

# Mothers Learn Parenthood

(Catholic Press Features)

A number of parishes have hosted parenthood-guidance sessions conducted by Catholic Charities-sponsored Family Life Education Programs.

The supervisor of one such program found that contrary to the myth of constant suburban

ban kaffee-klatching among young mothers, many women in the same neighborhoods don't know each other and the strain of suburban isolation puts a strain on being a mother.

"It's hard to be a parent if you don't have anyone to talk to about the normal things kids do," the supervisor said. "You

lose perspective and begin to worry that a lot of what they do might be deviant behavior and not normal at all."

In one diocese, the parent-guidance program began two years ago with a few Catholic Charities social workers meeting with small groups of mothers of parochial school children weekly for eight sessions.

While this format of weekly meetings has remained the same, the program has expanded greatly to include parents of public school children also. The Family Life groups have met not only in parochial schools and other parish buildings but also in community libraries, YMCA buildings and in public schools at the invitation of the PTA.

A main accomplishment of the program has been to give assurance to parents that they're doing something right, to accent the positive and move away from the overly negative self-criticism parents are prone to fall into.

"These sessions meant a great deal to me," said a mother of four. "I've found out I wondered if my impatience and frustration meant I wasn't able to be a good mother. I now feel pretty good about myself and what I'm doing for my family."

Another mother said she shook off a lot of the tenseness after attending the eight weekly sessions which were held at her parish. "I realized," she commented, "that for me to be happy is good for my family."

Overlooking some of the unimportant faults in her children was a new insight gained by a mother who tended to be over-critical of her children.

A mother who tended to lecture her children a great deal began to see how excessive words could turn her children off.

The Family Life Education Program is now branching out and bringing fathers into the sessions. They are also including people in special situations, such as adolescents, women in middle years and parents of visually impaired children.

The format of the group sessions is not teacher-class, with information about child-rearing being offered by a social-worker leader. Rather, the format is a sharing-meeting, where parents have the opportunity to discuss their experiences and learn from one another by exchanging ideas and discoveries.

## Our Parish COUNCIL by Bernard Lyons

What would happen in your parish if the Church law on weekly Mass attendance were made optional instead of obligatory?

Even if such a change is not made in the foreseeable future, it would be worth a discussion in your parish council or in the Worship Commission.

There are some pragmatic reasons for having such a discussion.

• Many Catholics today no longer feel bound by the weekly obligation and attendance is falling at Masses nearly everywhere. It's important to understand why these persons no longer feel that the Church law applies to them. This understanding must be broad enough to see that some of these people have something of value that they are expressing. Others are reacting, in their own views, to an overwhelming series of changes. They then draw the conclusion that with so many changes they might just as well individually go off and make some of their own innovations. Little or no progress will be made to attract these people to the Mass and a genuine love for liturgical celebration unless they are listened to.

• Because many Catholics are making their own choices of Mass attendance and that many no longer attend at all, the Saturday evening option for Mass attendance, and the possibility of a completely optional practice would indicate a widespread need for open discussion of this topic.

The mere mention of optional weekly Mass attendance causes fear and anger in many clergy and laity.

Just recently I received a note from a layman, in California, in which he told me he had been threatened with physical force for passing out a leaflet on the topic.

He was distributing a folder containing the National Association of Laity's "Resolution on Sunday Mass Obligation," to people on their way into a church on Sunday. Two men, who said they were speaking for the pastor, told him he had "no authority to be on Church property."

My friend replied that the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guaranteed him the right to do so.

One of the men told him, "We don't care about the Constitution around here."

It seems to me that the way of maturity, freedom, and love would require optional Mass attendance. I would hope for some widespread discussion on the matter, however, before any change would be made in the law. Just think how less traumatic some of our other changes would have been if there had been grassroots discussion, for example, before the change to English in the liturgy.

• Compulsory Mass attendance provides poor motivation for taking part in the Mass. It also produces a great many poor liturgies and mediocre sermons.



Seton Fashion Show

Active at the Seton fashion show luncheon at the Flagship today are (l-r) Mrs. Gerald Weins, who has charge of models; Mrs. Raymond Porter, tickets, and Mrs. J. Paul Lortie, general chairman. The affair is a benefit for St. Mary's Hospital.

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