

# Mission irresponsible in Staten Island

**I**F THE MISSION of the Immaculate Virgin was just another Catholic convent filled with chaste and charitable nuns, that would be one thing. But it's not. It's a foster care home on Staten Island teeming with troubled teenagers. And there's nothing immaculate or virginal about it.

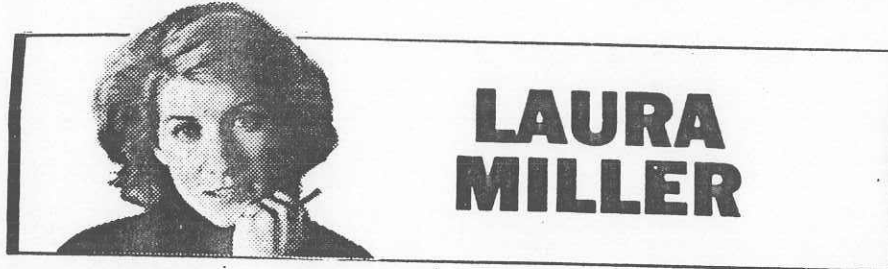
Just last month Bob Herbert of the Daily News broke a story that a 13-year-old girl had been raped and abused in three different foster homes—including the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin. The city placed her there; a 17-year-old boy forced her to have oral sex there.

The mission's deputy director, William Holland, refused to discuss it then. He still refuses, describing it as "a unique thing."

What makes his statement ironic, not to mention insulting to the taxpayers who pay this man's salary, is that sexual promiscuity within the sacrosanct walls of the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin is apparently not at all unique. It is rampant. It is randy. It's a regular oracle of orgy over there in Tottenville, Staten Island.

**D**LANE ARNETH can tell you all about it. She worked there for five years. Her job was to make sure all the little puppies nudging and nosing all the other puppies were protected. From having litters.

"The city required us to provide family planning and contraceptives if the kids requested it or if we felt it was necessary," says Arneth, 34, a registered nurse. "I did health histories on all the kids coming in, including sex history, and 100% of the boys and



**LAURA MILLER**

80% of the girls said they were sexually active. I think it was accurate, judging from the pregnancy and venereal disease rate."

Ah, yes. At the *Mission of the Immaculate Virgin*, there is a pregnancy rate; a venereal disease rate.

For five years, Arneth tried valiantly to stem this tide of infection and in-house breeding. She tried so hard, in fact, she got fired for it.

It was a May morning last year. Arneth was summoned to her boss' office, Sister Marie Bernadette, who asked her if there were girls taking birth control pills. Arneth said yes.

"Don't you realize that this is against our policy?" the sister said.

"My understanding of municipal regulations is that we have to provide the services," Arneth replied.

Sister shook her head no. "Take away all their contraceptives. Call up the doctors and tell them not to prescribe them any more. Call up the pharmacies and tell them not to fill the prescriptions."

Arneth said that as a registered nurse she couldn't do that. "What are we going to do if some girls say they want birth control?" she asked.

"Transfer them out of the agency," the sister said.

"But they need birth control," Arneth said. "They're sexually active."

"You're supposed to tell them that sex before marriage is a sin," Sister Bernadette said. "Anyone who chooses to be sexually active won't be allowed to stay."

"Then you might as well close down the agency," Arneth answered. And that was the last advice she ever got to give.

**S**O IT HAS cometh to pass that the Archdiocese of New York is threatening to withdraw from city foster care: It refuses to hand out the birth control; but a federal district court in Manhattan has ruled that the kids must have access to it if they live in group homes paid for by the taxpayer.

In New York, there is no question that the taxpayer is paying: \$50 million to \$60 million a year to the archdiocese in federal, state and local dollars—\$11.6 million of it being fed directly to the Immaculate Virgin.

By propping the barn door open to pregnancy, the church is costing the taxpayers even more money. Because when foster girls get pregnant, they get transferred to city maternity shelters—a \$2.7 million annual tax bur-

den. Pre-natal programs cost another \$10.9 million. And when the children of foster children are born, they go to foster care homes for babies, all tax-paid, and their mothers go back to condom-free foster care to re-enroll in unprotected intercourse.

So it stands to reason, if you look at this from a financial perspective and not a moral one, that the more often the church allows its wards to become pregnant, the better it is for the church. Because unwanted pregnancies are what keeps the wheels of the city foster care system greased with money.

"Immaculate is using public monies to preach their beliefs," says Arneth, who is suing Immaculate for firing her. "Sixty per cent of these kids aren't Catholics to begin with. And even those that are, you can't tell them to save sex for marriage. They don't even know what marriage is."

**B**UT THE MISSION of the Immaculate Virgin knows that what goeth around cometh around. That's why it applied just months ago for a new city contract to provide care for all those poor, little, illegitimate foster babies.

They got it. But with a name like Mission of the Immaculate Virgin they couldn't not get it. The new program started last week, charging the city \$134 a day per baby. Per unwanted baby. Illegitimate baby. Baby born to a foster care kid who was told to save sex for marriage.

The Mission of the Immaculate Virgin. Totally out of touch with what is going on in this festering city. Or maybe it isn't.