



St. Joseph Sisters went "on the road" recently to take their annual Spring Concert to the various cities of the Diocese.

The Nuns' Story—1967

By MARCELLA ENNIS

In a previous Courier article, Father Robert F. McNamara traced the history of the first religious orders of women in the Rochester diocese. He concluded by noting that because of the recent changes in garb, it's difficult to identify the nuns of today with their predecessors.

This brings up a question: Are these changes only external—only in the habit—or are there changes in habits too, that is, in the religious life itself, in attitudes and in goals?

To find the answer to this question, we spoke with representatives of the two communities which maintain a Motherhouse in the diocese: Mother Mary Bride, Superior of the Sisters of Mercy, and Sister Mary John, Public Relations Director for the Sisters of St. Joseph.

We found that not only have there been sweeping changes but that most of these are common to both orders. The very existence of a "Public Relations Director" is itself highly significant. Only a few years ago a Courier editor was requested to make no mention of these sisters! "The world forgetting, by the world forgot," was the old rallying cry for spiritual perfection.

Another sign of these changing times is the bi-monthly publication, "Dialogue," founded three years ago by Mother Agnes Cecilia and edited by Sister Mary John. Quite frankly in its appraisal of current religious life, this bulletin serves "as a communications media between laity and religious."

Although the principle of restructuring had long been considered, it took the Vatican Council's decree "On the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life" to give it real impetus. The idea of "community" is still the prevailing concept of convent life, but it is now to be communally reaching out to the world in love. As one sister wrote in "Dialogue," "What better substitute for external structures than more instruction in the three vocations of every person, namely that of a human being first, a Christian secondly, and finally a religious."

This is a far cry from the viewpoint expressed in the best-seller, "The Nun's Story." In one incident, the nun in question complains to her superior that often she must interrupt some important work because "the bell" has rung for prayers or other duties. The superior

replies that a nun's first obligation is to the convent rule; anything else must come second.

Today there is a deeper understanding of individual freedom and responsibility. "The bell" which once inexorably summoned still sounds, but its call is muted. Now in most cases, the individual must decide whether it's more important to respond or to continue what she's doing. And, as Mother Bride practically pointed out, bells came into existence only because there were once no clocks or watches in convents!

The modern young woman who contemplates entering religious life is quite different from her predecessor in two respects. First, she is much more accustomed to personal freedom; and secondly, she seeks involvement with the world, not retreat from it. To survive, to attract these spirited young women, religious orders must discard outmoded traditions and stifling regulations. Besides, as Sister Mary John remarked, the order itself needs this type of applicant if it is to meet today's challenges.

What are some of the specific results of this overall change in attitude?

For one thing, the curtain of secrecy and mystery which hung between the convent and the world is gradually being raised. Now families and friends of prospective postulants are taken on a comprehensive tour of the Motherhouse. Frequent "open houses" for parents are held. Postulants are allowed to go home for a weekend or even a week's visit. Now when receiving the habit, they are encouraged to keep their own baptismal name and even their family name when there is duplication.

There is also far greater communication between the various religious orders themselves. Superiors confer frequently and many social and cultural get-togethers are held at their respective convents.

Lecturers, including Protestants and Jews, clerical and lay, are invited to the Motherhouse to discuss a variety of subjects—from tenets of their particular faith to the modern dance or household budgeting. Films ordinarily not shown in Rochester (such as those at art festivals), as well as regular films, are presented frequently. Also offered at the Motherhouse are retreats for lay teachers and occasional convert instruction by the sisters.

Nuns in turn have taken to

the road, and not "in pairs" as formerly. Routine now are their visits to churches of other faiths, their cooperation with community agencies (as in the Lighted Schoolhouse, Head Start and other inner city programs), their enrollment at secular colleges, their attendance at public school meetings, etc.

The Sisters of St. Joseph maintain a "Speakers Bureau" of about 40 nuns who have volunteered to address any group requesting their services. And this fall three sisters will be

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Nazareth Nun Assigned To Secular College

In response to a proposal made earlier this year by Dr. Virginia Radley, Chairman of the English Department at Russell Sage College, Sister Thomas Marion of Nazareth College has accepted an appointment as Visiting Lecturer in English for the academic year 1967-68. Sister will teach in the regular undergraduate daytime session, and also in the adult education program, which is an evening session. Russell Sage is a private, secular college for women located in Troy, N.Y.

In his letter to Sister confirming the appointment, Dr. Lewis A. Froman, president, said: "We are very pleased that you have been able to arrange this academic year with us and we believe that much good will come of it. It is most worthwhile to expose our students and members of the faculty to fresh points of view. I have long been an advocate of more interchange of faculty between colleges."

Dr. Radley taught a graduate course in Bibliography at Nazareth College during the summer of 1965.

Sister suggests that as the issues in American higher education grow more complex, diversity in teaching experience becomes an important consideration. Nazareth College believes that this experience will work to the advantage of both institutions involved.

Returning to Nazareth College English Department in the fall will be Sister Bonaventure, now completing her doctorate at Fordham University. Mr. Richard Donovan will also join the department, beginning in the 1967 summer session.

CFM in Perinton

'Day for Challenge—Day for Commitment'

By JACK CORAL

Three groups of the Christian Family Movement (CFM) at St. John of Rochester in Perinton have rallied to the work of helping the people of the Inner City to help themselves. This plan for CFM to become "involved" includes the coming together of several organizations, all interested in the betterment of the human condition.

Before the CFM at St. John's could get into this endeavor there had to be planning and work on the part of many people. Now that these people have consolidated their zeal and know-how, the CFM groups are ready to put a Christian dimension into the project.

