

Servant - Community Enters Second Year Going Strong

By JOHN DEL MONTE

Rochester's most unstructured Catholic congregation is now in its second year of life.

The Community of the Servant of God (CSJ) recently marked its first anniversary as a going concern. From all indications, it seems likely to keep right on going.

The community now numbers more than 50 families, comprising some 100 adults and about the same number of children.

Their pastor, since the group's inception, has been Father Raymond Kenny, recently named pastor of St. Joseph Church in Rush.

Father Kenny, who had been assistant pastor of St. James Church, Rochester, when the CSJ was born doesn't feel that his new appointment will affect his responsibilities with the group.

"The group doesn't need a full time priest. We have enough capable people to manage our program," he stated last week.

The Servant of God group is about as close to an "underground church" as Rochester has, and it really isn't underground. The Pastoral Office, while turning down the group's early request for canonical status as a "non-territorial parish," has allowed Father Kenny to act as its pastor, and thus given a tacit permission for its existence.

At this point, the venturesome group isn't too interested in obtaining a canonical status. "We realize now that its better not to be structured too tightly," observed Herman Walz, Jr., board chairman of the CSJ group.

"When we asked previously for some official status, we were putting the cart before the horse," he went on. "We really weren't a community then, but were asking to be recognized as one. Now, I think we are a community."

Impatience With Parish Renewal

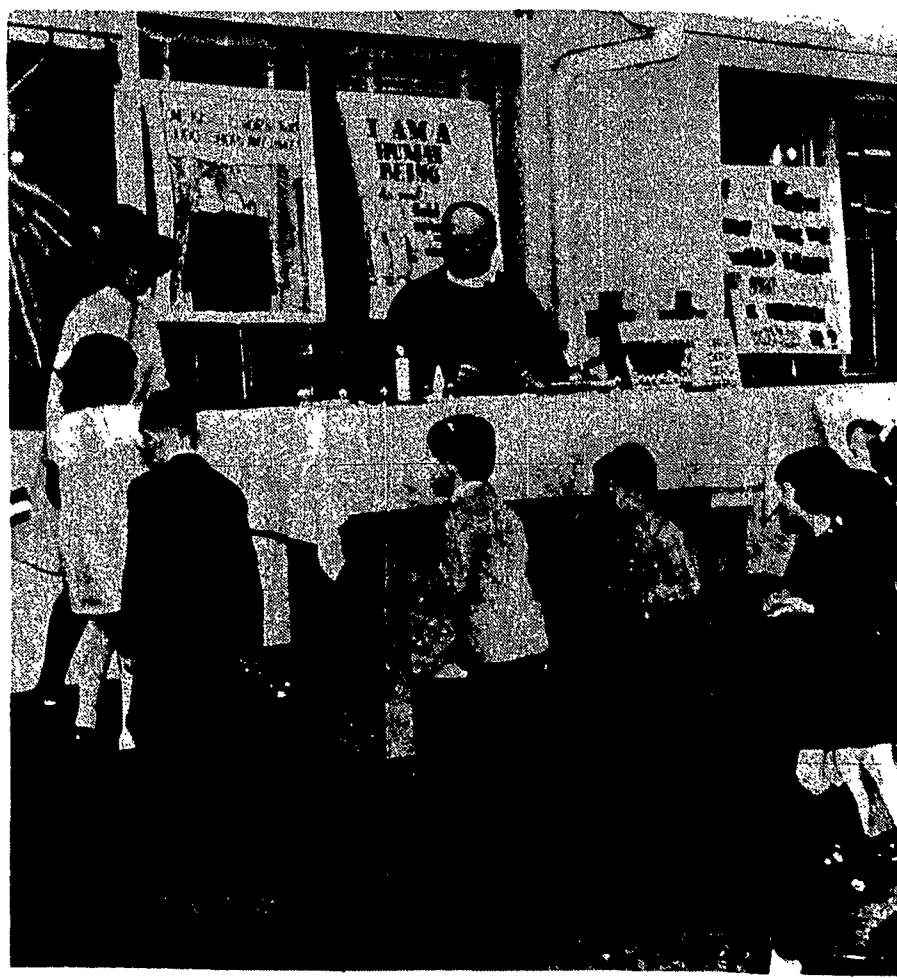
The Servant of God group, like other similar non-parochial communities in the U.S. grew out of the impatience of younger Catholics with the slow pace of post-Vatican renewal in their regular parishes.

