

SARAH CHILD
**All In
The Family**



We went to St. Jerome's in East Rochester the first time at my husband's suggestion. He wanted to hear the guitar Mass.

It was a sentimental visit for us — our oldest was baptized there and we were parishioners for the first three years of our marriage.

St. Jerome's has changed. For one thing the Pastor, Father Callmeri, has an Italian name which is appropriate even though the congregation seems to become less visibly Italian with each passing year.

The bank of flickering candles has disappeared. In its place some of the pews have been turned 180 degrees so that three sides of the altar, moved down toward the center of the church, are surrounded by people. The choir complete with guitar accompaniment is sandwiched near the new altar.

Our three children were ecstatic over the music and the singing. The baby, almost two, clapped her hands to the rhythmic "A-a-a-a-men" sung after the offertory and in the car afterward kept pulling her father's sleeve to keep him vocalizing.

We went to St. Jerome's a second time to take my teenage sister who was visiting us. This time I looked around and realized the folk Mass was well attended by youngsters but that the adults still outnumbered them. I noticed, too, that the choir, so competently directed by Mary Connors, includes at least a couple of greying heads.

We went to St. Jerome's a third time because the children asked to, requesting, "Can we sit up front, please?"

On this occasion it came time for the sermon and we got a baptism instead. At young Father Fleming's invitation our first grader and four-year-old left their seats. They joined other children, sitting on the floor in front of the altar, and the baptismal font placed to one side, in order to "see the baby better."

It may have been the most memorable "sermon" I ever "heard". The cry of the baby at the touch of the cold water, the looks on the faces of the youngsters wanting to see, the knowledge of a new life coming into the Church registered sharply.

We went to St. Jerome's a fourth time because I wanted to. I had liked the way a young boy had offered to hold my missal for me when obviously I had my hands full of a squirming toddler.

I had liked the way we had

clasped hands in front of us and in back of us and all around with at least 10 people in exchanging the sign of peace.

I had liked the way a woman across the church had come to me after Mass to ask the toddler's age and laugh at the way she had "swung" to the music. I had liked the way the fiftyish man next to me had sung his heart out over what we think of as young people's music.

Startled, I had found myself thinking, "After all these years the Catholic Church has finally become my church."

When the pastor patted the youngster on the back after the child couldn't get the advent candle lit something warm went through me.

The occasional laugh that went through the congregation when an impromptu aside emanated from the altar produced a similar glow.

I tried analyzing my feelings. Was it as simple as realizing that at last at my age I like singing the "Lord's Prayer" with a beat? Am I really more hip than I thought? I think not. Instead what I am responding to is a humanization, a flow of love perhaps and a singular closeness between priests and parishioners.

Possibly because we are singing "Hail-o-wed be Thy Name" with a bounce it is easier for this humanization to take place. Certainly the cold formality of remembered Masses did not allow us the liberty of a brief chuckle.

So I like warmth, and lilting music and the feeling that my family is bigger than just the four others I came with. Does that make this Mass better than the cool, ordered celebration I know too well? I do not know.

Then I remember the stricture: The people are the Church. And, here I seemed to have found them!

Immediate Chances Seen Slim On Non-public School Aid

(Continued from Page 1B)

can receive "secular, mutual, non-ideological facilities and materials that are provided in common to all students in public and non-public schools."

The Jesuit pointed out that as of this moment no one has been able to write a law to give aid to non-public schools for such things as instructional costs.

Father Whelan said there are eight constitutional problems which must be solved that deal with public schools.

They are: desegregation, religion (Bible readings and prayer), firing and discipline procedures, the extent of freedom of dress and speech for teachers and students, loyalty tests for teachers, and extent of control of schools to design their own curriculum, and, finally, the basic method of financing these schools.

Smith and Marshall both said the grave fiscal problems which will face the state next year

would probably cause the entire state legislature to be less than anxious to find ways to give private schools large amounts of money for their operations.

Smith did say, however, that if anyone could come up with a way of subsidizing private schools which would be ruled constitutional he would then support it.



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