We trace the story of St. John's CFM involvement by starting with the work of the

CIC. It was this group which brought into existence the CIC Housing Corporation. Several priests are also deeply involved with the CIC. The enthusiasm of these priests has helped give momentum to the Housing Corporation as well as of the Council itself. The president of the Housing Corporation at this time is Philip J. Callan, Jr. Callan was instrumental in arousing the interest of the CFM groups at St. John's.

At this point another active organization comes into the story. The CIC has the highest of ideals. But money is always a practical consideration. Financial assistance must come to our aid in making the ideals concrete.

It is to this end that Rochester Neighbors, another non-

profit corporation, has given its helping hand to the project. This group has secured the assistance of a substantial government loan at a low interest rate. With this loan it has purchased houses which can be rented to large underprivileged families at minimum rates.

Part of the plan is also to arrest further deterioration in

certain areas of the city by purchasing houses which are in need of major repairs. These houses will be fully rehabilitated.

Hence a challenge, too, for the family which moves in—a challenge and an opportunity to help improve the conditions of a particular neighborhood. At the same time the family itself will be advancing a good way from the crowded, unsanitary, and condemned dwelling which it formerly occupied.

And so it is that the people from CIC have the vision of what should be done. Rochester Neighbors has the houses to provide the decent physical environment and the practical know-how to set it in motion.

Finally, the St. John CFM will furnish the personal elements to complete the effort. Not only will their participation be personal but it will be along the lines of true Christian involvement.

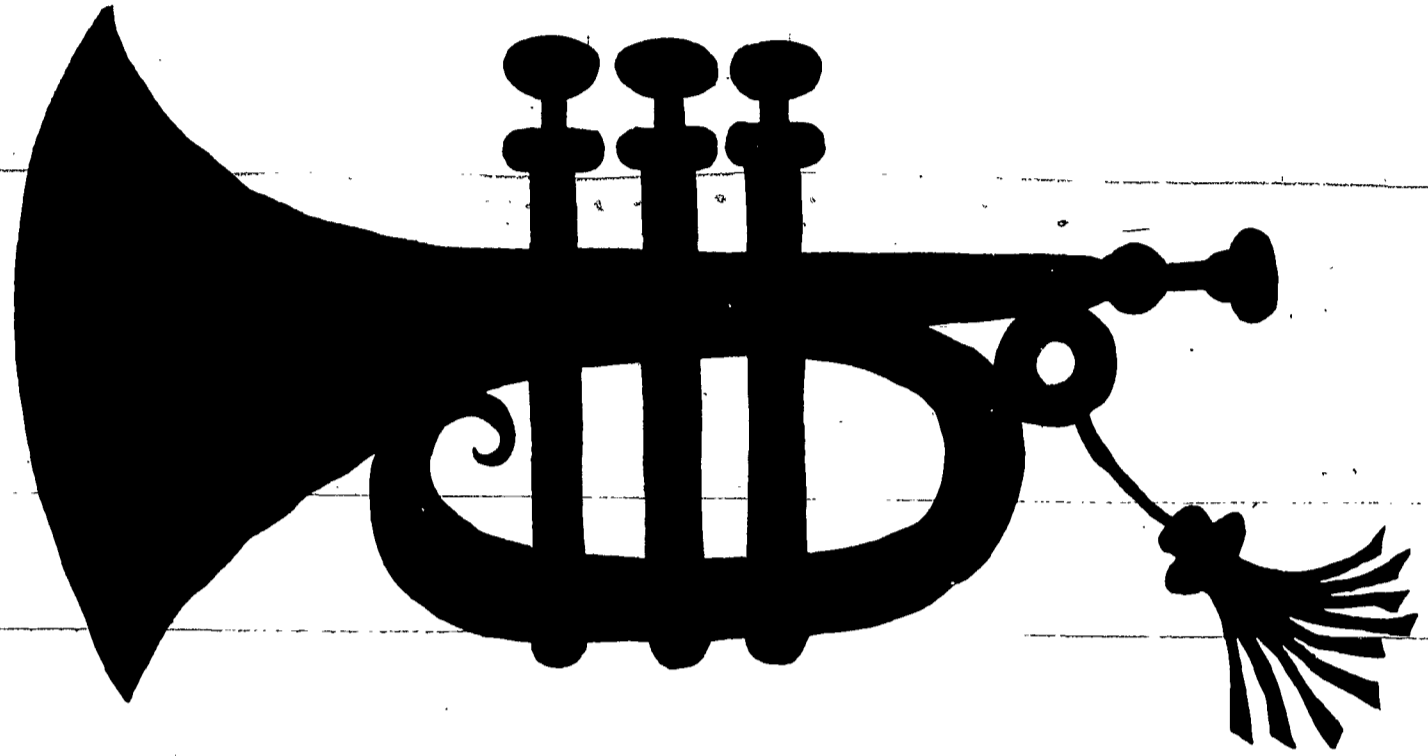
How did all this come about? How did these CFM groups get into the picture? A few weeks ago the CFM became aware of what had to be done.

Callan came to visit each of the three groups. He came at the invitation of Don and Ina Perry, one of the CFM couples at St. John's. The Perrys have been involved with Inner City activity for some time. They knew of Callan's interest and wanted him to present his plans to the various groups.

The groups listened, asked questions, and decided to act.

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The Courier
LOCAL NEWS SECTION
Vol. 78 No. 32
Friday, May 12, 1967
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CLOSED MONDAYS



A Mercy Sister gets a "kick" out of bit of comedy in Father's Sunday sermon.