

Birthright: Friend to Those on the Brink

Consistent maternity insurance programs, day care for infants, and mothers' helpers are needed to ease the experience of childbearing, according to a woman who has spent the last year and a half working with women distressed by unwanted pregnancy.

Marie Jesmer is vice chairman of Birthright Rochester, a non-sectarian group of attorneys, doctors, social workers, nurses, clergy and parents who have cleared the way for 70 births that might not have been but for their help.

Mrs. Jesmer, mother of three children, is a former high school teacher. During a recent inter-

view, she explained that Birthright's 70 volunteer social workers, give immediate, personal and individual help to women who find themselves unable to cope with pregnancy.

Their services, engaged by dialing 328-8700 include a pregnancy test, counselling in such areas as legal rights and Medicaid applications and housing assistance for those who need it, as in institutional homes for unwed mothers or lodging with a private family.

There is also a committee of obstetricians who have volunteered care free of charge if necessary. These doctors, "go out of their way for these girls giving

them special attention and great support. And that is what they need most," she continued.

Support is what Birthright is all about.

Women come to them pregnant, feeling it is the end of the world, and a volunteer listens, tells them of all the help that is available, sets them up with appointments at agencies that can help them, drives them to clinic or doctor appointments, talks to their parents, and to their schools and prepares them for their babies.

Birthright is a troubleshooter, paving the way for a woman to have a child with the least, psy-

chological, financial and emotional strain.

But these women are not all unwed teenage mothers. In its short lifetime, Birthright has received calls from 100 divorced, separated and widowed women; 91 married women and 452 singles. The age breakdown relatively is 139 inquiries from girls age 13-16; 242 from 17 to 21 year olds and 160 from women 21 years and older.

Mrs. Jesmer said a total of 1900 calls have come in, 413 women actually came to the Birthright office, 210 pregnancy tests have been done, 70 babies have been born, and 118 women

have been referred to adoption agencies.

In her opinion, 95 per cent of the women who opt for abortion do so out of fear of social stigma, fear of parents and of the inconvenience of pregnancy.

Birthright is there to minimize the fear.

"The first problem with young single girls is the parents' reaction," said Mrs. Jesmer. "Too often there is great parental pressure to have an abortion and many times the girl does not want it."

This is where the lawyers come

(Continued on Page 8)

CEDAR's Future Seen in Doubt

By MARY ANN GINNERTY

Auburn — Father Edward Palumbos, associate pastor, St. Alphonse parish, has been elected to serve on the five-man CEDAR Board (Christian Education Department, Auburn Region) to fill the unexpired term vacated by Father Lewis Brown's transfer to St. Ann's in Hornell.

Father Palumbos brings vitality and awareness of emerging trends in religious education at a time when the future of CEDAR is under evaluation by an ad hoc committee because it faces a funding crisis.

CEDAR was launched in July of 1971 to provide for program development in all areas of religious education from children through adulthood, to compile a resource center, provide teacher training, and awareness of modern techniques and fresh concepts in religious education through the availability of professional religious educators. CEDAR employs a secretary and

two coordinators, Miss Barbara Schumacker and Sister Ellen Ward.

Father Palumbos said CEDAR is being reevaluated because of the financial difficulty. Money for CEDAR has been raised through interparish bazaars, but fell short of its goal in the second year. CEDAR must look to individual parishes for support.

"I feel very strongly that it is an injustice if CEDAR as it presently exists has to end, primarily because the lack of money represents the misplacing of priorities," stressed Father Palumbos. "CEDAR's personnel has provided quality programming which needs to be continued in the community."

Father Palumbos pointed out the larger parishes who are responsible for a larger proportion of funding are being faced with needs of their own which are being defined as greater than CEDAR. Among these needs are the support of parochial schools

(Continued on Page 8)

Priests Discuss Planning



Left to right: Father Bernard Dollen, pastor of St. Andrew's; Father Thomas Brennan, pastor of St. Mary's Corning; Msgr. Robert Keleher, St. Charles Borromeo; Father Philip J. Billotte, Sacred Heart Auburn; and Father Paul McCabe, newly appointed co-pastor of St. Augustine's.

By BARBARA MOYNEHAN

The diocesan office of planning, a concept voted into existence by the last Priests' Council, was the subject of heated discussion as new members questioned such fundamentals as the need for the office.

The discussion began when Father Bernard Dollen made a committee report that recommended the hiring of a full-time director and secretary at a cost of \$25,000.

