

'Bearings' for Priests Who Want to be Laymen

New York—At first thought, it would appear that if there is one thing the Church does not need right now it is an organization that would make the transition to laylife easier for priests who want to give up their clerical life.

But one such organization called "Bearings for Re-establishment," has in little more than a year produced some second thoughts—and some interesting results.

"Bearings" was established by a 35-year-old ex-priest named William Restivo to help men who have left the priesthood get their secular bearings: providing assistance in getting them a place to live, a temporary job, aptitude tests, career counseling, and then a job in which they can be happy and productive.

Restivo's organization has given assistance to about 75 men in its brief history, but it is winning the support of more and more priests who have no intention of leaving the priesthood because of its techniques, methods and goals.

"Several priests contacted us for assistance and said they were about to hold press conferences telling why they were leaving," Restivo said. "We told them that if they did that we wouldn't help them. They left without press conferences."

One of the major aims of "Bearings" is to do away with the bitterness and harsh words and public scandal that have been associated with recent decisions by some priests to give up their priesthood, for what ever reason. Besides helping ex-priests to adjust to the lay life, Restivo said, "Bearings" wishes to help the Church avoid suffering needlessly from the parting,

"It doesn't do any good for a priest who wants to leave the priesthood to publicly condemn," Restivo said. "I left the priesthood for my own personal reasons—and it wasn't because I wanted to get married—but I don't want to be associated with the Longo's or Girandola's or Kavanaugh's. I'm not a rabble rouser. I want to fill a need. I want to work as closely as possible within the Church."

In fact, "Bearings" discovered, many of the ex-priests have expressed a desire to again work for the Church, in a lay capacity. One pastor, Restivo said, is preparing to hire a "Bearings" referred man as a lay theologian.

"Bearings" has, as a matter of fact, helped several men decide to stay in the priesthood. "What happens sometimes is that a priest runs into a problem with his bishop and things get so bad that he feels he has to get away. We got one such priest an apartment, paid his rent and gave him time to work things out in this case a transfer to another diocese.

"But if we weren't there to help, he would have tried to get a job, gotten bitter, and the Church loses one good servant and gains an enemy."

Even if the break with the priesthood is permanent, Restivo said, there is no good reason for the bitterness to remain. But it will, he insisted if the ex-priest is suddenly forced into the lay world late in life without such necessary knowledge as how to apply for a job ("You ask an ex-priest what he can do and he'll instinctively reply, 'Nothing.'") or talks himself into taking an "anonymous" job far beneath his capabilities, elevator operator or office clerk.

Operating out of offices at 220 East 67th St. in Manhattan, "Bearings" has drawn nearly a hundred volunteers from job placement agencies, career counseling services and even sympathetic landlords willing to wait a month or two for the first rent ("You can't imagine how difficult job-hunting can be when the only address and phone number you can leave is the YMCA's").

A nine-member executive committee includes Sister Timothy a member of the philosophy department at Manhattan's Marymount College who is in charge of recruiting volunteers for "Bearings," and Jesuit Father William J. Davis, an editor of "Jesuit Missions" magazine who has called "Bearings" a "critically needed apostolate."

In June, "Bearings" launched a monthly newsletter, its issues to date being filled with news of expansion (Detroit and Chicago offices are being established), appeals for funds, position-wanted ads, testimonials ("It is a most Christian, useful work," wrote a Monsignor from Texas), and news related to the work of "Bearings."

An item in the July issue quotes the Rev. John J. O'Brien, a faculty member at Boston's archdiocesan seminary, who suggested that national or regional centers be established by the Church to counsel priests and religious who are considering leaving.

Father O'Brien suggests that should a person, after counseling by theologians, psychologists and even marriage counselors, decide to leave the religious life, "he should be returned to the lay state by his bishop. This man should have proper retraining and assistance in his readjustment. . . . Hopefully another lay leader is given to the Church and a future disaster is averted."

