

FR. LOUIS HOHMAN

## The Open Window



Q. I guess I don't understand this parish council thing. For centuries the Church got along without them and did very well. We always thought of our pastor as the representative of God who would teach us the truths of our faith and lead us to salvation. Now it seems that our religious destiny is in the hands of people just like ourselves.

A. You, my dear friend, are finding yourself in a groove — I will not say a rut — which comes from many years of pre-Vatican II teaching (which apparently was far more effective than we give ourselves credit for).

As a consequence of the Protestant Reformation and the relatively low level of general education, and the antagonism our immigrant forefathers faced, and a host of other reasons, you were taught the way you were taught. It is really not a matter of what you believe. It is a matter of emphasis. In your time (no attempt to make you very old) the emphasis was on personal salvation, solidity of faith, and a father to lead you by the hand. Which is fine as far as it goes. But the Holy Spirit has shown us that it is not far enough.

The emphasis now, while maintaining the necessity of personal piety and deep spirituality, is on the outward thrust of Christianity. We, all of us, have a divine mission to bring the Good News to the world. All of us by Baptism share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. We are all in this together and must share his mission and sacrifice. The priest is not way up there, the professional religious, and you down there in the pews, the passive and private recipient of his pearls of wisdom. You are a community bringing Christ to the world and to each other. Granted the priest is leader, it is still the community of Christians who must organize their talents and energies to his cause which is the identical same as your cause. So it's a new ball game, at least for this age in the Church.

Maybe some councils are not as effective as they might be. Others are groping in the darkness of pre-dawn. And maybe in the long run someone will come up with something better. But for the time being parish councils are the best means we have of making parishes more effective in apostolic mission, creating unity and community and expressing our common destiny to love all people and change the world.

I hope you will do some reading about the true meaning and place of councils (right in this paper — Bernard Lyons and others) and will get a little background from the documents of Vatican II. Especially should you read the document on the Laity and the Church in the Modern World.

### Nazareth Hosts Indians

More than 200 Indians from six New York State tribes are expected to attend the Third Annual New York State Iroquois Indian Conference at Nazareth College of Rochester July 28-30.

"Indians for Unity and Involvement in '72" conference will focus on problems associated with Indian education from

the elementary school level through higher education.

The conference will involve Indians from seven New York State reservations, as well as those included in the state's off-reservation Indian population.

The six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy — Seneca, Oneida, Mohawk, Cayuga, Tuscarora and Onondaga — will be represented.

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