

Our Parish COUNCIL

by Bernard Lyons

Beware of experts! Even this one!

I've never used the term myself. And when I'm introduced at meetings as an "expert," I usually give the classic, humorous definition of that breed — anyone who is more than 50 miles away from home!

Some years ago, when I was active with the Young Christian Workers (YCW), I had my first experience with the damage that can be done when one becomes an "expert."

The YCW, based upon small groups and active commitment, has always had a great deal of give-and-take in its process of training people to observe the persons and situations around them and then trying to apply the judgment of Christ in order to act.

I treasured our sharing and our ability to disagree with each other. It was something that I nearly lost when I joined the YCW national staff to edit the newspaper. The small YCW group that I continued with, despite the fact that I had to move from the neighborhood, soon began to treat me with an unaccustomed deference. I had joined the ranks of the "experts."

In no way do I wish to discount the experience, time, study, and writing of any so-called expert. I would merely encourage you not to be too rigid in categorizing anyone as an expert, and to realize that your own "expertness" counts for a great deal.

The greater the ambiguity and the more complex the human re-

lationships then the more weight that must be given to your own expertness.

For example, any one of us welcomes a computer repairman when our computer is out of whack, or a master plumber when our pipes leak. Not many of us are going to give such an unquestioning welcome to an "expert" in our family life, however, even though there are theologians, sociologists, psychologists and others who can contribute important and helpful insights to us.

The same thing applies to a parish family. Any parish can benefit from a Certified Public Accountant tackling the books. His expertise is of little help, however, in setting priorities for a budget.

The priorities, our sense of mission of what the parish is all about, must come from the people themselves (clergy, religious, laity), if it is to be effective.

And by this, the people, I do not mean only the leadership itself. It must come from as many of those people as possible. And here again, it is not solely from individuals, but from the Christ-life in the community of persons.

There is a delicate balance involved in the uses of "experts." Not all of them can be spelled out, nor can many of them be specified in your council's constitution and by-laws.

It comes much more dynamically from the love, the sharing, and, yes, even through the disagreements we have with one another.

Parishioners Air Views At 'Town Meeting'

The people were heard from during a "Town Meeting" at Blessed Sacrament school hall Sunday, March 19.

Father John P. Norris, pastor, explained that the annual parish meeting is set up to invite questions, but he seemed a bit surprised at the polarization of feelings and attitudes in such areas as religious education in the parish school, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine program, liturgy changes and the role of the parish in social issues.

"It was a kind of lesson in democracy, a painful lesson for people on the parish council. But it was good to see people raise questions and speak out in front of the clerical staff and nuns. There is no longer a silent Church," Father Norris said.

Some suggestions did come out of the meeting that ran an hour and a half over the scheduled time. Most of the 125 people that attended agreed that such

Easter Panorama At St. Charles

An "Easter Panorama" will be presented at St. Charles Borromeo School Hall, 64 Maiden Lane near Dewey Avenue, March 26-April 16. The shows will be audiovisual presentations of the Passion of Christ, from the Last Supper to the Resurrection.

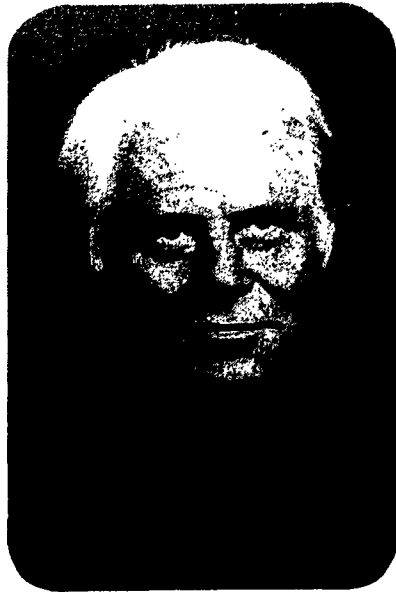
The scenery will be made up entirely of miniature figures, constructed by Bernard Miller. The hours for the showings are Tuesday-Friday, 6:30-9 p.m., and Saturday-Sunday, 2-9 p.m. The shows will be 10 minutes long and will run continuously.

'One Parish'

(Catholic Press Features)

In one parish, a program has been begun to personally welcome new parishioners into the parish community.

