

What Do People Think of Church Societies?

By ANTOINETTE BOSCO
(Last of a Series)

My parish studies raised these questions which need an honest examination.

How do people look at church societies? — As fund raisers, entertainment groups, opportunities for spiritual development, social clubs, or as a combination of all?

Why is it that a Rosary Society can hardly sell tickets to a Communion supper, but fashion-show tickets are a sell-out weeks in advance?

Why are societies such as the Catholic Interracial Council, Interfaith Councils, Social Action Committees, and Human Relations groups, so unsuccessful in attracting a large Catholic membership?

Why are Holy Name Societies dying out? Is it due to unexciting programming, lack of time, apathy, or simply that such societies have lost their purpose?

Response to religious education offerings is another disappointment in most parishes. Attendance at Confraternity is good on the elementary level to post confirmation; and then drops progressively each year after.

While a cry has gone up for adult education, and programs are being offered — from one-night talks, lecture series, work-

shops, and home discussions, to six-week courses — response has hardly been exciting.

With the establishment of these Parish Lay Councils, there is now a vehicle for lay leadership, communication and action within a parish. But will a new vitality actually be generated within parishes because of the Councils?

When one pastor held an open meeting to give his parishioners the chance to offer ideas on what would be important starting work for the Parish Council, he got speeches on parking lot problems, termite

control, better landscaping, the poor acoustical system in the church, and suggestions on how teen clubs could raise money.

Priests say that Parish Lay Councils — established on the sound principle of collegiality for mutual benefit of all in the multi-faceted work and needs of a parish — will work or drag, depending on the people elected.

A generally agreed "profile" of a person who would be an asset to a parish council emerged as a person who has:

- some theological formation, both from education, having at-

tended lectures, workshops, Confraternity training courses for teachers, etc.; and from experience, having worked in Confraternity, Christian Family Movement, Legion of Mary, St. Vincent de Paul, etc.

- a capacity for a non-near-sighted, total vision.
- the willingness to give much of his time
- a psychologically sound personality
- the willingness to accept "no's" to his proposals
- a knowledge of current de-

velopments in the Church from a consistent reading of Catholic periodicals and books

Persons to be avoided would be:

- The "quickie opinion absorber" — who assimilates and then pushes new ideas with no research, background, or serious thought.
- The "change protesters" — who hesitate to drop or even reconsider the outmoded, and could well cause schisms in relationships among Council members.
- The person who only of-

fers help on his own terms — what he wants to do, rather than what the parish needs.

When the emerging needs in parish life have been spelled out, it becomes clearer that parish boundaries and buildings may stay unchanged, but this is not essentially the substance of a parish. The parish will always be the together-creation of the priests and people, reflecting what they are.

Which makes the crucial question: Do they know who they are supposed to be?

(Reprinted from "Today's Parish")

Program Altered By Edmundites

Winoski, Vt. — Students will no longer be admitted to the Edmundite Novitiate immediately after completion of high school, the Edmundite Renewal Chapter, meeting at St. Michael's College here, has decided.

Candidates for the priesthood and brotherhood in the Society of St. Edmund in the future will not enter the novitiate before completing at least two years of college

or, in the case of some prospective brothers, two years of vocational training. The Chapter also decided to cease recruiting high school seminarians; but because of the society's longstanding commitment to black Americans and a need for black vocations in the American Church, the chapter decided to continue its policy of financial sponsorship of black high school students at minor seminaries.

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Jesuit College To Merge With London U.

London — (NC) — The Jesuit college and house of studies at Heythrop near Oxford is expected to move into central London and become an integral part of London University.

The move is planned for late next year. If ratified as expected later in July by the London University senate, it comes after months of negotiations, during which the Jesuit college with its high educational standing and valuable library has been strongly wooed by several other universities.

The Second Vatican Council called for such ties between theological colleges and the universities and the importance of Heythrop moving into London, would be that Jesuit and non-Jesuit, Catholic and non-Catholic teachers and students would be able to approach their theology in an ecumenical setting.

Heythrop, 49 years old, has not been a striking success as a pontifical seminary, since English bishops send their brighter students to the English College in Rome.

In London, Heythrop would have the advantage of association with some of the finest Anglican and Protestant theologians. The Heythrop library of some 200,000 books would be an outstanding asset for London.

College Plans New Religion Course

Albany — An undergraduate course in religious studies described as an "interfaith, interdisciplinary major" will be launched at the College of St. Rose in 1970.

A pilot program will be conducted this year as a second major for students who already have the bachelor's degree. Sister Catherine Thomas MoNamee, CSJ, the academic dean, said that the course would serve as a base for graduate work in theology and also could prepare people to run parish education centers, campus apostolates and adult education programs.

Area clergymen of many faiths joined the college administrators and faculty in preliminary discussions last week, she reported.

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