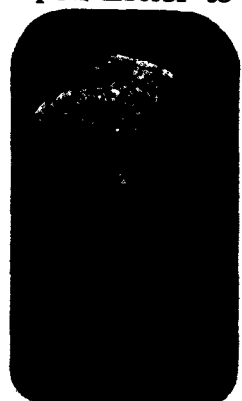


# Prayer Makes the Headlines

Within recent weeks, Bishop Bernard Topel of the Diocese of Spokane wrote an Open Letter to his seminarians on the



necessity of daily communication with God through prayer. The letter seems to me but a simple statement stressing what should be the obvious. Yet, his message was considered newsworthy and excerpts from the letter were published in several prominent periodicals.

Perhaps it was this frankness of the bishop that proved to catch the attention of the reporters: "If it appears that you are not likely to practice daily mental prayer in the priesthood, I ask that you cease studying for the priesthood. It will be better that you do. Better for you; better for the Church."

I have no doubt that the bishop's concern is a legitimate one. For we who are called to be His priests are summoned to be Christlike — to think and talk and act like Him. And without daily contact with His mind and will we soon find ourselves empty shells — and all our words and actions become like sound and fury sig-

nifying nothing, until the living out of our vocation is reduced to meaningless motions and intolerable hypocrisy.

This emptiness of life is experienced by all who are not prayerful people. What the bishop said is applicable in due proportion to all who bear the Christian vocation. And that is why prayer must be the basic ingredient of our Year of Renewal. New structures and better organizations will help us as a serving Church only if we have depth in our being. And prayer alone provides that personal dimension.

It is easy to deceive ourselves that we are busily engaged in doing God's will — so busy, in fact, that we have no time for prayer. This heresy of activism has always gnawed at the vitality of the Church. It seems to be especially flourishing today. More and more want to describe their prayer as "the work I do," or "life itself." Such a statement receives its power of deception from the fact that it expresses a partial truth. Certainly, our Christian tradition can support the statement that "to work is to pray." In fact, we are encouraged to convert our daily tasks into prayer through the Morning Offering. But to say that prayer is 'only serving others' is to mouth a formula destructive of our spiritual health.

I have no doubt that one of the great graces of our time has been the rediscovery by Christians of their personal responsibility for the world about them. A Church which does not see itself as a 'serving Church' distorts its gospel mission. Man's loving response to God always implies real and concrete action. Christ explicitly assured us of His presence in activities which worked for the betterment of the disadvantaged of our society.

But Jesus also spoke about the cherished secret places and moments where God is met alone. For the man of faith finds in them the strength to be the man of service. What we seem to be forgetting today is that without these moments of quiet reflection there can be no true service. Our best efforts will always be wanting in a crucial dimension that enables us to see more deeply into life — to perceive Christ hidden in all human activity which is valued only by men of prayer as an utterance of the divine.

No other strength will sustain us in our vocation. May the Year of Renewal bring us to a deeper realization of a truth which should never seem to be a startling statement.

## The Slot Man

By Carmen Viglucci

# Some Unusual Statistics in Flood Relief

Reducing human grief to statistics often seems cold but nonetheless those responsible for combatting such misery must resort to numbers to gauge how best to do their job.



For instance, Father Peter Bayer, director for flood recovery programs for the diocese in Corning, has compiled some stats showing the virtuous effect of volunteer service in that city.

His figures are only for those volunteer hours that could be verified, there are countless others, of course, that were not recorded.

These figures also are not up to date, they only include up to August.

Somewhere between 8,000 and 9,000 volunteers and the staff of the Human De-

velopment Office have put in some 133,250 hours of work in flood recovery in Corning.

Figuring this at a hypothetical \$2 an hour wage, it means that diocesans have put in some \$266,500 worth of effort into volunteer efforts. This doesn't include travel time, traveling expenses — just on the spot work.

Operation Rebuild is a second category. Father Bayer has figured that to rebuild 100 houses, and he has some 1,500 in Corning to worry about, it would take 4,200 man-hours. Since this requires skilled labor, he uses the figure \$6 an hour to come up with \$2,520,000 needed for each 100 homes in such voluntary effort.

Over in Elmira, Frank Patterson of Catholic Charities mentions that there are some 6,700 homes to be restored, ranging from extensive damage to minimal damage. The need again is for skilled laborers to do the electrical work, the carpentry, the

dry wall and sheet-rock work.

Patterson, who took over the Elmira program after the cleanup operation finished, has no compilation of volunteer work-hours but can attest to the present need for all that is possible.

Anyone spotted the new snazzy look to the Daily Record, Rochester's leading legal newspaper? . . . And speaking of publications, Volume 1, No. 1 of The Minutes, a Monroe Community College newsletter, is a sprightly addition to the institution's communications' efforts . . . One of the weaknesses of the campaign to use Ms. arises with male chauvinists like myself who have strange names such as Carmen. When you're called Ms. it's not so bad but when friends address you as such it makes you edgy . . . And how about the letter that came to our GM Anthony Costello recently addressed to Tony Courier? . . . Carrying things a bit far, I'd say.

## Editorial

# Abortion Conference Well-Timed

The Special Conference of Concern for the Unborn, which Bishop Joseph L. Hogan has called for today and tomorrow, is important not only because "abortion is fast becoming an accepted way of life in New York State," as the bishop noted, but also because many Catholics are still uneducated on the subject.

All diocesans involved in Catholic education — in schools, colleges, high schools, and CCD, and Parish Council leaders — have been urged by the bishop to attend, and well they should.

Abortion has passed the stage where emotional debate is going to reverse the tide. The problem of liberalized abortion can be tackled from legal and medical viewpoints as well as from spiritual. The

more people who are aware of this and who can intelligently handle discussion on the topic, the sooner this heinous law will be overturned.

There is a feeling that educators have not been stressing to their students the legal and medical dimensions of the anti-abortion battle. If this is a well-founded argument then now is the time to correct the situation.

In any case there is a great deal of work to be done, from the ground up, to establish a firm, active, calculated and rational movement to make our legislators see the folly of taking the lives of the unborn. Remember many of the legislators who voted for liberalized abortion and many who will be deciding the issue in the future are products of Catholic edu-

cation.

As the second part of a one-two punch, Respect Life Week will be observed here from Oct. 1 to 7. This is in conjunction with a national celebration which will focus on the sanctity of human life, dealing with abortion, peace, poverty, the aged, youth problems and the family.

Parishes will develop their own programs in noting the week.

The timing of these two events is particularly good, what with the encroachment of the political season. The Bishop's Conference of Concern for the Unborn and the special Respect Life week should serve to remind all of their duty to take a greater interest in the selection of the men and women who represent us in government.