest in their areas.

We have built on the "faith for all the ages" theme established a few years ago with our bimonthly "Kids' Chronicle" and monthly "Seniors" features by adding the weekly "On the Move" centerfold for teenagers, and monthly columns for young adults and for parents.

In a decade of journalism competition, the "new" *Catholic Courier* has amassed 144 awards from the Catholic Press Association (a national organization of Catholic newspapers, magazines, newsletters and books) and the New York Press Association (a statewide association of primarily secular weekly community newspapers). For its 1995 coverage alone,

the *Courier* won a record 29 awards, and we're confident that our 1996 coverage will receive numerous honors when the judgments come in next spring.

I hope I've made a case for those of you who do not regularly receive the *Courier* to consider subscribing. A coupon for that purpose appears on Page 2 of non-subscriber editions, or you may contact your local rectory about ordering subscriptions through the parish.

One final note: I'd like to clarify in advance any questions that may arise about our publication of political advertising in this and other October editions.

For the record, the *Courier* sent an identical ad solicitation to EVERY candidate for office representing citizens in the Diocese of Rochester. The decision to advertise or not was made exclusively by the candidates and/or their advisers.

Publication of a candidate's ad, moreover, does not constitute an endorsement of that candidate either by the *Catholic Courier* or the Diocese of Rochester.

Franz is general manager/editor of the *Catholic Courier*.

## Life is a gift from God that requires respect

When Chicago's Cardinal Joseph Bernardin was informed that his cancer had recurred and his life span would be short, he confided that this did not change his outlook on life.

In an address at Georgetown University in Washington he said, "I am not anxious, but rather reconfirmed in my conviction about the wonder of human life, a gift that flows from the very being of God and is entrusted to us. It is easy in the rush of daily life or in its tedium to lose the sense of wonder that is appropriate to this gift."

I agree. And I believe that the way to regenerate our sense of wonder is through the practice of greater respect. There is a direct link between respect and the experience of wonder in life's presence.

Respect is characterized by some essential qualities.

First, it requires that we sense what is truly awesome about another person and allow for a certain greatness and ho-



the human side

By FATHER EUGENE HEMRICK

liness. This, in turn, makes us want to be associated with the other person.

Frequently we see youngsters wearing jerseys bearing the names of sports superstars. These youths are awestruck over their heroes' feats and will swarm around these players if they get the chance, thrilled if they get to shake hands.

Yet, if we look closely at these youngsters we see that they are hesitant to get too close and need to be invited to come

forward. Interestingly, true respect requires a certain sense of fear which keeps us at a distance from what is awesome.

The irony in this is that we want to be near to it, but sensing it is much bigger than we are we give it a reverential space; this forbids us to take possession of it and use it for our own purposes.

Neglecting this principle is one of the major reasons marriages break up. When husbands and wives no longer view their spouse with a sense of wonder, they often become tempted to dominate the other and in the process to smother the other's human dignity.

Respect acknowledges that, given the other person's human dignity, he or she must be given a degree of space and freedom.

Second, respect allows privacy for another person. It goes against the mania to unveil and exploit the secrets of a person's life. No day passes without news reports that do just the opposite, and my guess is that this holds true in our work-

places, where snooping into others' private lives is common.

Respect promotes others. It tells us to look deeply into another, find his or her talents and boost them.

If we look back upon our own lives, I believe most of us will find that the confidence and dignity we feel was nurtured in us by someone who said we were good and should be proud of our talents.

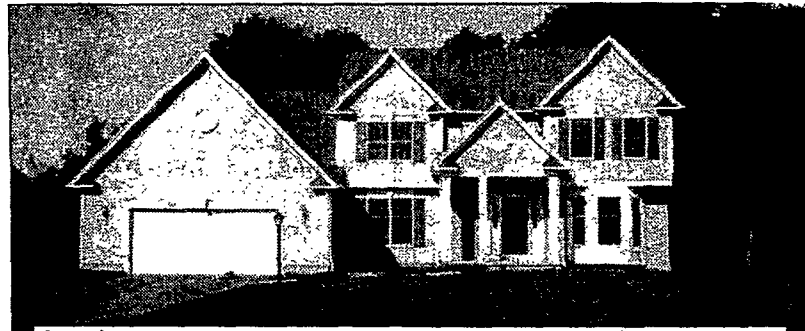
Today a culture of death seems to assault our sense of awe in the presence of life. Abortions, genocide, gang killings, drug abuse, environmental pollution and scandals are everywhere.

To create a culture of life, we need to heed the words of a man close to death who sees more than ever that life is a wonder and a gift from God that requires respect.

Father Hemrick is the former head of research at the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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