

# The Time of Renewal.

## Part II: The New Catholic Church.

### Survey Report

This is the second article in a nine-week series based on a recent survey by the Catholic Diocese of Rochester.

The sample questions to the right were taken from that part of the survey which deals with this week's topic: What do Catholics expect from the Church today?

The survey reports that the guidance that three out of four Catholics in the Diocese of Rochester are looking for is in the areas of religious practice, moral judgment and social issues.

Religious practices, such as Mass, Confession and Church ceremonies are viewed in three ways. A small minority of Catholics have eagerly and enthusiastically accepted the changes since Vatican II. A smaller minority like the "old ways of the Latin Church." The vast majority (60-70%) say they believe the Church is right in updating ceremonies and practices. Over-all, the majority of Catholics in the Diocese of Rochester are accepting the changes gradually and becoming comfortable with them.

Their expectation is that they will continue to receive explanation of the new forms of worship as they look for new ways to express their "Catholic identity" within the framework of the formal Church.

As far as the social and moral sides of religion are concerned, the survey

The following questions appeared in the recent Diocesan Time of Renewal Survey.

How frequently do you, yourself, attend Mass?

- More than weekly
- Weekly
- Several times a month
- Once a month
- Several times a year
- Once a year
- Less than yearly

How clear do you feel you understand the position of the Church on these issues?

	Very Well	Quite Well	Fairly Well	Not Very Well	Not at All
Legalized Abortion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vietnam War	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National Race Crisis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Population Growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Farm Labor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parochial Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conscientious Objection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How well, do you feel, the observances expected of a "good Catholic" by the Church agree with your idea of a "good Christian?"

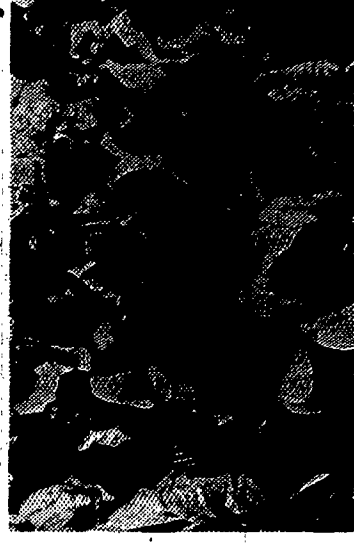
- Very well
- Quite well
- Average
- Not very well
- Not at all
- Don't know

make personal decisions on what they believe is right or wrong, rather than just conform with the views of the Church.

### Church Commentary

Because the Church is human, as well as divine, it will always need updating. Because people are always a part of a world which changes, Church methods and programs will always have to change. The message of Jesus is unchanging. The human words we use to speak that message and the situations in which we try to live by that message always changes.

The Mass is always the same: people of faith come together to listen to God's word in the Bible; bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. The way in which Mass is celebrated—the words, songs, gestures, buildings, books, furniture—has changed throughout history. It has changed again in our lifetime. Having Mass in our own language, with lay people sharing in the leadership is, in large part, a restoration of the way things used to be done over 1000 years ago. It is one of the many means to help us understand that our faith-values should influence how we live each day.



Pract in the public forum. (Religious News Service photo)

One major goal of Vatican II was to encourage Catholics to unify our "religious" life and our "worldly" life. Today Mass attendance is falling off. But too many of us who do attend are still "Sunday Catholics." The faith that brings us to Mass does not always influence the attitudes and behavior that we live by each day. It should. Church teaching—echoing the Bible—is only one factor in influencing a person's values. Other factors conflict with this teaching. And the Christian is constantly torn between the standards of Christ and those of

Perhaps we have not done a good enough job of accurately, consistently and clearly presenting the teachings of Christ: freedom, peace, brotherhood, mercy, love, suffering in the cause of right, and all praise to God alone. Perhaps we have allowed the changing laws of man (no meat on Friday) to become confused with the unchanging laws of God (love God and love your neighbor).

For too long a time, communication in the Church has been a one-way street. Today, Church leaders are learning the skills for two-way communication: listening, as well as speaking. Major new efforts are:

1. Regionalism—lay representatives and Church leaders meet regularly in 10 areas of the diocese to plan, evaluate, and share resources, creating new programs to respond to the specific needs of the people in each geographic area.
2. Parish Councils—elected parishioners meet regularly with the pastor and parish staff in most parishes to prayerfully decide together how the parish can best meet the needs of all parishioners, starting new programs and stopping older ones which have outlived their usefulness.
3. Most large parishes already offer mini-courses to adults; helping parents prepare their own children for First Communion; Church involvement in public issues; and topics suggested by groups of parishioners.

Faith in Jesus Christ offers us healing for our hurts, light to understand the real meaning of life, and hope to face the complexity of life in today's world. Leaders and people in the Church together share these blessings. Leaders and people together can find ways to thank God and extend these blessings to others. We are one Church. We are a renewing Church. Rigid uniformity is gone. Gospel and Church values are clear. There is much room within the Catholic Church for a variety of ways of teaching and living these values and of worshipping their Author.

Survey questions related to each weekly topic will be printed here throughout the Time of Renewal newspaper series. The completed survey, answers and findings will be published in a book, "Dialogue For Renewal," available this Fall.

influenced by religious teachings: the Church is only one of many elements that move an individual to decide and act.

The majority of Catholics in the Diocese of Rochester are gradually becoming comfortable with the changes in Church ceremonies. On the moral side, they are seeking a clearer explanation of the teachings of the "new" Church. And they want to know how they can make these teachings mean something in their daily lives.