The same theme is expressed in a "Bearings" brochure: "Bearings exists for those men and women who feel they must change their status in the people of God. Bearings intends to make their transition fruitful. . . . It wants them to know that although they have changed their state of life, they are still Christians. Bearings wants them to lose nothing of the zeal and devotion that prompted them to serve as ordained ministers in the first place."

Restivo, a native of Cheyenne, Wyo., who entered the seminary in 1953, was ordained in 1959 and left the priesthood in 1961.



WILLIAM RESTIVO

... better a good layman . . .

But even in that short time, he said, it "took me four years to adjust to lay life." Now a business-management consultant ("I only work for 'Bearings' part time; otherwise people would say I started it because I couldn't get a job doing anything else"), Restivo said he established "Bearings" partly as a result of his own experiences adjusting to the lay state.

"But without the kind of help we're offering," he added, "it means that if you're an unsuccessful priest, you're faced with the alternative of staying an unsuccessful priest or becoming an unsuccessful layman. I think it's better to become a good layman than remain a poor priest." — (Catholic Press Features)

Vacation -- God's Gift

Castelgandolfo — (NC) — Pope Paul, addressing crowds of summer vacationers at his own vacation home here in the Alban hills, noted that vacation time has become an important part of modern life.

He expressed the hope that all might enjoy their holidays "with a keener awareness of God's great gift of life and with a more attentive and thoughtful vision of the terrestrial world that surrounds us."

The Pope also sent his blessings to various theological conventions and spiritual celebrations around the world, such as the Marian and Mariological meetings in Portugal and the celebrations in honor of the Blessed Virgin of the Aparecida in Brazil.

Vocations On Increase

Santo Domingo — (NC) — The seminars on religious vocations sponsored by the Work of Religious Vocations are paying dividends, according to the results of the first such meetings held in this country.

Similar meetings in Santo Domingo, La Vega, Altigracia and other Dominican dioceses are expected to be similarly fruitful in the work of increasing the number of Dominican priests.

NOISE ON THE ROOFTOP



Religion's Focus On Human Side

Traverse City, Mich.—(RNS)—Christians, increasingly find little consolation in worship and prayer, often because of psychic fears, a Catholic theologian told a mixed group of Protestant and Catholic clergy and laity in session here.

Addressing the first annual Inter-Faith Seminar on Religion and Contemporary Man, Father Gregory Baum, O.S.A., said religion is facing a "crisis of the sacred."

The five-day seminar on the campus of Northwestern Michigan College was sponsored jointly by the Grand Traverse Council of Churches and the Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids.

Father Baum, an Augustinian, is associate professor of religion at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, and was a theological adviser to bishops of the Second Vatican Council.

"Objections to religion no longer come only from outside the church," he said. "People inside the church also have difficulties."

"They remember when they were consoled by prayer and worship, but today these acts mean less to them, even among those in the ministry and in seminaries."

Father Baum said some Protestant theologians have interpreted this crisis of religion as the "death of God," but that this has not been helpful to those in spiritual distress.

"At the same time," he said, "many Catholic theologians insist that religion does not deal with a special supernatural world, occupying a pious corner of man's life, with a being, a divine being, far away in some other world."

"They insist that the Gospel of Christ deals with what happens in the present world, at the center of human life. It deals not with the spiritual side of life, the pious and religious side, but with the whole of man's life, with his growth as a human being."

People fear to pray, Father Baum said, because:

1. By being preoccupied with a God outside of life, they feel they are by-passing the real problems of life and their responsibility for the future.
2. They fear that prayer may be an "unreality factor," a "fantasy" in their lives, and that they thus fail to seek out real life problems.
3. Prayer to a heavenly Father threatens to make them dependent, and they already have difficulties growing up and maintaining maturity.

Along with his growing aversions to prayer and worship, man's appreciation of the holy has undergone a change, Father Baum continued. The "otherness" of God is no longer cen-

tral in Protestant and Catholic thought, he said.

"When we see a man who is free enough to forgive, to sacrifice himself for another, to be totally for others, then we tremble," he said. "We are face to face with something we regard as superior to ordinary life and which we as Christians understand as God's redemptive mystery present in man."

