

COURIER-JOURNAL

Dialogue for Renewal

"Active sharing... is necessary for the Church." —BISHOP JOSEPH L. HOGAN

Interview: Father Daniel F. Holland, Time of Renewal Director

Key man in the Time of Renewal Survey is Father Daniel Holland. Ordained a priest in 1965 and a graduate of St. Bernard's Seminary, Father Holland is director of the diocese's efforts at renewing itself.

The survey was, in large part, originated by Father Holland, a bright young priest who was responsible for training teachers of religious education before his present appointment in June 1972.

Interviewed in his office at 1150 Buffalo Road, Father Holland explained how the diocese came to take the survey.

"When the Bishop announced his intention to make this a time of renewal for the diocese, all of us had opinions on the basis of experience about what concerned the 450,000 Catholics in the diocese.

"But none of us could say our evaluation of the scene was accurate," he adds with a laugh. "If we were going to make renewal work, clearly we had better know what people in the diocese are thinking about."

"What makes this study different," says Father Holland, "is that we set out to find what is on people's minds. It wasn't just a bunch of questions the Bishop had." The questions in the survey were drawn up by Harvey Research Organization. "We went outside," said Father Holland, "and we didn't use any of the normal channels of Church communication, because we didn't want it influenced by any Church leadership, including our own."



FATHER HOLLAND

Father Holland even admits to being personally "disappointed" in the questionnaire used in the survey.

"As a personal thing, I wanted to know what are people's attitudes to the great moral and social issues of the day, things like amnesty, the war, race, the environment, population control.

"During the focus group discussions held before the questionnaire was drafted, people kept bringing it back to local questions when the interviewer brought up these issues.

As a result of four initial group discussions, the questionnaire was weighted toward "local and individual questions," in the words of the survey report.

How does the survey relate to the diocesan Time of Renewal?

"The Time of Renewal," explained Father Holland, "wants the Catholic adult to take a serious look at our faith. Why? Because of all the changes in the 10 years since Vatican II, both in the Church and in the world around us. We're hoping if he takes this look, he'll have a deeper understanding of the Church, a new mental image of it, and hopefully he will rededicate himself to it.

"The problem was, how do we bring this to the attention of the 450,000 Catholics in the diocese?

Many alternative methods were considered, said Father Holland. It was thought that canned sermons delivered in each parish might be used, CCD classes for senior high school students could have been tried, even adult education classes were on the list.

None of them was adopted, said Father Holland, "because there were too many constraints on each." For example, he pointed out, "only about 2 per cent in the parish are interested in adult education."

This led to the decision, he said, to take the survey and publish the results in the press. The series beginning today in the

Courier-Journal will present a thorough look at all aspects of the Church in the Diocese of Rochester.

Analysis THE SURVEY AND THE NEW CHURCH

In this issue of the Courier-Journal, the Diocese of Rochester begins announcing the results of the most critical self-examination ever undertaken by a major Catholic institution in the United States.

Planned to run for nine weeks, the results of the survey will show to Rochester Catholics many things, some new and some long suspected but never verified.

No survey can answer all our questions about the Church and her people, but it can indicate to us just how complex are the issues we face.

The survey is different from anything tried in the past.

● Although Catholics are the largest, most homogeneous group in the population of the United States, making up 27 per cent of the total, little analytical work has been done on them using the scientific tools of modern sociology.

● The questions asked were not what the Church hierarchy wanted specifically to know, but what Catholics themselves felt was most important. Four "focus groups" in divergent parishes were interviewed to direct development of questions to be asked.

● The survey was conducted in depth. More than 7,000 questionnaires were mailed out, both to Catholics on the Courier-Journal mailing list and to the population at large. One in 17 was interviewed personally, with interviews tending to average nearly an hour.

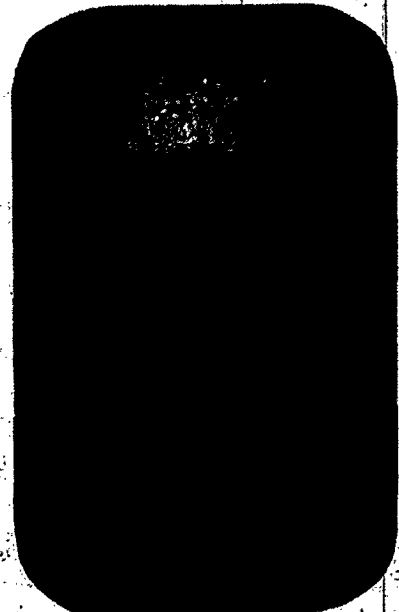
● The survey covered the whole spectrum of Catholic attitudes and concerns. Questions were asked on topics from the kind of Mass preferred and the most meaningful type of prayer to the respondent, to the kind of social action clergy should take and how the Churches teachings relate to housing.

● Computer analysis is being used to cross-tabulate the answers. This makes it possible to find out if a person's opinions on one topic are related to his opinions on a different subject. For example, do people who are completely opposed to abortion also want strict pronouncements on all moral issues by the Church?

The answers to such questions will be forthcoming during the next eight weeks.

REGIONAL REPORT:

Although Father Thomas Reddington, pastor of Holy Name of Jesus parish, is studying in Rome for three months, he left his Northwest Region in good shape for the Time of Renewal.



FATHER REDDINGTON

Father Reddington, regional coordinator of the Monroe County Northwest Region of the Diocese of Rochester, said before he went away that he was pleased with the progress made toward regionalization in his area.

The region, which extends from downtown Rochester north to Lake Ontario, and west to Hilton, has within its limits 18 parishes, three Catholic high schools, and a major seminary.

Of the parishes, all but one have either parish councils or steering committees to establish them.

There are also four standing regional committees on human development, education, liturgy, and youth. Respectively, they are chaired by Evelio Perez-Albuerne; Father Leon Hart, CSB; Donald Meminger, and Father Thomas Bales, CSB.

Perez, according to Father Reddington, has been "really forging ahead" with human development.

Working with a core group at Nazareth Academy, he has begun a teaching game where students learn what Human Development is. He is also involved with the Bishop Sheen Housing Foundation in efforts to improve low income housing.

Father Reddington said that Father Hart has been "very active," and is strong at organizing and working with principals. He has made effective use of audio-visuals in Spanish and Italian, and has begun sacramental programs and teacher training.

Father Thomas Reddington Northwest Region

One area that met with failure was the adult education program, which held a couple of poorly attended meetings, and folded. Father Reddington blamed the failure on crossed signals and "collision of dates."

Donald Meminger's liturgy Committee has been "very effective," said Father Reddington. A convention was held on music as an expression of the concept of regionalism.

Nazareth and Aquinas have been training centers for young people and Father Bales' Youth Committee.

Putting together the work of the standing committees and the parish councils is the object of the newly formed regional conference in the Northwest. At its recent meeting, representatives of all concerns of the region unanimously approved the conference's format.

A general assembly is planned for the Northwest Region. It will be composed of four delegates from each parish, and an executive committee with six elected members, the coordinator and his assistants, and the heads of the four standing committees.

Filling in for Father Reddington while he is away are his two assistant coordinators, Father William Amann, associate pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Parish, and Sister Mary Jo Langie, RSM.