

Fr. John Hayes

Harmony, Unity, the Mission of the Church

First in a Series
By MARY ANN GINNERTY

Auburn Region — "The Year of Renewal calls for close cooperation of priests and laity in a region as harmony and unity of purpose is the mission of the Church," reflected Father John Hayes of Aurora, senior regional coordinator for the Year of Renewal efforts of the Auburn region comprising Seneca and Cayuga counties.

"The Year of Renewal calls for a look at the local Church on a much wider base than simply the parish level. One of the primary goals is to find out what the needs of the region are as well as the resources. The emphasis is on sharing, cutting across parish lines and promoting basic Christian involvement," he added.

Father Hayes explained that

Bishop Hogan suggested the division of the diocese into 10 regions to decentralize his administration and facilitate the identification of the problems where they exist and solving them locally by consensus of clergy and laity.

As senior regional coordinator for the Auburn Region, Father Hayes is in communication with all the parishes of the region to facilitate and expedite the Year of Renewal efforts. He works through other coordinators in this region who have specific responsibility for worship, human development, Christian education and any other areas which may develop in the future.

"For us in Cayuga and Seneca Counties, our regional proximity will find its expression through parish councils well schooled in the lay involvement emphasized in Vatican II, banding together in

a common cause to preserve the Church and fulfill its mission. In this sense, this new division of the diocese, hopefully, will start a genuine grassroots movement for unity," he explained.

The Year of Renewal which is functioning through the structure of regionalism, has already brought priests and people together for prayer and study of the mission of the church.

As more and more churches develop parish councils, the direction they will take in fulfilling their mission of renewal will be determined by their "councilors."

Father Hayes explained Christian education in both its familiar phases (Catholic schools and confraternity programs), Human Development, our concern for the less fortunate, and worship, are the principal areas to which both regional structure and the year of Renewal are directed.

"There can be no doubt in the minds of those familiar with the Church in the world today, that these three concerns, education, human development, and worship, need a good deal of attention and involvement on the part of priests and laity," Father Hayes commented. "Training programs are planned by the regional coordinators for these areas, thus making the Year of Renewal a reality in our region."

At present, core groups are being organized for these three departments with Sister Ellen Ward, coordinator for Christian education, father Lewis Brown, for Human Development, Father Edward Palumbos for worship, and Father John Mulligan, media director. Father Leo Lynch is general coordinator for Seneca County.

Father Hayes stated that, apart from many meetings to determine the structure of our region, there have been and will continue to be convocations for prayer, occasionally with the bishop.

This is something new. For example, on October 27th all the priests of the region are invited to meet at Holy Family Convent Chapel with Bishop Dennis Hickey to spend the day in prayer.

Year of Renewal

Similar days of prayer for the religious sisters in the area and the laity are planned.

Training teams are being organized to assist each parish in developing parish councils and to help them achieve some measure of effectiveness.

"Specifically, we hope to achieve an increase of fervor in the minds and hearts of all Christians finding their commitment in the Church today as well as the return of those who have left us in the recent past," comment-

ed Father Hayes. "And, I detect a renewed spirit of prayer abroad in the modern Church which needs deeper development and wider exposure."

At the end of the Year of Renewal, it is expected that a planned survey will show every parish with a functioning parish council, or an advisory board, as avenues of expression for the clergy and laity.

A regional council will then be elected which will coordinate the various needs and resources of the area.

Our Parish COUNCIL

by Bernard Lyons

If Mark Twain were talking about religious vocations rather than the weather, he might have said, "Everybody talks about it, but few Catholics do anything about it."

Part of the problem with the religious vocation crisis is that though it is recognized as everybody's job, the typical thing happens — "Everybody's business is nobody's business."

The Vatican II Decree on Priestly Formation says, "The task of fostering priestly vocations devolves on the whole Christian community which should do so in the first place by living in a fully Christian way. Outstanding contributions are made to this work by families which are alive with the spirit of faith, love and reverence and which serve as a kind of introductory seminary; and by parishes, in whose pulsing vitality young people themselves have a part."

How do you fit into that description? What are families in your parish doing to encourage priestly vocations? What is your parish doing to promote vocations?

There is probably little being done by you, the families or the parish unless your parish has a special committee to promote religious vocations.

This isn't so strange. We live in a vocation-oriented society. Trade groups sponsor information about their particular calling and counsellors in high schools and colleges help youngsters prepare for their future work.

Are you doing as much? Does your parish have a vocation committee? Or, does the parish council's apostolic commission have a special sub-committee or special programs on religious vocations?

The fact that a committee of priests, religious and laity are assigned the specific tasks of promoting religious vocations does not mean that others in the parish do not have anything to do in the fostering of religious vocations.

"Everyone admits the vital role that a family plays in the spiritual and total growth of children," says the Committee for Priestly Formation of the San Antonio Archdiocese. "What is said of an individual family also applies to the parish family. Growth of all kinds takes place in an atmosphere of warmth,

understanding, encouragement and hope. If young people are going to respond to God's love, it is important that the parish family provide an adequate background.

"It is impossible to speak of a vocation program in a parish without mentioning those important areas which contribute to and bring about a living Christian community. These include the joyful celebration of the liturgy, a dynamic catechetical program, effective proclaiming of God's word, close interpersonal relationships between priests and people and among the laity, and a sense of mission toward the Church and the world."

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