

An Experiment In Commitment

Bishop Sheen, in a recent column he writes for daily newspapers, described a hazard clergyman face these days — a technological "fallout" which nails them to administrative desks rather than leaving them free to be with their people.

Pastors so often seem to be trapped in an "edifice complex" — building one parish structure after another and then having to repeat the circle in renovating the oldest building as soon as the latest one is completed.

Most every pastor wishes he could somehow break out of this treadmill existence and be quite simply what he had as a youth dreamed of being — a priest with his people, to console them in their sorrows, to bless them in their joys, to instruct their children, to guide them in serving the world but not becoming captivated by it.

One parish that has attempted to do something in this direction is the one year old Community of John XXIII in Oklahoma City — a parish without buildings or boundaries.

Organized last May, the parish is still in an experimental condition but the enthusiasm of its members is certainly significant of its possibilities for the future.

Mrs. Herbert Giles of Oklahoma City, a member of the John XXIII Community, was in Rochester last week and described her new type parish to several groups of lay people. She is the former Jane Doane of St. Michael's parish, Newark.

Community membership requires a "commitment" for at least two years to be "a servant to man."



An intent audience hears about new "no buildings" parish.

One way members fulfill this commitment is through FISH, a code name for a dial phone number staffed around the clock by volunteers who try to meet any emergency — a despondent person who's on the brink of suicide, a mother who has to go to work but can't find a babysitter, a man who's drunk and ashamed to go home, somebody who's lonely.

The "Community" meets every Sunday for three hours — one hour for study, one hour for worship and one hour of a social get-together. Parishioners decide where the meeting will take place — at first they met in each others' homes but now they're meeting in a school hall or a theatre or wherever it's most convenient.

Their "pastor" is free most of the week to attend to other responsibilities in his diocese but is on call for any individual needs of Community members.

There are no membership fees or quotas but members



MRS. HERBERT GILES breaking the "edifice complex"

have been remarkably generous in supporting their new parish and in meeting diocesan quota collections.

The Community has been accused of being ultra-liberal — and members agree "we hope to have every degree of ideology" represented there — and they've been accused of "sheep stealing" the more active members of traditional style parishes. "This complaint has some validity," a Community statement admits, "but it should be strongly pointed out that this new Community is very important for the growth and advancement of the whole diocese." This is a point that still needs to be satisfactorily resolved.

Father William F. Nerin, pastor of the John XXIII Community, and to a great extent its inspiration and motivating force, readily admits that they may all soon grow weary of being wanderers and "hanker for a stable structure" but "that's our task at the moment," he says, "to find out what works and what does not work in view of our stated objectives and personnel involved."

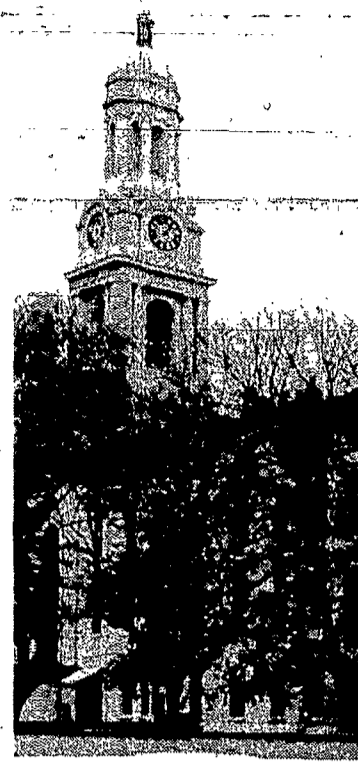
The Community has a membership of just under 75 but about 50 prospects attend quite regularly. At present they have set 75 as the limit and every time they build up close to double that number they'll divide and form another "Community."

The Vatican Council stated, "The parish exists solely for the good of souls."

These days when some souls are no longer satisfied by the routines and often impersonal arrangements required by present parish structures, experiments like the John XXIII Community deserve our attention and our encouragement. They may not have the solution for all parish problems, but then our present parishes don't have all those solutions either.

