

Chapter Mercy Sisters' Answer To Smoke-Filled Room

A Chapter of Affairs to a Religious Congregation is somewhat like a convention in a political party. Elected delegates convene at a specific place for a definite length of time to "carry on the business" of the group — business which has been previously outlined by appropriate committees.

The Rochester Sisters of Mercy held such a chapter for two weeks. Chosen from the total congregation of over 400 members, the 36 delegates preceded the formal convocation with several pre-chapter meetings during the year, and with a full "work-week" immediately prior to the opening on Aug. 3.

Matters ultimately voted upon had been submitted over a period of a year by individuals or groups. These had to do with such aspects of the sisters' lives as apostolic, government, community, worship and religi-



A central figure in the preparation and execution of the Chapter of Affairs was Sister Mary Sullivan, a member of the Coordinating Committee, Congregational Senate, Constitutions Committee and delegate. Professionally, Sister Mary is a member of the English faculty at RIT.

ous witness. Proposals, position papers, suggestions, or responses were read by a Coordinating Committee, and then given to one of the five commissions which had been set up to prepare the materials for the chapter.

The chapter was part of the on-going renewal called for by Vatican II. When the council concluded in 1965, a plea went out to all congregations of Religious " . . . to renew from within, and in so doing become relevant without. . . ."

An innovation in the actual chapter proceedings was the decision to have someone outside of the congregation to act as the chairman, Father Sebastian Falcone, a Capuchin, and a member of the faculty of St. Bernard's Seminary, was chosen.

The theme that dominated the Chapter of 1967 likewise seemed to permeate the 1971 proceedings: that is, an emphasis on the individual, but in community. A Sister more and more is making decisions about her own life in the congregation, but is asked to take the full responsibility for those decisions.

The government of the congregation had been headed by a superior general and her four council members, advised by a 15-member Senate and several other specialized committees. The chapter moved into a new form called a Central Administration where the Executive Council and elected representatives have essentially equal authority, although certain duties are reserved to one or the other. Various committees continue to function, also.

The chapter allowed for a Sister to continue to select the life style most conducive to functioning effectively as a woman religious. This includes place of residence, her kind of work, her style of clothing and her means of recreation and prayer. These privileges are granted with the knowledge that she is also accountable to the Congregation, to Church



A common scene during the two-week session was the hand-raising for a vote count. The months of preparation eliminated need for many hours of discussion during the Chapter, so the voting was often continuous.

authority, and to the people she serves. Where there is no solution to a disagreement between an individual, or a group and administration, either may appeal to a new Board of Reconciliation which is being set up for mediation.

In reaffirming the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the delegates encouraged a Sister to be more aware of the place of these counsels in her witness to Jesus Christ. Her sharing of her material goods, time and talent; her availability and willingness to love all people; her listening to the voice of God from all sources: these are the gifts and demands of a religious woman in 1971.

Formation is no longer just for the aspirant or the new member of the Congregation. Growth is on-going and a committee to study the needs of all the sisters will work with the present formation team.

Reflecting on his part in the Chapter, Father Sebastian said: "My work with the Sisters, for the Sisters, has never given me any cause for regret; . . . If the chapter serves as a bell-weather for the way people are thinking in the congregation, I can only say God certainly has blessed them very, very richly."

St. Agnes Slates Music Program

A touch of the medieval and a taste of the modern characterize the music program to be presented soon by the Saint Agnes High School drama and music department.

The drama department, under the direction of William Andia,

will perform "The Second Shepherd's Play", a medieval mystery play.

Under the direction of Sister Virginia Hogan, the freshman chorus will make its first public appearance. Their program will include a Christmas medley, an

African Noel and a calypso Noel. The Glee Club will present selections from Bach and Dunhill and conclude with the Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's "Messiah".

The Madrigal Singers will interpret several traditional carols in the madrigal style, such as "Shepherd's Pipe Carol," "Lo How A Rose" and "Jingle Bell Fantasy".

The program will be presented to friends and parents at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 21.

Doublecheck Charities, Business Bureau Warns

Guidelines for evaluating the credentials of fund-raising groups whose activities usually escalate during the holiday season were suggested today by Robert C. Hildreth, manager of the Rochester Better Business Bureau.

Although the majority of local religious charitable and philanthropic organizations are worthwhile and soundly operated, Hildreth stressed that there are some instances where wasteful spending of the public's money is done through high-pressure promoters for ineffective and unnecessary services.


Hildreth said a frequent trick used by door-to-door solicitors is to wear a cap resembling the official cap of the Salvation Army, thereby implying to residents that the S.A. is making the solicitation. He said one organization that solicits in Rochester in this manner has

failed to respond to BBB requests for an accounting of the funds. The Salvation Army does not send out door-to-door solicitors.

The guidelines urge the public to: check the identification of door-to-door solicitors to determine if they are affiliated with legitimate organizations; request that telephone solicitations be made in writing; pay by check to a responsible representative of the organization; verify the responsibility of the beneficiary organization before contributing to any charity.

Hildreth noted that the Better Business Bureau does not issue approvals or ratings on solicitations but its reports can assist contributors in determining whether any particular solicitation is properly conducted and whether promotional costs are excessive.

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