A project of the parish council's specially formed "welcoming committee," the program has as its key element a personal invitation to new parishioners to join with the parish council at a special Mass and immediately afterwards to be greeted by the parish priests, council leaders and society heads at a council meeting.



Drama Head To Speak

The head of Catholic University's famous speech and drama department, Father Vance Hartke, OP, will speak at St. Margaret-Mary's Altar and Rosary Society communion breakfast April 9 on "Youth Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow."

Father Hartke's department regularly sends groups of student actors on tour around the world and has graduated such well known entertainment figures as Walter Kerr, Ed McMahon and John Voight. Seven productions written by students and faculty from the department have appeared on Broadway.

A teacher since 1939, Father Hartke has served on committees for UNESCO, the USO, the US Fine Arts Commission and Kennedy Cultural Center, and in 1965 received the Benemerito Medal from Pope Paul VI.

Welcome Mat Put Out

When new parishioners register at the rectory — the parish averages about a dozen new families a month — they now receive a special letter of welcome from the council, which says in part:

"The Parish Council would like to take this opportunity to wish you a full spiritual life within our parish."

"In order to do this, we would like you to participate with us in a special Mass which will be celebrated with you and the other families who have become members of the parish this month."

"You will be notified personally as to time and date, so that you may make arrangements to attend and meet with your priests and council afterward."

"The parish newspaper has a list of the various societies, along with days of meeting. Please consult it."

"If we may be of service to you, we would be delighted to hear from you."

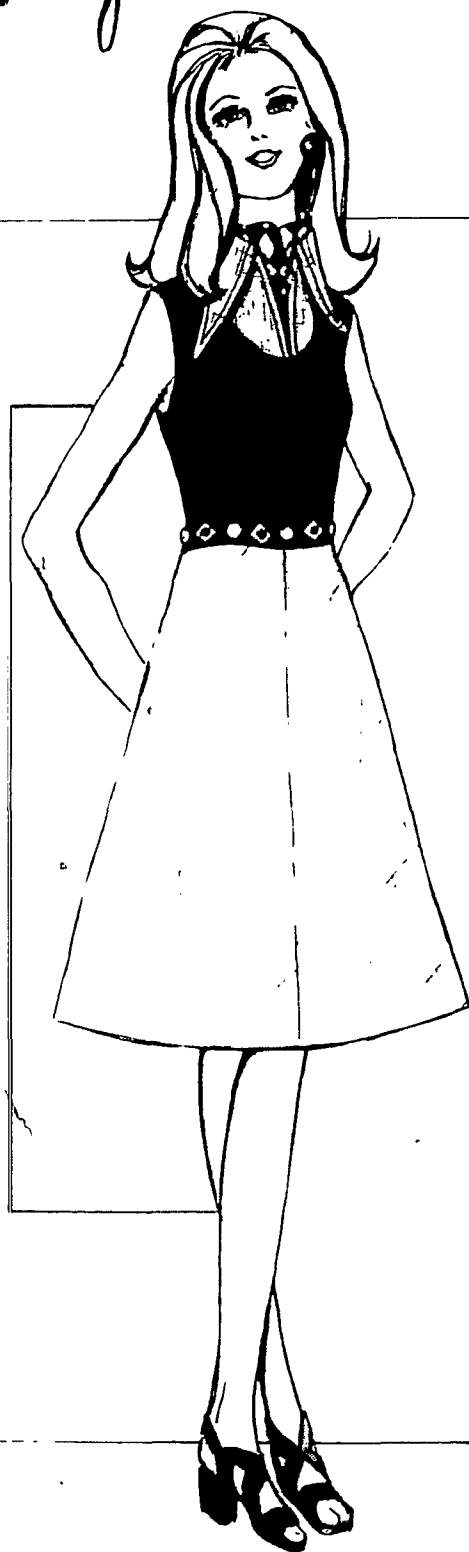
At the gathering following the monthly welcome Mass, the heads of the parish societies serve as official hosts and hostesses to the new parishioners being welcomed that month, inviting them personally to come to their organization's meetings and activities.

One of the reasons for this gesture, it was explained, is that many new parishioners fail to become involved in parish activities or groups simply because no one ever asked them to and they feel like outsiders.

But, said the "welcoming committee" chairman, the Mass prior to that gathering is a key part of the welcoming program.

"The place to welcome people into our parish community is the church, because the church is the center of our spiritual community."

McCurdy's



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