The Lord said in His heavenly kingdom there are many mansions. It's good to see that even on earth that kingdom now has room enough for many different types of dwellings for the People of God.

—Father Henry A. Atwell



New on

Business To be D

Bishop Kearney will dedicate the new six-story St. Joseph Business School this Sunday, May 7, at p.m.

The school will then be open to the public until 5 p.m.

Begun in 1904, the school has long been known in Rochester for the competent training it gave its students in business and commercial subjects and procedures.

The school this year has grown from a three-year course of study to a fully accredited four-year high school.

Present enrollment is 29 young women. Sister M. Bernardine of the School Sisters

Two Parishes To Vote on Merger Plan

Parishioners of St. Cecilia's and St. Peter and Paul Church, Elmira, will ballot Sunday to decide whether or not to merge their parish school in what would be a pilot project for the Diocese.

According to a proposal made by the pastors and school principals of the two parishes, if through fourth grade pupils would attend St. Cecilia's school; fifth through eighth grade pupils would attend St. Peter and Paul's school. This would eliminate double grading in the present separate arrangement. Pupils would be bused from one area to the other as needed.

Monsignor Philip McGhan, pastor of St. Peter and Paul Church and Sister M. Jonath is principal there. Father Leo McManus is pastor at Cecilia's and Sister M. Seraph is principal.

Schools at Focal Point in Church-State Debate

(By Religious News Service)

The American principle of church-state separation is simply enough stated in abstract terms: the power and financial resources of government should not be used for the benefit of any religious group.

Expressed in such terms, the principle receives nearly unanimous assent from Americans of all shades of religious belief and unbelief. One step further, in any direction, leads to controversy.

A major focal point of such controversy, now as in the past, is the question of aid to religious schools. In its year-end report on litigation, issued at the end of 1966, the American Jewish Congress cited 32 current lawsuits on church-state and religious freedom issues. Half of them were related to government aid for church-related schools.

School bus transportation of children accounted for 8 of the Congress' 11 school cases. Others were related to the inclusion of religious schools in the benefits of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The other four dealt with the use of publicly owned textbooks by students in religious schools. This proportion reflects the nationwide activity of various organizations carrying the banner of church-state separation.

On the national level, two other agencies frequently join the American Jewish Congress in statements or litigation related to the school aid issue: the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State. In a given community, a particular case often enrolls the support of other organizations, churches and sometimes a local council of churches, groups of public school teachers and/or parents.

A chief advocate of aid to church-related schools is Citizens for Educational Freedom, a non-sectarian organization whose membership and leadership are predominantly but not exclusively Roman Catholic.

Having by far the largest system of non-public education in the country, the Roman Catholic Church, through various agencies and spokesmen, is the organization most closely involved in this area of church-state controversy.

In recent years, Catholics have welcomed growing support from agencies representing Orthodox Jews, whose increasing

involvement apparently reflects two factors: A steady growth in the number of Hebrew Day Schools, which are generally conducted under Orthodox auspices and which have sometimes appealed for various forms of government aid and a concern with what Orthodox spokesmen have sometimes called a "one-sided" or "secularistic" image of Judaism conveyed by the activities of the American Jewish Congress.

Next to Catholics, the American religious body with the largest number of day schools is the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, whose 1400 schools have some 160,000 students. Other religious bodies with smaller but significant numbers of full-time schools are the Episcopalians, the Amish, the Adventists and the Greek Orthodox. These churches have not become involved in aid to education controversies, though a few Missouri Synod Lutherans have been active as individuals in Citizens for Educational Freedom.

According to the CEF and many Catholic spokesmen, the point at issue in current school aid controversies is not aid to religion but aid to individual students who study under religious auspices. This theory, usually called the "child-benefit" theory, has been attacked by some organizations and individuals as an attempt to circumvent the constitutional separation of church and state, but it has received substantial recognition of late in both legislative and courtroom actions.

A recent denunciation of the "child-benefit" theory was given by Methodist Bishop Richard C. Raines of Indianapolis in an address to the Women's Division of the American Jewish Congress.

