

FR. LOUIS HOHMAN

The Open Window



Q — I have heard of a particular priest stating at a Pre-Cana Conference several years ago, and again recently at a women's club meeting, to let their conscience be their guide pertaining to birth control. A former seminarian attended the Pre-Cana and said many went away thinking birth control other than rhythm is acceptable. Are priests perhaps sliding over the word "informed"?

A — If that was all the priest said about the particular matter, he was, in my opinion, oversimplifying or taking it for granted that his audience was well-versed theologically. That would not be a sliding over the word "informed" but merely a failure to give a full explanation. Let's look at some of the pertinent principles relating to conscience.

Principle: each individual must make a firm decision as to the goodness or badness of any particular act he is facing. This is conscience. It is not separate from the mind and will but is simply the operation of these relative to the moral quality of a particular act or omission. The moral guilt of the person (or non-guilt) will be determined by whether or not he follows the decision of his conscience. For example, if an individual were to make a firm decision that it would be wrong to accept military draft, he would be guilty if he did accept it.

Principle: conscience must have content. Conscience is not a separate human faculty having from birth all the raw materials necessary to make decisions. Rather it is the mind with its accumulated knowledge, insights, wisdom, experience. An informed conscience is one which has acquired sufficient of these ingredients to make a reasonable judgment on the matter at hand. It is presupposed that the person will make every reasonable effort within the limits of his capability to find out the truth about the matter.

Principle: the individual in forming his conscience should be humbly aware of the fact that in matters of moral values there are outside sources which he must check. For the Christian these are: 1. Sacred Scripture; 2. the teachings of leaders in the Church — Pope, bishops, pastors, with respect not only for their office but for their relative advantage in having advice of many experts, having many people gathering facts for them; 3. theologians — who concentrate their whole lives on the study of moral values and problems; 4. The common sense of other people who are not emotionally involved in the same problem. Each of these sources will have more or less value in a particular case, so we must take them as a whole. For example, Sacred scripture is of no help whatever in the matter of birth control. Therefore in dealing with that subject we must consider: a. the repeated statements of Popes and bishops forbidding contraception; b. the considerable number of reputable theologians who teach that where serious unselfish reasons exist for practicing birth control and no other means is workable that the practice is justified; c. particular knowledge of one's own situation and the weight of necessity — because we are not good judges in our own case we should consult on this.

To say simply "follow your conscience" is to say a great deal more than meets the eye. Such a decision calls for serious investigation as well as strict honesty and humble wariness about the possibility of being wrong. When such a process has been carefully followed one must follow the firm decision at which he arrives.

200 in St. Agnes Frosh Class

More than 200 freshmen have brought the "Spirit of '78" with them to join the student body at St. Agnes High School for the new school year.

St. Agnes is offering new subjects and several expanded departments. Advanced Biology, Physics and Math IV lead the list of subjects offered in addition to the regular regents program and in addition to the

Advanced Placement areas of Math, History and English.

New members of the faculty include Robert Gengarely, Mrs. Richard Liberti, Mrs. Anthony Leonardo, Mrs. Arline Porcelli, Miss Corrinne Jerris, Sister Christine Lloyd, two alumnae, Sister Marie Susanne Hoffman and Miss Colleen Maher and former faculty member, Sister Therese Daniel.

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RACSA Holds First Meeting

By CHARLES RANDISI

The Rochester Association of Catholic School Administrators held its first meeting of the new school year recently at St. John the Evangelist Convent on Floverton Street.

RACSA is a group of principals of Catholic city schools that meets on the second Tuesday of each month of the school year.

This year's officers are Sister Virginia Steinwachs, chairman; Miss Gilda Maccalini, secretary; Sister John Bosco Boss, vice chairman; and Sister St. Luke Hardy, treasurer.

The first order of business was a report from Sister Roberta Tierney, the association's representative to the Rochester Diocesan Federation of Catholic School Administrators. The Federation is a loosely knit group of representatives from different associations like RACSA throughout the diocese.

Sister Roberta said the Federation acted as a "sounding

body" to Father Daniel Brent, diocesan superintendent of schools. It is a coordinating team of educational advisers to Father Brent.

Next, Sister Eleanor Volpe, past chairman, proposed that any speakers who were invited by the association should receive a stipend. A motion was made, seconded, and passed with a nearly unanimous vote.

The sisters then divided themselves into discussion groups on goal setting. The results of their brainstorming sessions will be reported at the October meeting.

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APPOINTMENT

Father Daniel J. McCarthy of the Sacred Hearts Fathers, new pastor of St. Peter and Paul, Rochester, has been named diocesan director of the Apostleship of Prayer, the pastoral office announced recently.

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