

# DIOCESAN NEWS

## Readers mostly happy with *Courier's* content

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

An online reader survey conducted in September and October 2001 on behalf of the *Catholic Courier*, in association with the National Newspaper Association, shows that the vast majority of readers who responded are pleased with the *Courier*, but would like to see improvements in certain coverage areas.

The results of 210 completed surveys were tabulated by Pulse Research, a nationally recognized, independent newspaper research firm in Portland, Ore. Survey results will be used by all departments at the *Courier* and serve to update an extensive reader survey conducted in 1999.

This is the first time the *Courier* has conducted a reader survey over the Internet. Prior surveys, including the one in 1999, have been done by mail. Due to an explosion in Internet usage over the past couple of years in all demographic groups, Pulse's research now indicates that Internet users are now representative of the population as a whole.

The survey showed that the *Courier* is read by 1.86 people per subscriber household, for a total readership of about 81,000.

*Courier* readers reported that they are involved with their parishes, with 87 percent of respondents saying they had attended or were regularly involved in their church or other religious organizations. Fifty-four percent of respondents were between the ages of 40 and 59; 68 percent were married; 29 percent held professional or managerial jobs; 28 percent were retired; 31 percent had post-graduate degrees and 29 percent had college degrees; and the average household income before taxes in 2001 was almost \$60,000.

The majority of respondents — 67 percent — had no children under age 18 at home, and 62 percent of the respondents were female.

When asked "How often do you read the following in the *Catholic Courier*?" 95 percent said that they "always" or "frequently" read diocesan news. Other leading high-readership features were front-page articles, national and international news and columnists. The parenting page, teen and chil-

dren's pages, young adult page and classified advertisements garnered lowest readership figures, each drawing from 27 to 38 percent of readers "always" or "frequently," depending on the category.

In response to a variety of questions about the paper's overall content, the majority of survey respondents said they believe the *Courier* contains quality writing that is accurate and objective. Most readers also said they approved of the newspaper's layout, design, photography and coverage of the local community. The *Courier* earned "excellent" or "good" ratings on these characteristics from 89 percent of respondents.

On average, *Courier* readers have been reading the paper for 16 years, and 53 percent read most of the paper each week; 13 percent said they read it cover to cover. Forty-one percent keep the paper around for a few days after delivery, and 22 percent keep the paper around until a new edition arrives.

Readers also indicated that they place greater trust in the *Courier* than in all other media types rated in the survey. Eighty-three percent of the respondents rated the *Courier* "most trustworthy" or "trustworthy." Readers' regional daily newspapers and radio ranked second and third in terms of trustworthiness. Direct mail received the lowest rating at 9 percent.

In the week before completing the survey, 51 percent of respondents had visited [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com), the most popular Web site rated in the survey. At 31 percent of respondents, the *Catholic Courier's* Web site, [www.catholiccourier.com](http://www.catholiccourier.com), tied for third-most-visited Web site with America Online and the Microsoft Network, just one point behind [www.democratandchronicle.com](http://www.democratandchronicle.com), the Web site of the Rochester daily newspaper. The Web sites of other area newspapers, as well as such national newspapers as *The New York Times*, were visited by less than 18 percent of *Courier* readers.

Respondents also were given the opportunity to provide narrative comments on how they would like to see the paper improve its coverage. Some readers requested more articles on Pope John Paul II and the Vatican, along with more international and national news. Other respondents, however, preferred a greater emphasis on diocesan and parish news.

## Obituary

### Father J. Wolfe, diocesan priest

Father James T. Wolfe, a priest in the Diocese of Rochester since 1955, died Feb. 16, 2002, at his Rochester home after a long illness. He was 72.

Father Wolfe was a native of Rochester's St. Boniface Parish. He attended St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries and was ordained by Bishop James E. Kearney June 4, 1955, at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Father Wolfe served the Diocese of Rochester through his ministry at a number of parishes in Rochester, Corning, Canandaigua, Nunda, Greece, Pittsford, Avon and Webster, where he served for a considerable period of time at St. Rita and Holy Spirit parishes. He had been retired since 1996.

He was a man who made friends quite easily, according to Father Thomas Erdle, a member of Father Wolfe's ordination class.

"He was a good speaker, a good homilist — very sincere," said Father Erdle, pastor of St. Mark's Parish in Greece. Father Erdle, having also grown up in St. Boniface Parish, was a childhood friend of Father Wolfe's and spoke at an evening service for him Feb. 19 at Stephenson-Dougherty Funeral Home in Avon.

"He was a very brilliant man, very hum-

ble. If you didn't know him real well you might not realize the depth of his intellect," said another classmate, Father John J. Philipps, who served as homilist at Father Wolfe's funeral Mass Feb. 20 at St. Boniface Church.

Father Philipps, who lives in retirement at Perinton's St. John of Rochester Church, noted that Father Wolfe was a talented musician who enjoyed classical music. A man of diverse interests, Father Wolfe was also an authority on toxic mushrooms; in fact, Father Philipps said that Father Wolfe was a frequent resource for the Poison Control Center and Strong Memorial Hospital.

Father Philipps noted that Father Wolfe was beset by numerous health problems in recent years. However, Father Philipps said, "His spirituality came through very clearly, as did his accepting of his suffering."

"He made many, many friends and stayed in touch with them from his different places in the diocese," Father Philipps added.

Father Wolfe's funeral Mass was celebrated by Bishop Matthew H. Clark. Interment was at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Father Wolfe is survived by a brother, Charles.



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

## Blessed Grimoaldo unveiled



A painting of Blessed Grimoaldo Santamaria was unveiled at Holy Cross Church in Rochester Jan. 29, on the seventh anniversary of his beatification. Local descendants of Blessed Grimoaldo attended the ceremony, including his two nieces, Helen Panella Schlegel and Ida Panella Turan. Above, artist Minhhang Huynh, who painted the icon, speaks during the unveiling. At left, Father Robert McNamara observes the ceremony, in which Father John Reif blessed the new painting.

san and parish news.

A number of readers suggested that the *Courier* do more articles on catechetical subjects and papal encyclicals. One reader expressed the position that the *Courier* has placed too great an emphasis on negative aspects of the priest shortage, whereas another respondent thought the *Courier* should focus more on the plight of urban parishes struggling to stay alive.

Readers asked for more coverage of all ages in the church, as well as greater coverage of such specific groups as rosary societies, prayer groups, Bible study groups and Catholic schools. A number of readers commented that they liked the paper's features on parishes and people, and would like to see more such stories.

When asked about the paper's perceived "ideology," one reader called the paper "too liberal and almost non-Catholic" whereas other readers said the *Courier* does not report enough on liberal reform movements in the Catholic Church.

Like the *Courier's* news coverage, the newspaper's columnists also drew mixed reviews. Father Richard P. McBrien drew the greatest number of negative comments, along with a fair share of positive ones. Sister Patricia Schoelles and Father Albert Shamon received generally positive comments. Some readers said they wished Bishop Matthew H. Clark's "Along the Way" column would focus more often on church issues and catechetical topics. A number of readers asked for more pieces by guest columnists.

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**EDITORS' NOTE:** Those who participated in the National Newspaper Association survey were entered in a national drawing for cash prizes. Although no *Catholic Courier* survey participants received prizes, those who filled out surveys for the following newspapers did: *Malibu Times, Malibu, Calif., \$3,000*; *The Placer Herald, Rocklin, Calif., \$1,000*; *LeMars Sentinel, LeMars, Iowa, \$500*; and *Southeast Missouriian, Cape Girardeau, Mo., \$500*.

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