



Becket Hall: Where the Clergy-Laity Gap Vanishes

By ARTHUR P. FARREN

Many activities in today's renewing Church lessening, if not eliminating, any gap between clergy and laity.

Among examples of such progress is Becket Hall, a diocesan residence on the St. John Fisher Campus where future priests and laymen are living, working, studying and recreating.

Currently Becket Hall is the residence of seminarians who are pursuing their college courses and preparing for enrollment at St. Bernard's Major Seminary, a diocesan seminary for seminarian students attending the college.

Also in the Becket residency are the rector, Father Louis J. Hohman, and three priests—Father John Murphy, diocesan vocations director; Father John O'Connell, director of the diocesan Office of Human and Social Concerns; and Father Urban Ministry and Secular Missions activities; Father Liam Donnelly, chaplain at Monroe Community College; and Rev. Mr. Peter Bayer, a deacon, serving with Father Hohman.

Becket Hall, established five years ago, is a more relaxed seminary than its predecessor.

Today's Becket seminarian has fewer responsibilities; he has much more companionship with other seminarians, and is practically "just another student" with the necessity to keep up on and to pass his courses.

He is in classes not only with Fisher College men but also with Nazareth College women. He participates in off-campus meetings, cultural and social gatherings, and he may not date a girl on a "one-to-one" basis.

Seminarians at Fisher must take only two courses in theology and philosophy. They otherwise may take any courses they desire. Fisher grants accredited degrees in the field of arts and sciences.

Among the 60 seminarians at Becket are 11 juniors, 11 sophomores and 9 freshmen (in addition to 29 from the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey). Eventually, naturally, they will reach priesthood, Father Hohman notes. About 35 percent—about the same as in former days.

Becket Hall—which along with St. Bernard's Seminary receives a subsidy from the diocesan Seminary—like so many other institutions, is undergoing a restructuring. If it were operating at capacity, 150 students, it would be at a "break-even" point, 110 students, it would be losing. With only 60 at present, the loss has been met by the income from the 43 Fisher non-seminarian students.

Seminarians now pay full tuition with their own money; the seminary still follows a policy which says no young man will be denied an opportunity because of the lack of money. In order to meet the needs of the seminarians, work at summer jobs is encouraged at Becket Hall.

This reporter experienced the presence of seminarians at Becket Hall. He came away with the feeling that the present generation of seminarians are being given an excellent opportunity to be relevant—who will be in a position to help the layman and his problems and to be much more relevant than were the priests of two or three decades ago.



Father Louis Hohman, rector of Becket Hall, talks over some programs with Lawrence Marvullo.



Gregory Freidman helps out in the kitchen.



Arthur McCann takes care of some routine bachelor duties.