Many of the CSJ pioneers are not far removed from their college days, where they had found a liturgy that spoke to them "meaningfully." Fuller vocal participation, contemporary hymns and sermons geared to topical issues made Mass on the campus a richer experience than it often was back home in their own parishes.

Accustomed to gathering close around the altar, enjoying the stimulus of dialog homilies, they missed these things when they left the college scene.

Many of the CSJ founders had been members of discussion groups moderated by Father Kenny, then a teacher at St. Andrew's seminary. As they heard about "floating parishes," which were built more on the common interests of members than on geographical lines, they began to say: "why don't we form such a community?"

The informational meetings at Nazareth College in May of 1967 re-



Eager First Communicants hasten forward in an offertory procession for one of the Servant of God group's memorable days. Mrs. Leo Dodd, left, leads her charges to Father Raymond Kenny, awaiting the offertory gifts.

vealed some 50-60 adult Catholics interested in starting such an effort. They elected Father Kenny as their pastor, and began to meet regularly.

Early business meetings were held at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality on South Avenue, while the community Mass was soon located at Immaculate Conception Church.

The community has enjoyed several homes for its Sunday liturgy. They stayed at Immaculate for several months, then accepted an offer from Our Lady of Perpetual Help's pastor, Msgr. Richard Quinn, to use the Joseph Ave. church on Sunday afternoons.

As of last Sunday, the Servant of God congregation shifted to St. Jo-

seph's Church in suburban Rush, where Father Kenny recently began a pastoral appointment. Their Sunday Mass is at 11:30 a.m., and with the extended dialog homily, normally runs to 90 minutes or longer.

They don't plan to remain at the Rush church much beyond this summer; however, partly because "we don't want to become a satellite of Father Kenny's parish," as one member put it, and partly because its small size restricts their catechetical program.

"We feel that its helpful to move around a bit," noted Herman Walz, adding that the moving makes it easier for interested people in various areas to observe their liturgy.

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Ecumenical Church School Opens

By PATRICIA ROESCH

More than a hundred Protestant and Catholic youngsters from five area churches gathered into Corpus Christi school on Main Street East Monday for the opening session of the Ecumenical Summer Church School.

The program of Bible study, arts, crafts and games for the kindergarten through sixth graders will run each weekday morning for two weeks.

Special activity plans include a Passover supper, a "Last Supper," and a "freedom" or "exodus march." The fifth graders will publish their own newspaper.

St. Boniface Church is conducting a similar church school for the second year, with St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Lutheran Church of

Peace, Calvary Presbyterian and South Avenue Baptist Churches.

(St. James Church just completed an ecumenical summer school program with St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, and Laurelton Presbyterian Church.)

Churches participating in the Corpus Christi-based school are East Side Memorial Presbyterian, Parsells Ave-

The Layman and His Parish

He Feels Sermons Don't Touch Important Issues of Everyday Life

This is the second of series on laymen discussing their parishes, concerning such topics as finances, sermons, liturgy, relations with clergy, etc.

By CARMEN VIGLUCCI

"If a man write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mouse-trap... though he build his house in the woods, the world, will make a beaten path to his door."

The question of who originated that famous quote has been the subject of debate. So, too, the idea of what constitutes a "better sermon" can stir up a pretty heated discussion among today's laity.

And as for the pastor preparing his sermon the task of trying to satisfy all his congregation must indeed be a hopeless one.

One thing is rather clear from a sample survey of church-going laity — most are dissatisfied with the type homily they are hearing at Sunday Masses. Also clear is the fact that they are not in agreement on just what a sermon should be.

Typical comments: "Sermons don't touch on any of today's basic issues. You don't hear anything of the day-to-day, hand-to-mouth problems. I think the tone is set too high."

