

More Freedom Now in Seminaries

(This is the second of five articles on U.S. seminaries.)

Washington—Twenty questions were recently asked rector of U.S. seminaries, all dealing with the general effects of the Second Vatican Council on their methods of training, regulations and programs. This is the second of a series of articles, detailing the replies to those questions. Replies came from 149 seminaries.

THE RECTORS were asked: "Do you have new criteria for the acceptance of students?"

Most felt their criteria for students had been well thought out and carefully applied; of the replies, 93 said in effect that no change, or no significant change, had been made; 6 said the criteria had been modified; 4, that they were stricter; and 19, that they had new criteria.

Here are some of the comments by the rectors:

—The increasing difficulty in recruiting vocations seems to have prevented any significant change in the admission policies.

—Nine said some sort of psychological tests are being used, six stressed greater insistence upon academic achievement; several said the screening process is extensive.

—We are now accepting boys from broken homes and from invalid marriages.

—We are more ready to ask a boy to leave if he is a borderline case. If a young man is going to have a difficult time in the priesthood, we think he has a right to know while he is in the seminary.

The third question was: "Do you have a new curriculum? Does it include more of the humanities? Of the social sciences? Of public affairs? Is the curriculum divided differently now?"

Sixty rectors said that they had a new curriculum, while 39 said no. But these latter, in most instances, qualified their replies by saying the curriculum was constantly under study or had, in some instances, been recently adopted. Many too had more courses in the social sciences, in public affairs, in mathematics, in the humanities. And others said, in effect, "We have always had these courses."

Some comments from the seminary rectors were:

—Greater emphasis on individual research.

—Have introduced pastoral counseling. Extended lecture discussion series arranged for our students but also scheduled for clergy, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish, of the area. Last year the series was devoted to the problem of the city—Metropolis; this year a study of alcoholism.

—Each month we have a noted expert in government, law, politics, industry, business, etc., come to the seminary and talk to the students.

—Insist more on modern languages, more research by seminarians.

—An accounting class for the fourth year... more room for private study.

—New courses being offered include personality development and aberrations, counseling and one in Protestant theology.

—More freedom of choice through electives.

The fourth question asked: "What is the situation in regard to academic freedom among students and faculty members? Is it an issue; and if so, have steps been taken in any way to encourage more academic freedom among students and faculty?"

In their replies, the vast majority of the seminaries rectors said academic freedom was not at present an issue in their seminaries. Many had individual comments about changes that had been or were being made, or remarks on their experiences, as follows:

—Complete freedom of discussion is encouraged in all classes, at least officially. How much the more traditional-minded members of the faculty

allow it is of course problematical.

—It seems to me that the student of today has greater "freedom" than the student of yesterday... Patience seems to have disappeared from the scene... They want to operate without going through medical school.

—One wishes the faculty and students would be a whole lot more inventive and ingenious in the use of the freedom which is theirs already.

—Freedom has been an issue but until recently not "academic" freedom. Until recently there has not been such intense interest in academic affairs as to raise the question of ac-

The fifth question asked: "Do students reside at home at all? May they visit their homes more often? Do they have more free time? Can they visit downtown more often?"

Very few seminaries reported that students live at home, and

demically "freedom." Until recently the professors taught and students studied, what was handed down in textbooks as if they were written on Sinai. Now there is intense interest in academic matters. In classes taught by professors who are mentally young no one feels inhibited. In other classes the students have no hesitation in "speaking the truth with charity" (Pope John).

Several rectors remarked that "students have devised their own student government association."

—We want the student to be less tied down to set hours of lectures but certainly want him to spend a great deal more time in independent study. Under no circumstances do we turn him loose to do what he wants.

—It might be well remarked here that we are now running into a problem with our intramural sports and our seminarian social activities as a result of these more generous permissions for outside activ-

ities. We feel this is an area that the students must pay attention to if they are going to learn to live successfully in the seminary system.