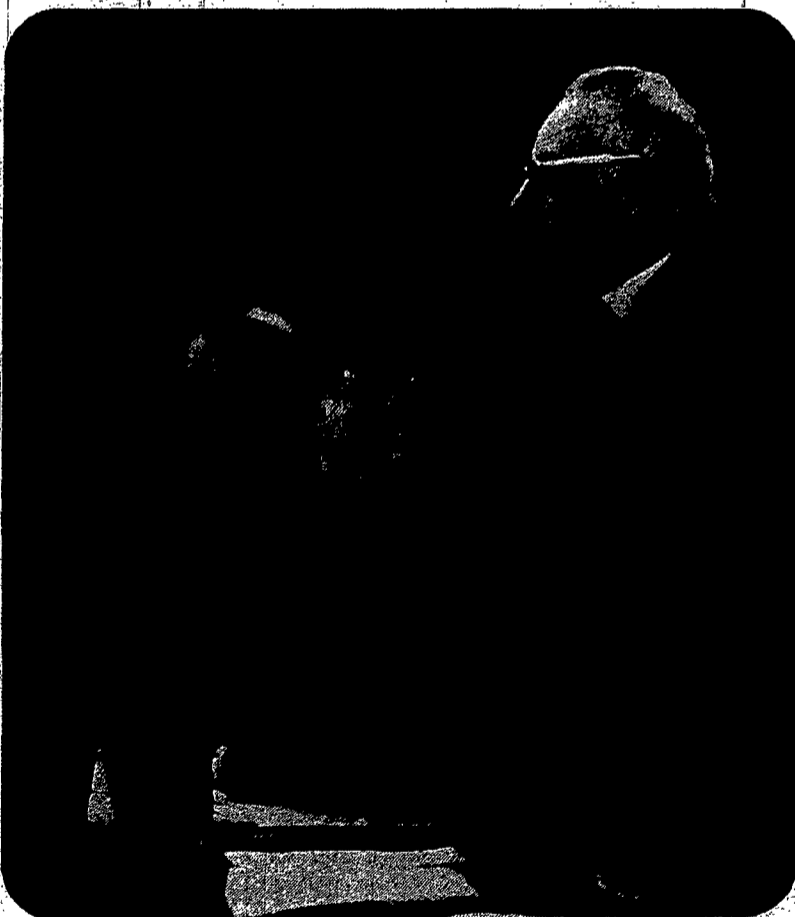
The price tag made new members, Fathers Thomas Brennan of Corning and Gerald O'Connor of Elmira in particular, question the need for a planner.

Father Joseph Brennan, rector of St. Bernard's Seminary and Father James Schwartz, chaplain of Northside Hospital, both in their second terms, stressed that the need has been established and agreed upon by the pastoral office, department heads, Sisters' Council and the financial committee and urged the implementation of the new office.

Father Schwartz pointed out that if the financial committee, which he said has always "exhibited conservative and sound judgment, recommended the planning office be established at \$25,000, then we can afford it."

Father John Mulligan, another new member then moved the committee take back its recommendation and expand its reasoning to help council members in "selling" the idea to their constituents. His motion was accepted.

In other informational reports heard by the 19 members present at Becket Hall for the February meeting last Tuesday, Father Charles Bennett spoke on the priests' retirement program;



Before settling down to the afternoon agenda Father Robert MacNamara, pastor of St. Ann's, Hornell, (standing left) talks with Father Thomas Brennan while Father Bernard Dollen converses with Father George Wood, pastor of Our Mother of Sorrows who is sitting next to Father Raymond Heisel, pastor of St. Mary's Irondequoit.

James Noonan told of his duties as director of the diocesan communication office and Father Robert Meng, a member of the last council, presented the financial committee's report on priests' finances.

Father Henry Atwell, speaking as executive director of Genesee Ecumenical Ministries, attended to discuss the participation of the Rochester diocese in GEM.

He asked the council to reactivate the Ecumenical Commission, a 12-member body of laity and religious that has not met in five years, according to Father Atwell.

He also asked the priests to "bring our Catholic membership up to full strength" by financial support as well as by furnishing a part-time staff member to GEM.

Msgr. Mulcahy Takes Good Shepherd Post

Msgr. Donald J. Mulcahy will administer the affairs of Good Shepherd parish in Henrietta until a new pastor is selected, the Pastoral Office announced Friday.

He will take over the Henrietta parish from Father Leo Mans, whose health has forced his resignation from the pastorate.

Msgr. Mulcahy, former director of Catholic Charities, is executive secretary of the board charged with developing a diocesan pastoral council. After 21 years with Charities, he served briefly as pastor of St. Patrick's, Victor, and has been with the pastoral council formation board since its inception in March, 1971.

Abortion Re-Run?

Are the much-protested "Maude" abortion episodes going to be screened again by CBS?

A Seneca Falls reader, Elizabeth Shipley, wrote to Courier-Journal TV columnist Pat Costa reporting that she had heard the network would air the two half-hour shows either as a one-hour special or a regular sequence as the season's finale.

"What can we do," she asked, "to stop the re-airing of this show?" A check with CBS director of press information, Harry Feeney, in New York revealed that CBS has received protests about the show from all over the country. At first he had no answer from CBS execu-

tives on possible re-runs.

Next day he phoned back with the official word, "No decision has yet been made." He added that the two shows will definitely not be "shown back-to-back" (in a one-hour program.)

Ironically protests generated a great deal of valuable publicity for "Maude." We suspect the network will attempt to reschedule the shows. To Mrs. Shipley's question about what readers can do: mobilization of church groups to announce publicly a large scale boycott of any sponsor and product that helps underwrite the costs of the screenings may have some clout. But, it must be done prior to rescheduling and it must be large scale to be effective.