Worth noting is the fact that all of the laymen surveyed felt that their priests did work hard in preparing their sermons. It is the general belief that sermons are sincere, well thought out and organized at least in outline but that they just are not relevant to what the laity thinks is important.

Also it is general diocesan policy here, but not in any sense an obligatory one, that sermons should be tied to the Gospel and be scriptural and spiritual in character.

In order to put such criticism in

proper perspective attention must be called to the Decree on Liturgy from Vatican II (section 35, part 2), which says:

"Since the sermon is part of the liturgical service... (it) should draw its content mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources. Its character should be that of a proclamation of God's wonderful works in the history of salvation, that is, the mystery of Christ, which is ever present and active within us."

The feeling that many preachers don't weave the Gospel graphically into everyday life is expressed by one layman who said:

"It's one thing to say such things as 'Your Heavenly Father will feed you' — and believe me, I mean no disrespect — but what does it mean to a guy who is hungry?"

It should be noted that as quickly as one suburban housewife will complain that sermons "don't touch on issues such as the race problems, except in the most general way," another church-goer will take the opposite stance — "I don't want the priest telling me what I should do — I get all the controversy I want in the papers and on TV and want that one hour on Sunday for spiritual satisfaction."

While it seems that most comment on sermons concerns the day's explosive issues, one layman felt that they don't come to grips with the more mundane nitty gritty moral issues.

For instance, he said, "Sermons are just full of platitudes when it comes to telling a man how to conduct himself in the business world. But how does a good Christian react to another guy in the office who is playing dirty politics? It's not so much the guy who slaps you in the face as the one who stabs you in the back. What do you do?"

One man's church, (St. Ambrose, Rochester), turns the pulpit over occasionally to laymen or sisters.

"These preachers, usually just describe some upcoming event, such as a retreat, but as a change of pace, it's refreshing," he said.

He had "the same feeling about a recent sermon by a nun — 'It filled us in on the school's operations and problems. It was very worthwhile.'"

The same man also mentioned a

fact that others also touched on — pleasing sermons, regardless of the subject, are remembered.

"I remember a German priest, when I was in the Army, who used to give great sermons week after week," he said. "He was able to relate moral values to everyday life and that's what I look for."

The same thought came from another city layman:

"I'll always remember a sermon I heard at the 'French church' (Our Lady of Victory)..."

Or a housewife who recalls "when I used to go to Old St. Mary's they had consistently good sermons, related to life, generally on the brief side, but clear and moving."

Whether they want to be entertained, inspired, lectured, patted on the back, educated or what is unclear, but it is certain that some laymen regard the Sunday homily as such a personal thing that they attend churches outside of their own parish.

A city woman who made such a switch said she "almost stopped going to my own parish church, the sermons were so bad."

"The traditional type sermon is alienating our young people," she said. "It is often unstimulating to go to church. I feel that a sermon should be rewarding, fulfilling."

She feels that at her new church (Immaculate Conception) sermons are just that.

"The best I've ever heard in a Catholic church," the woman, a convert, said.

"Our sermons deal with FIGHT, the Bertrigans, current movies such as 'The Graduate,' articles in 'Newsweek' and other topics tied in with the mainstream of discussion."

"And church is filled every week," she added.

While not everyone feels strongly enough about sermons to change parishes, one layman tells of his personal reaction:

"It's like a Walter Mitty dream where I suddenly jump up in the middle of the sermon and take issue with the preacher," he said.

When asked how his mental vagary turns out, he replied: "The congregation tears me apart."

Kids at Camp: Inter-Racial Bright Spot

By MARGARET CONNOLLY

This is a story about kids at camp, grownups who worry about race relations, and a telephone that rings all day.

The kids are black and white, but they don't know it; they're color blind.

Let's hope so, say the people who worry.

The grown-ups are black and white, and know it, and wonder how they can ever get together: "What can I do?"

Dial 436-0621. Drivers will be needed Sundays to bring campers home from Camp Stella Maris on Conesus Lake and Hillside Camp in Wyoming County.

Hand-me-down sweaters and shorts and bathing suits, blanket and flashlights are needed to equip the outward-bound.

