

The Forms May Change But . . . The Future of Religious Life Is Strong

By BARBARA MOYNEHAN

The future of religious sisters is strong, though the form as we have always known it may change, says the president of the Archdiocese of New York's Sisters of Charity.

Sister Margaret Dowling flew here in the snow storm of Sunday, March 18, to address the Sisters of Mercy at their "Women in Ministry" day. More than 150



Sister Margaret Dowling, DC

sisters from throughout the diocese braved the blizzard to attend the day of seminars and discussion at Mercy Motherhouse.

In a quick interview after her talk, Sister Margaret said, "The future of religious sisters is strong because I feel there is a strong future for women living in community."

She admits she doesn't know what form the future communities will take. "New kinds of membership may develop," she said, explaining that, "just as sisters are being part of lay groups now, many lay people would like

to form a community, one that may not live together but would relate to an established congregation."

Sister Margaret has had many jobs in her life as a Sister of Charity. In the field of education, she was an elementary school principal and curriculum director for the Archdiocese of New York.

As a social worker, she was involved in East Harlem with Full Circles Associates, a program established to make the mission of the Church felt in the ghetto and the suburb.

Because of her varied background she is often called on to speak to other congregations of nuns about their place in the post-Vatican II Church.

From her discussions with many communities around the country, Sister Margaret has found that sisters are concerned about the need to come to terms with ministry and contemplation in today's world and today's Church.

"In the past we have spoken of our work, or our apostolate, and how we speak of ministry," explained the petite nun, defining ministry as a contemplative style of life, "including more than work and service, with roots in faith and a faith community."

As an aside, she told the sisters that she believes ordination should be available to women, but added, "I feel we have a lot of other work to do."

One matter she seemed to think needed work in all congregations, is handling the different life styles within religious communities.

"Too often sisters working in a new ministry, such as jail work, or drug counselling, are spinning off from their community," she said.

What is needed, advised Sister Margaret, is for the community to



Photos by Barbara Moynihan

Speaking during a seminar on Ecumenical Ministry, Sister Elizabeth Hughes, RSM, of St. Christopher's, Chili, tells interested members of her community about her work with a neighborhood ecumenical council.

support every sister in her work whether it is teaching third grade or counselling drug addicts. And each sister must be accountable to her community, and must share her new insights with the congregation.

She went so far as to say, "unless one's involvement in new ministries is supported by the community and is rooted in a faith community, the work is not ministry."

Stressing the importance of "corporate ministry," Sister Margaret pointed out, that in the past nuns had a pattern to live by, and life was easier. "Now we are challenged to believe and trust that sisters who are doing something different than our work, are truly trying to respond in faith to God's word."

She said confusion has arisen over congregational commitment. "Are we committed to so many schools," she asked parenthetically, "or are we committed to the Lord and the people of God?"

"We must come to a new view of our ministry as rooted in faith, and call on people to take hold of their own lives. Therefore," she continued, "we must be called into the issues of oppression and justice."

But to this Sister of Charity, who has taught school as well as worked in the streets of Harlem, the ministry of justice is not separate from education or hospital work or any work already being done. "It is part and parcel of everything we are doing."

"But," she explained, "we have to look beyond our own school to question education in general, and beyond the care of one patient to the whole medical system."

"We can't keep just mending things up," she continued. "We, with the corporate power of religious women must address

ourselves to social change. We must relate to injustice."

It was religious sisters who started many of America's first hospitals as works of mercy but "we are in a different society than our sisters who started hospitals," Sister Margaret explained, and this to her means that today's sisters must turn their attention to shaping the society of the future.

The best tool they have to use in that work, according to the nun

from Brooklyn, is their community, their corporate ministry.

"We have the obligation to preach the gospel and the obligation to challenge the government if it is not responding to the needs of the people," which may lead to the use of their corporate ministry as "lobbying power for the needs of the poor. Not by demanding particulars, she said, "but by keeping people and legislators knowledgeable of the needs of the poor."

Cardinal Mindszenty Invited to Rochester

Mayor Stephen May revealed recently that he has extended an invitation to Josef Cardinal Mindszenty of Hungary to visit Rochester during his trip to the United States this Fall.

May said Rochester would be honored to host this great church leader and humanitarian whose courageous leadership in the cause of Hungarian independence and religious freedom is deeply admired by all Americans. He is an inspiration to all who believe in freedom, justice and the right to self-determination.

Cardinal Mindszenty spent 15 years as a political exile in the American Embassy in his native Budapest until he went to Rome at Pope Paul's request in 1971. His visit is expected to take place in September or October.

The mayor's invitation was conveyed through Hungarian church leaders in New Jersey who are arranging the cardinal's tour.

May said that the "welfare of the Hungarian people and the

brave struggle of all oppressed peoples for individual and religious freedom and fundamental human rights are matters of great concern to the people of Rochester. The cardinal's presence and message would, of course, bring great inspiration to our Hungarian community and the many Rochesterians whose ethnic heritage makes the current struggle against communist tyranny of great personal significance."

May expressed confidence that Cardinal Mindszenty will receive the "kind of warm, hero's welcome which he has earned through his heroic commitment to the church and the cause of human freedom, and in keeping with the special bonds of friendship and blood between the peoples of Hungary and America."

NO TIME WASTED

Aid from Catholic Relief Services to help reconstruct Managua after the recent devastating earthquake began almost immediately. Sixteen days after the disaster occurred, CRS sent its first shipment of rebuilding supplies to the capital city of Nicaragua — \$25,000 worth of hammers, nails, shovels and wheelbarrows.

UNITED INCOME TAX SERVICE
1315 RIDGE RD. E. Near Van's 266-7670
Open Mon., Thurs. Sat. 10 to 5, Tues., Wed., and Fri. 10 to 6,
Other Times by Appointment

MERCURY MUSIC CO.
SINCE 1949
NEW LOCATION 929 E. RIDGE RD (Cor of Carter)
DISCOUNT INSTRUMENT RENTAL PLAN
AUTHORIZED DEALER
325-6936
• BACH • BUFFET • ARMSTRONG

TURNPIKE CAMPER & TRAILER SALES
• 5th Wheels
• Truck Campers
• Hitches
• Accessories, Etc.
1370 RIDGE RD. E.
342-3655
Between Portland & Goodfrian

OUR 36th YEAR SERVING YOU
MFG
NEW 1972 MODELS ON DISPLAY INCLUDING MFG SAILBOATS
BOATS
MERCURY MOTORS & TEE-NEE TRAILERS
ARIENS MOWERS & INTERNATIONAL CUB-CADETS
"The Port of Better Values"
ROCHESTER OUTBOARD
MOTOR CO.
932 ST. PAUL (Near Hickoks)
Open Mon. & Thurs. - Even.

THIS NIGHT
MEDICATED CLEANSER

For a very limited time, you can obtain an expensive medicated skin cleanser for only 50¢. This 50¢ value is substantially lower than the retail price planned for this product. THIS NIGHT Medicated Cleanser contains a special blend of oil solvents and cleansing agents that works so thoroughly it even removes facial oil and dirt that ordinary soap and water can leave behind. Also contains medication to help control pimples and acne. For the present time, this liquid cleanser may be purchased only through the mail.

Please forward one bottle of THIS NIGHT Medicated Cleanser to:

Name _____
Street _____
City _____
State _____ Zip Code _____
Send coupon and 50¢ in coin to: Vick Manufacturing Div.,
P.O. Box H Hatboro, Pa. 19040