

# Our Parish COUNCIL

by Bernard Lyons

The Faith-ful Community must be a Face-ful Community.

Answers to the parochial crisis (e.g., leakage from the Church, schools, change, finances) are in the direction of a more face-ful community, where we must interact with individuals and small groups.

#### Endless Search

Even with Christ's example in the Gospels, too few people be-

lieve this is a suitable direction for the Pilgrim Church. There isn't a button they can click!

Like life, a face-ful, community is dynamic. It demands time, frustration, the mystery of dealing with others who are often full of surprises, and sometimes seemingly small hopes.

A minister, writing to The National Observer, gives testimony to this need for a face-ful community.

#### Chance To Cope

"A year ago," David Hacker admits, "the shopping center finally overwhelmed me. I couldn't cope with the traffic, the lines at the counter, or the gum-chewing, faceless clerks."

"And there were too many choices available. I found a small drugstore and a family-run hardware store three miles up the road, in the other direction, and took my business there.

"There I am recognized. It has helped my copability quotient no end."

"Often, I buy my groceries at one of two small, family-run stores," Hacker continues. "The choices may not be as many, and perhaps the prices are a few pennies higher per item.

"But, to me, this is a small price to pay for the personalness I feel in dealing with the owners. I am not a charge-card, or a number at the meat counter, or the object of the com-

puterized warehousing system.

"I am a neighbor."

#### Parish As Diamond

"For several years now," Hacker writes, "I have been trying to fracture my church, an institution of nearly 900 members.

"It has grown so big, and so impersonal, that when members shake hands with a 'newcomer' they are likely to discover that (he or she) has been a member 10 years longer than they have.

"By fracturing, I mean in the sense of taking a huge diamond of 15 facets, and cutting it up so that each of many smaller diamonds has 15 facets.

"The other Sunday, the adult congregation, in an unusual service, held coffee-hour conversations as the form of worship. For the first time in their church lives, some people began speaking out—and up. Instant friendship.

"The question asked was: 'Why are you here?' Perhaps for the first time some persons began searching within themselves to answer that question.

"Church took on a personal, neighborhood tone, shucking its corporate robe."

#### Hunger For Community

"The dozens of communes that have sprung up in such diverse places as Taos, N.M., and central Indiana are symptoms. Even if they are failures, as most of them surely will be because of their extreme ways, they reflect man's hunger for personal contact—for neighborhood life."

"The neighborhood is society's soul," says Hacker. "It's an imperfect but personal place.

"I may get skinned there, but, being human, I have to put my trust somewhere and the most comforting place I have found in trying to cope is the neighborhood."

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