"The child-benefit claim seems to me but a subterfuge which excuses us from using indirectly what law forbids us to do directly," he said.

He added that "a leaky roof of a parochial school can be fixed at public expense to benefit the children; teachers can be hired, buildings built as well as children bused under the child-benefit umbrella."

This contradicts a statement on the subject that many Catholics accept as representative of their views. It was given in 1949 by Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York:

"We do not ask nor can we expect public funds to pay for the construction or repair of parochial buildings or for the

support of teachers or other maintenance costs.

"There are, however, other incidental expenses involved in education expenses for such purposes as the transportation to and from school, the purchase of non-religious textbooks, and the provision of health aids."

These specifics outline accurately the main points on which Catholic educators and spokesmen have insisted. They also indicate the areas in which Catholic schools seem to be nearing success.

The transportation of non-public school students at public expense is now taken for granted in many parts of the U.S. and its federal constitutionality assured by Supreme Court decisions. It is still firmly opposed by various agencies wherever state constitutions offer a possible basis for court action, but whenever a school bus case arrives in court the fact indicates that bus transportation has been effectively accepted by a community, through its public officials, and often through referendum. The most recent such referendum, in Wisconsin, showed approval by 56 per cent of the voters. In a state whose population is only about one-third Catholic, this indicated substantial non-Catholic approval.

The latest court decision, also in favor, was given in Pennsylvania by Chief Justice Michael A. Musmanno, in his majority opinion, said that the purpose of the law was to provide for the "health, welfare and safety of the children."

Two other issues are generally considered more controversial than that of bussing and their status has not yet had nearly as much legislative or judicial discussion.

The loaning of publicly-owned textbooks to students in religiously affiliated schools is under court consideration in several states. In New York, after lower courts have ruled on both sides of the issue, it is headed for a final decision in the State Supreme Court.

The first decision, given by Justice T. Paul Kane in August, 1956, held that such loan of publicly-owned textbooks is unconstitutional. He was reversed unanimously by an Appellate panel of five judges in January, 1957. The grounds of the reversal were, technically, that the plaintiffs had no standing to sue but the judges also expressed the opinion that the loan of textbooks to students did not violate the constitution.



The offertory rite of the Mass concludes with the priest's reminder that all present share in offering the sacrifice soon to be accomplished — Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father almighty. In reply we say, May the Lord receive the sacrifice from your hands to the praise and glory of His name, for our welfare and that of all His holy Church.

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Laity Control Trend Seen at Catholic Colleges

By GARY MACDON

On paper there is an immense difference between the decision of the Loretta nuns to turn Webster College over to a board of lay trustees and the proposal of the Indiana province of the Congregation of Holy Cross to make laymen equal sharers in the power, responsibility and control of the University of Notre Dame and the University of Portland (Oregon).

The practical effects, nevertheless, are not likely to be very different, and the decision of the Jesuit-owned St. Louis University to transfer property and control to a lay-dominated board indicates that we are involved in a wide ranging trend.

The Webster plan as published envisages a total divorce from the Loretta congregation, placing the College in a situation comparable to that of Harvard or Columbia, which today retain only vestigial traces of earlier Church relationships.

Cross if at any time the College ceases to have "an integral academic and pastoral program of Catholic thought and culture."

Whatever the legal technicalities, however, the process once initiated seems to be irreversible as those which have occurred at Harvard and Columbia. It may well be that in this respect our Protestant brothers read the signs of the times long before we recognized them.

What some of these signs are has now been underlined by Holy Cross proponents of the change. Their first point is the Vatican Council's call to religious orders to disengage themselves from the administration of property and wealth, when this is possible without damage to the apostolic works of the Church, and the broader challenge of the Council to the religious orders to put the interests of the people of God, whom they profess to serve, before those of their own institutions.

This fits in perfectly with the Council's stress on the equality of status and responsibility of the laity in the institutional life of the Church.