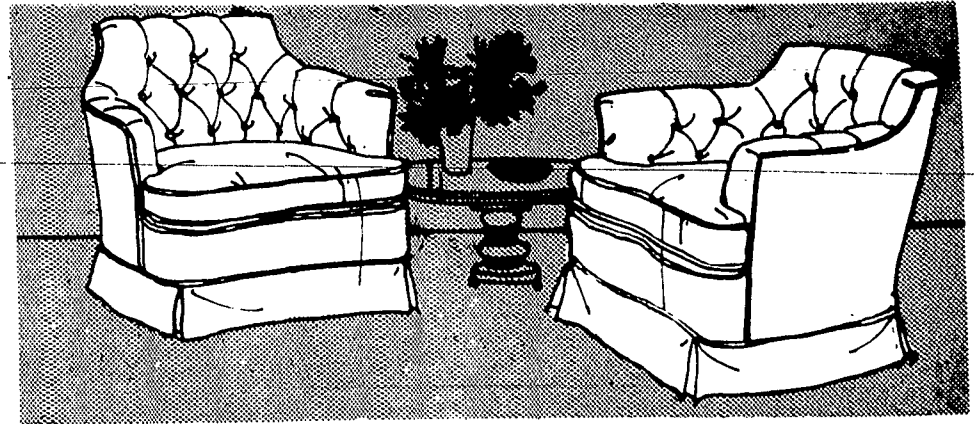
Festival At Holy Ghost

Holy Ghost Church, Gates will hold its Summer Festival August 22 and 23 on the church grounds, 220 Coldwater Rd. An old fashioned chicken dinner will be served from 5:30 to 9 p.m. There will be games, booths and prizes.