—Seminarians are to attend all scheduled exercises such as chapel, classes, meals, seminars, etc. Around this framework he must build his own day, allocate his own time, provide himself with necessary recreation and discipline himself to study the necessary number of hours his particular talents require. No bells are rung, no study periods are scheduled, students are not told when to go to bed or get up, coffee is available in the community room 24 hours a day, as is the TV, magazines and newspapers. Similarly the library is open 24 hours a day.

—The answers overwhelmingly said that the students did serve actively in parishes during the summer and at other times, when occasion and time permitted. They did CCD work, conducted censuses, worked with handicapped—in fact, did practically anything the pastors were willing to let them do.

A large proportion also were encouraged to take part in community projects, in civil rights activities, a war on poverty work, depending on the seminary's location, and whether it was a minor or major seminary. One point mentioned by several rectors was that many students work during the summer to help earn money for school expenses, and many others take summer courses.

The sixth question was this: "Do students approaching priesthood serve actively in parishes during the summer? At other times? What do they do? Are students encouraged to take part in community proj-

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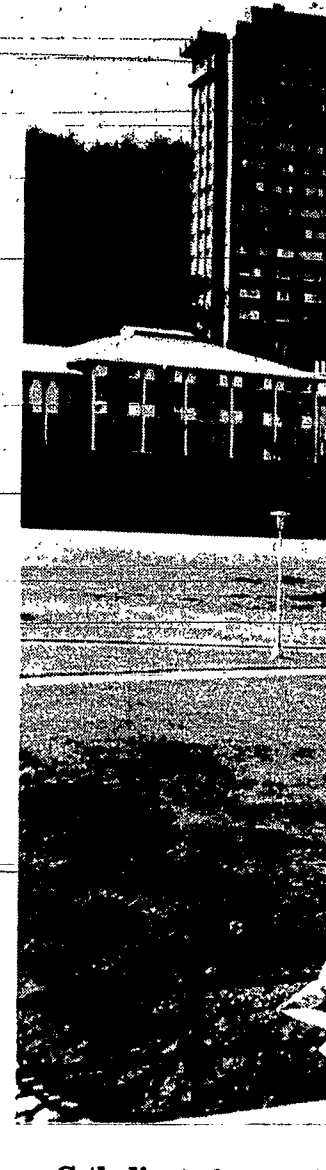
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Catholic students at Ithaca College are also pioneers in a project collection.

The Tith

Vo Van Tien — an eight-year-old lad with his front teeth missing — "introduced" to Catholic students at Ithaca College this past Sunday.

He's their boy in Saigon.

They "adopted" him through the international relief agency known as Father Parents Plan.

The Ithaca College student will contribute \$15 monthly to his support in war-torn Vietnam. The youngster's father has tuberculosis; the mother also has the care of four young children besides Vo Van Tien.

This reaching out in mercy to the needy around the world is typical of at least three Newman Clubs at colleges in the Rochester Diocese.

Newman chaplains Father Richard Torrey at Cornell University and Father William G. at Ithaca College introduced the reverse tithing system two years ago — they give away ten percent of the collection each week. Father John Hedges of the University of Rochester is a similar arrangement in operation there.

Father Graf said, "Our tithing small though it is — usually five or six dollars — reminds the students of the Christian obligation to be involved, to be deeply and genuinely concerned for others."

Father Torrey explained why he gets the tithing. "Recipients of the tithing are selected at random, with an attempt to vary the domestic and foreign frequently, to choose a Protestant or non-denominational beneficiary. Many of the suggestions come from the students," he said.

The Ithaca College tithing also crossed denomination lines to include the Salvation Army's Christmas fund, Cancer, Heart and Easter Seals campaigns and the Ithaca United Fund.

One week, Father Graf reported, the tithing was sent to the School of the Holy Child in Rochester, a school for

Berlin Prelate Visits Prison

Berlin — (RNS) — The Roman Catholic Bishop of Berlin, Archbishop Alfred Bengsch, celebrated Mass at the Moabit Prison in the Western sector during his monthly visit here.

He said "brotherly love was the only way of freeing ourselves from the prison of excessive desire for the things of this world."

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