Financial Reports Not Harsh

Two Auburn parishes have unique ways of reporting on collections: as part of its bulletin one prints in several mimeo pages every Sunday the total list of donors and their gifts over $1 from the previous week.

The other church uses red paper for its bulletin every week that the Sunday collection has not reached the announced minimum total needed for parish stability. When the parishioners see their bulletin on white paper, (too rare a sight, some admit), they know that last week's figures pleased the finance committee.

Glaringly absent from bulletins is news on how parochial funds are being used from week to week, or even season to season. An annual financial statement seems to be considered an adequate accounting of the pastor's stewardship.

Yet many laymen who face the monthly duty of paying bills and balancing their own finances believe that a precise monthly listing of all the specific, major disbursements required for parish maintenance would be an easy bulletin gesture.

Telling the donor where his dollars went would help make parishioners observant of the parish property and programs and give them a sense of sharing parishioners say. Not everyone can be on the finance committee, laymen admit, but "it's human nature to give better when you know where it's going."

Charity done by the parish seems to be a legitimate item of bulletin material but hardly anywhere is it publicized for the parishioners. An annual visiting missionary finds its easy to beg from even the less-affluent parishes, but if the parish-treasury is aiding the local poor, or could do so, bulletins never report.

Two campus communities, the Catholic students at Cornell University and at Ithaca College, have for several years tithed for the poor each Sunday, taking a straight 10 per cent of the weekly offering and sending it to needy groups in the U.S. and abroad. Students are invited to suggest to the chaplains where the tithe should be sent.

Granted that these Catholic campus communities do not have the overhead problems of average church, how many parishes dare say they could not afford to give away a small set portion of their collection every week for some inner-city poor parish, some welfare project on a limited budget, some community less blessed than themselves?

Hospitality and friendliness are two other facets of the Christian life not easily discerned from reading bulletins. Hardly any parish bulletins studied here seem to reflect that each week there may be strangers in the congregation, visitors in their area, Protestant or Jewish friends of parishioners, new residents in the parish or even long-absent Catholics. There could be an occasional heading on the

bulletin expressing a general welcome, listing parish facilities, urging the visitor to speak to the pastor at the door or drop in at the rectory.

Only a few places were noted as offering the hospitality of coffee and sweet rolls after Sunday Masses. St. Francis of Assisi of Rochester and the Cornell Catholic community in Ithaca. For parish acquaintanceships, conversation for the lonely and fellowship that would complement the fraternity felt at Mass, the expense (and labor) of providing an informal stand-up continental breakfast could be tried by parishes who bewail "there is so little community tyn ess in our church."

This concludes five articles on parish bulletins. The author is grateful for mail-response to his commentaries. The Editor will welcome letters about this series and suggestions for other surveys of parish life. Please note on page 1 today the beginning of a new series on the layman's opinions about the management of his parish.

Send your sacrifice to The Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 50 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604.

CO NEWS Vol. 7

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By MONICA RE

An unused, old Meth and a brand new medica like unusual birth pla parishes.

But such is the case new parishes created in the northwestern dioceses.

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