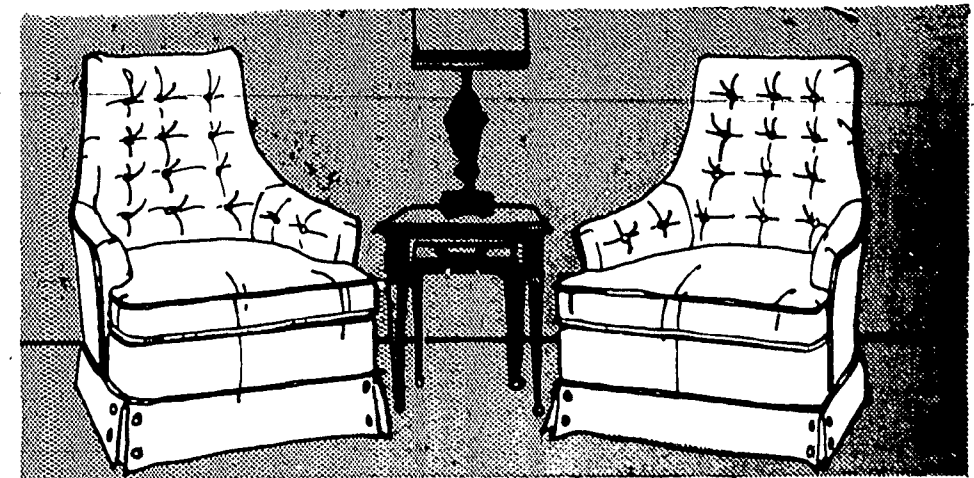


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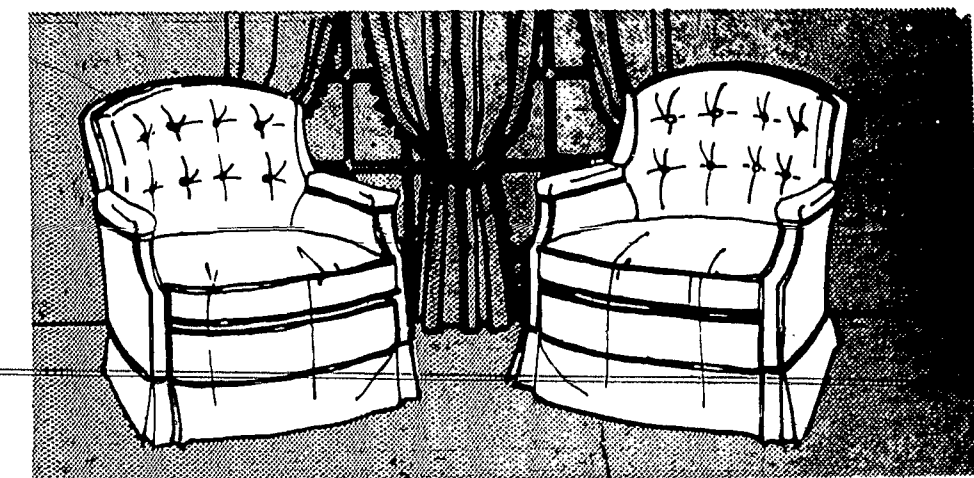
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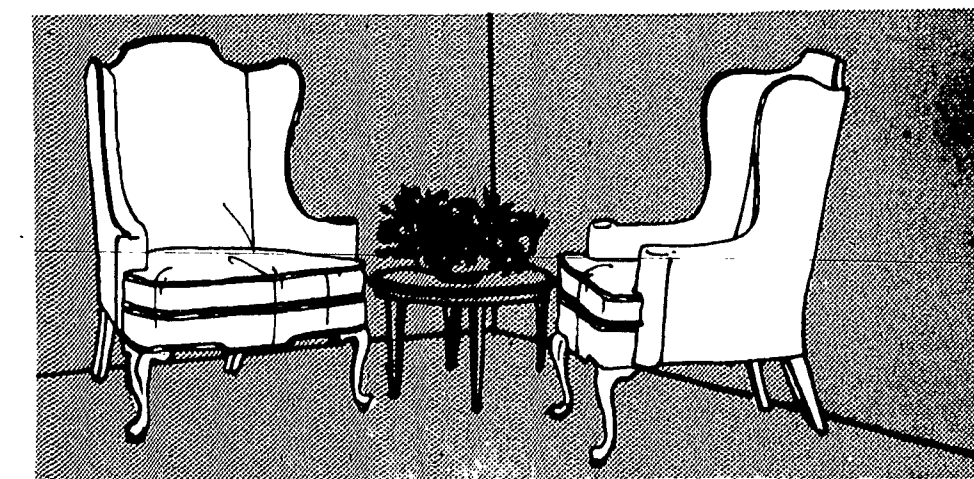
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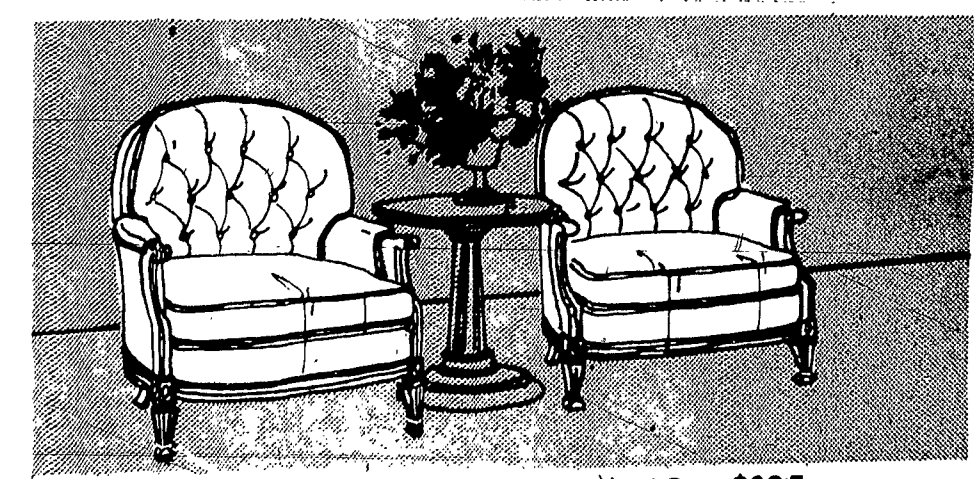
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