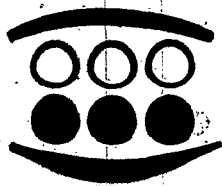


Our Parish COUNCIL

by Bernard Lyons



"On the first Sunday of October there was a notice in the Sunday bulletin, inviting all interested parishioners and leaders of parish groups to come to a meeting on organizing a parish council for St. Mary's Church," Mrs. Edward Johnston writes, telling how her council was organized.

She wrote a history of the founding of the council in her parish of some 750 families in Bloomington, Illinois.

Good Turnout

"Approximately 40 persons attended the meeting. All of the various organizations and groups of parish workers were represented."

"The pastor presided. He talked about the need for a parish council to help with the physical needs, and also provide for the spiritual growth of the parish."

A few men and women volunteered for the steering committee, and the first meeting was held on the first Monday evening of November, at the rectory.

"Education of not only our steering committee, but of the entire parish was the first goal to be accomplished. Also to keep the parish aware that plans for the parish council were in the formation period."

Set Goals

Two weeks later, at the second steering committee meeting, the members drew up a list of goals for the parish council — holiness, charity, growth; sense of community; involvement of all parish members; communications among parishioners; ecumenism; community service; Christian formation; planning, coordinating, implementing parish activities; and contacting lapsed Catholics.

The group also outlined plans to be used to educate the congregation, including talks at Masses by the laity, area meetings (by blocks, neighborhoods, study club groups), use of leaflets, bulletins, outside speakers, prayer for success at Sunday Masses, questionnaires, posters, and skits.

After an audio-visual presentation on a Sunday in late January, questionnaires were passed out at each Mass, and nearly 300 persons returned them.

Survey and Recruit

The questionnaires were separated according to interests (education, liturgy, parish services, administration and community services) and these people were invited to the first meeting of the commissions in February.

At these meetings the responsibilities and activities of the commissions were explained and chairmen elected.

In March, following the work of the nominating committee, the first officers of the parish council were elected, and the steering committee was phased out.

The commissions are now busy. The liturgical group worked on the liturgy for Holy Week and attended a diocesan liturgy workshop.

The education commission is working on organizing a school board for the parish and doing a study of the CCD.

Getting Action

Community Services is helping a group distribute the New Testament, "Good News for

Modern Man," to every home in the community. They also appointed a person to follow the local governments in the twin cities of Bloomington-Normal and another to report on state and national legislation.

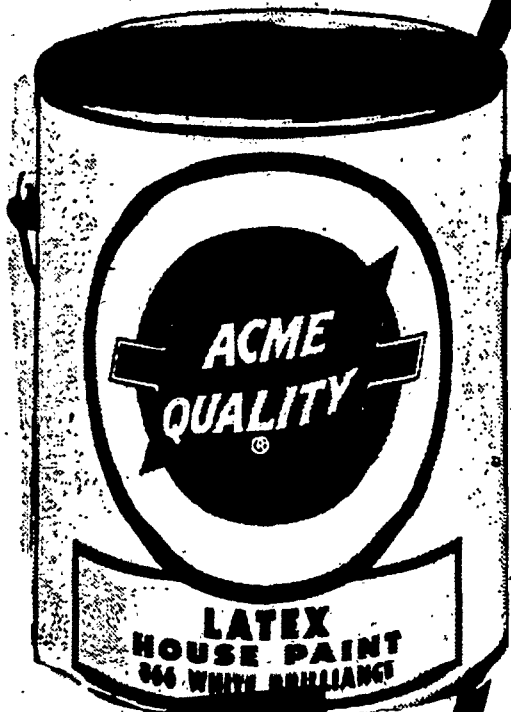
"St. Mary's Parish Council," writes Mrs. Johnston, "is off to a good start and will go far because not only are the priests much interested, but the interest of the parishioners is very good. The younger people of the parish are really coming forward for this work."

Don't Forget to Say Grace

In Baltimore, Bob Hieronymus, a 33-year-old restaurateur, chose an unusual décor for his eating establishment. The seats are church pews, the windows are stained-glass, lighting is by sanctuary candles—all obtained from Catholic, Episcopal and Green Orthodox churches and antique shops. Named Seton's Habit—it's not far from the home of Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton, expected to become the first native American to be made a saint—the décor was described by a writer for the weekly Catholic Review as "pleasant, monastically dim and not at all disrespectful."

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