

'Sno Kidding

CCD People Human, Too

By CECELIA VIGGO

Not many reporters have been snowbound with 36 religious education coordinators for two and one-half days. I was, last week, on a hillside over Canandaigua Lake.

At first hearing, the experience may sound harrowing. The term "religious education coordinator" seems like another example of bureaucratic double-talk. It evokes images of faceless cogs in the Great Diocesan Education Machine.

But my 60-hour "ordeal" demonstrated that the religious education coordinator is a very "human" being, involved in one of the newest and most challenging positions in the American Church today.

In the past decade there has been an increasing awareness on the part of Church leaders that religious education must be extended to all members of a parish of all age levels. To make this goal a reality, parishes have begun to hire religious education coordinators.

These persons — lay people and Sisters — fulfill the role of educator, administrator and catechist. Their duties are varied: visiting parishioners, training volunteer teachers for parish CCD programs, preparing both children and their parents for the reception of the sacraments, and developing programs for adult education.

Forty-two full-time, salaried coordinators work in 40 parishes throughout the diocese.

The 36 coordinators with whom I was snowbound (30 Sisters, five laywomen and one lay man) had come to Notre Dame Retreat House to attend a workshop on religious education.

The sessions, scheduled to last from Monday evening to

CARDINAL VISITS NIXON

New York — (RNS) — In what was described by an archdiocesan spokesman as primarily a "personal visit," Terence Cardinal Cooke of New York met with President Nixon at the White House to report on his Christmas visit with U.S. troops in Vietnam and elsewhere. The 45-minute visit Jan. 26 was described by a White House press aide as a "positive" report by the cardinal on U.S. involvement in Vietnam.



Pictured at CCD workshop are, from left, Father George Torok of Czechoslovakia, guest speaker; Michael Stanley, religious education coordinator of St. Catherine of Siena parish, Ithaca; Sister Elaine Muleahy, coordinator at the King Ferry Rural Center, and Father Daniel F. Holland, director of the diocesan religious education division-CCD.

mid-Wednesday were extended by the Blizzard of '71 into Thursday afternoon.

Principals, directing a film and slide presentation were Father Edmund Walker, professor at St. Bernard's seminary and consultant to the Office of Religious Education, and Sister Virginia Cartenuto, coordinator at St. Patrick's parish, Victor.

Father George Torok, Czechoslovakian film maker, was the program's guest lecturer.

Father Torok compared the role of coordinator to that of the Old Testament prophets. He stressed the importance of prayer and contemplation in their work.

Alluding to Moses as an example of the "supreme catechist," Father Torok spoke of three actions vital to this role:

- The religious education coordinator "must define God, and locate His relationship to present history;"
- he must be able to see human suffering as God sees it — with empathy and love;
- and he must "lead men out of bondage and into a realm of hope and freedom."

Both Father Daniel Holland, director of the Office of Religious Education-CCD, and Sister Sheila Kennerson, RSM, program chairman, assured me that the blizzard had not been on the agenda.

But one can't deny that the storm and the resulting ban on travel did contribute to the fulfillment of the workshop's avowed goals: to strengthen the

sense of community among coordinators, and to give them an opportunity to learn, discuss and pray together.

It was also noticeable that the storm's end neatly coincided with the coordinators' commitments at home, and their desire to leave.

Somehow, it makes me feel that the Office of Religious Education — CCD has more power than even the Pastoral Office suspects.

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