The telephone belongs to Mattie and Jim Williams, who find themselves running a clothing depot and car pool for 200 lucky campers from the inner city. They put their phone number in the paper last Saturday, by way of hollering "Help!"

Their garage, at 163 Reynolds, quickly filled up with boxes and bags of tough, clean play clothes, for boys and girls aged nine to fourteen. Their telephone pad was scrawled with names and addresses of drivers enough to get the children to camp all season.

"But now we have to get them back," Mattie observed later in the week.

Where did it start? In the Protestant-Catholic Joint Office for the Urban Ministry and in a number of church groups that have camp connections.

The "campership" program is not new, (free camp experience for the underprivileged) but there is a new angle. This year at Hillside (Presbyterian) and Stella Maris (Catholic) the inner-city guests are taken right along with the more affluent regulars.

"That's the way it should be," says Mattie. "Separatism is out." So the Williamses set up the "campership" kids for these two camps.

They naturally attract this kind of work. Educated, religious, articulate and strong-minded people, they are involved to the saturation point —

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the difference is like

DAY & NIGHT



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PAT ANSWERS

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Q. My friend insists that angels were simply "influences" or "messages" emanating from God to humans He wished to reach rather than created, spiritual beings. Please comment.

—G. G., Rochester.

A. That cannot be maintained. It would deny angels' personality. But both the Old and New Testament insist upon the unique spiritual and personal character of angels. Isaiah 63/3 states that the angels worship God crying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts." Our Lord said (Math. 18/10): "I say to you that their angels in Heaven always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. He also said there was 'joy among the angels in heaven' when a sinner repents. Do 'influences' worship, see and rejoice?"

Q. Different non-Catholics have asked me why nuns wear a ring. It doesn't seem quite enough to say that a "Sister is a bride of Christ."

A. K. F., Geneseo.

A. The ring as an unbroken circle has always been the symbol of unbroken fidelity. The nun like a married woman vows absolute fidelity but not to any merely human being. She intends a spiritual union of her soul with God. And for the purposes of this union she renounces earthly possessions, legitimate earthly affections and self-will. The pledges she makes to maintain the spirit and rule of her religious community, as well as her intentions to consecrate her body and will to God's work is symbolized by the ring.

Q. I cannot understand why the Church does not officially lend support to programs for preventing cruelty to animals.

—L. E., Clifton Springs.

A. While the moral laws of charity and justice forbid wanton cruelty to animals, the Church places no obligation on Catholics to take a special interest in activities for the prevention of cruelty to animals. But any and every good cause concerned with the betterment and protection of God's creatures, human or animal, would have the implicit approval of

God's church. Be slow to criticize those who do not share your enthusiastic views on the importance of this work but who continuously devote their attention to other projects of welfare work judged to be more urgent or significant for human happiness.

Q. I subscribe to a well-known book of the month club. Although they distribute some fine books, others recently have been very outspoken on sex. Is it a sin to read these books? I have not received Communion for the last few Sundays because I am uncertain about this.

—M. R. B., Rochester.

A. If the books do stimulate you to desires or actions that you are certain are evil, certainly you should not read them. Most such clubs offer a choice of selection or rejection. You do not have to take anything that is offered, so exercise some judgement and send questionable books back.

But perhaps you are being overly scrupulous. The Bible, too, is "outspoken" about sex. If you have reference to some popular novels that are crammed with sex episodes described explicitly, then I would say you are guilty at least of wasting your time.

Q. Is there a patron saint of social workers?

—R. J., Penfield, N.Y.

A. The patron saint of social workers is St. Vincent de Paul (1580-1660), a French priest renowned for his charitable work and the founder of organized charity in France.

Q. May a non-Catholic husband of a Catholic wife be buried in a Catholic cemetery? If so, my husband and I would purchase a family plot. As I would purchase a family plot. As I would purchase a family plot. As I would purchase a family plot.

—M. S., Rochester.

A. This is scarcely a problem in most dioceses of the U.S. You may purchase a lot in your own Catholic cemetery for you and your husband. Have you tried?