

RACL:

Everything You Always Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask

RACL stands for the Rochester Association of Catholic Laymen. (It is referred to as "rackle".) To give Courier-Journal readers a better understanding of its structure, membership and aims, Editor Carmen Viglucci sat down with Robert Fein, RACL president, to come up with this question-and-answer interview.

Q. When was RACL formed?

A. In the Fall of 1968.

Q. What is its structure?

A. We have a president, two vice presidents, secretary and treasurer and a board consisting of 14. Then we have five commissions presently — peace, education, human dignities and marriage and family life. A new one is the issues and priorities commission.

Q. How many members?

A. About 250 or 300.

Q. Can anyone be a member?

A. I think it's any lay Catholic, which includes Sisters. Our members range from college students to grandparents.

Q. What is RACL's purpose?

A. In accordance with the dictates of Vatican II it is the responsibility of lay people to be involved in the process of Church renewal. This, then, is the purpose of RACL.

Q. Is it aligned with the National Association of the Laity?

A. Yes. We're an affiliate now. RACL was a spontaneous thing in Rochester. Subsequent to its forming here we became affiliated with NAL.

Q. How much voice does RACL have in determining NAL policy?

A. As president of RACL I'm on NAL's national board. In such position there is a certain amount of dialogue between yourself and the national. NAL formulates its policy at an annual meeting. Members of affiliated



Robert Fein, the current president of the Rochester Association of Catholic Laymen, heads up the editorial department at Lawyers Cooperative Publishing Company. He served on the Bishop's Educational Task Force and has been active in CCD here and in California.

groups serve on resolution committees and individuals from affiliates have voting power on resolutions.

Q. Do you think RACL should stand for Rochester Association of Catholic Liberals rather than Catholic Laymen?

A. On the contrary, I think it should stand for Rochester Association of Catholic Conservatives. Because after all we, like a number of conservative people, are interested in preserving the best and trying to weed out the irrelevant matters and weaknesses that grow through time. It's our desire to allow ourselves to be instruments which point up the weaknesses and irrelevancies so the Church will continually renew itself and reflect to greater and greater degree the philosophies of Jesus Christ. We count in our membership people who have varying opinions and differences on politics, economics and specific issues within the Church. Nonetheless we find our common ground in renewal of the Church.

Q. How can a person join RACL?

A. We really welcome anyone who would wish to work with us for renewal and it can

be done by a simple phone call to Joan Hensler at 654-8960.

Q. Just how does RACL work for renewal?

A. We feel renewal comes from two specific areas. The first the education and growth of everyone in the Church in terms of our Christian consciousness and the second in the area of changing procedures and policies which could be restricting our ability to respond as Christian people. Specifically, RACL develops and runs programs for the long-range education, sensitizing and growth of everyone in the Church, ourselves included. We also surface issues that we as an organization think are problems in the institutional Church which conceivably are preventing it from responding to a greater degree as a Christian Church.

Q. Still many feel that RACL has a negative image because of its opposition to aid to nonpublic schools, its criticism of the way dioceses issue financial statements, etc. What about that?

A. Catholics are not used to criticism of the Church but I think the significant point here is that we criticize specific policies of the Church not out of hate but out of love and an honest desire to be a part in helping it reach its ultimate goal of being the true witness of Jesus Christ in the community. I also like to emphasize that we try very hard never to criticize people — the processes under which we operate but never the people operating them. We have on a continuing basis over a number of years been asking the question are we effectively fulfilling the educational needs of all our people—children and adults. Further we are saying that we should take a hard look at the methods by which we are establishing our Christian priorities and allocating our resources to these priorities.

NEXT WEEK: RACL's action program and its spiritual dimension.

Where to Write Your Legislators

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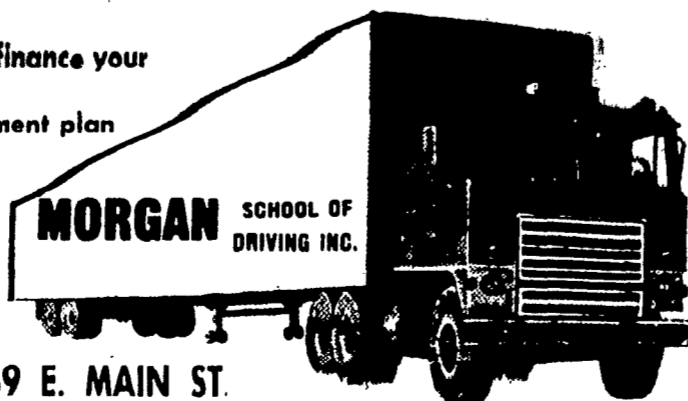
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