The proponents also stress the economic motivations of various kinds. The mounting cost of operation is becoming an impossible burden for a religious congregation, and in practice the widening of the

responsibility for financing demands a parallel sharing of the decision-making processes. The University of Ottawa and other Catholic colleges in Canada long ago recognized that fact and have made or are making the appropriate changes. Our resistance here to giving public aid to Church-affiliated institutions adds weight to the argument.

One should not, however, make economic motivations the villain. It may rather be the angel telling us to do what we should have done for better reasons. It played that part in the abolition of slavery.

The official statements have played down what I think must be recognized as a further vital factor. Academic freedom can no longer be avoided as an issue. Tension is mounting between the needs of intellectual research and the limitations traditionally imposed by Catholic institutions. The question is not whether these restrictions are objectively right or wrong. It is that they are extrinsic to a process which permits only intrinsic limitations. In addition, the Catholic should have the humility to recognize that they were often exercised arbitrarily and harmfully.

When administrators and faculty were mostly members of a religious order, the situation was technically controllable and the intransigent easily silenced. In Notre Dame, and generally, 90 per cent are

today laymen. We have recently had a distressing open class in one big Catholic university. Notre Dame deserves congratulation for anticipating and heading off a similar scandal.

Recognition of the autonomy of education must quickly focus attention on another institution which has developed in the Church under strict lay control, the press. Ave Maria, a weekly magazine published by the Congregation of Holy Cross at Notre Dame, has used the university issue to formulate the problem. It broke the story of the project to reform the university. It did so in a framework of full objectivity, thereby helping the creation of a sound public opinion. It did this in spite of, not because of its institutional control. At the pleasure of the institution, those responsible could be censured or replaced. That was the risk they took, knowing that such retribution is still far from uncommon in the Catholic press.

The fact that crisis is showing in education earlier than in the press perhaps reflects the historic concern of the American Church for education and the consequent greater evolution of off educational system. But the conciliar Church simply cannot function without public opinion, and this need is forcing the issue of press autonomy. It will soon move to the center of the stage.

God's World

Like Walking On Egg-Shells

By DENNIS J. GEANEY, O.S.A.

One of the things I am not supposed to do in this column is scandalize the readers. I must not propose anything that may weaken their faith. Our Lord has uttered a harsh condemnation for such people. However, we can become so obsessed with the fear of scandalizing the least of our brethren that our theology becomes paralyzed.

If it becomes fixed in such a rigid mold that it cannot grow, Christianity will become irrelevant to the learned. The Catholic student dealing with a theology that does not cope with the issues he faces in the academic world will either reject it out of hand, or carry it along like folkloric baggage which must not be let to interfere with his addressing himself to the issues of his real life.

It is like walking on egg-shells to avoid shocking the rigid while one is trying to make sense to the inquiring student of Christianity.

This is the risk Pope John took in calling the Council. I must take the risk myself and see people shaken and cry that their faith is being taken from them. The alternative is a decadent Church.

I also know that people who cry "loss of faith" may simply be going through a necessary crisis that liberates their faith that brings them to a new Christian maturity. Like a parent or a teacher or any other authority figure, I must absorb the

hostilities of the people I threaten by being a front runner.

For those whom there is a crisis of faith in seeing doctrinal change or development, it might be well to see Catholic doctrine, not as something that is set in a fixed mold for all time, but as something that was given to us in seed form in the scriptures and which has a twenty century history of historical development. This is what the Council Fathers had to face in the early sessions. Was Catholic doctrine like a geometry theorem that is neat and needs no re-formulation at any time or is there a core that each generation and each culture explores and understands in its own historical setting?

One perceptive Council reporter, after the second session, observed that the Council Fathers should not be divided into liberal and progressives as reporters were quick to do, but into those who saw Christian doctrine as historically conditioned and those who saw it as a set or fixed proposition. With each session the voting showed that the historical approach increased by the hundreds until the final session, the non-historical or static view was a very small minority.

If it took hundreds of bishops four years of debate to grasp the issue, should we be impatient with priests and laity who did not engage in four years of theological dialogue?

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