

The Time of Renewal.

Part III: The Catholic Parish Today.

Survey Report

This is the third in a nine-week series based on a recent opinion survey conducted by the Catholic Diocese of Rochester.

The sample questions to be right were taken from that part of the survey which deals with this week's topic: The changing face of the Catholic parish.

Parishioner evaluations show that they are looking for improvement, to one degree or another, in every aspect of parish life.

Areas in which need for improvement is indicated fall into two divisions: the tangible, such as religious ceremonies and parish organizations; and the non-tangible, such as spiritual service to the individual and social service to the community.

In the tangible area, almost all Catholics approve what they see as the changing structure of the Church. They see this as a shift away from the priest having all responsibility for the parish, toward a structure that includes increased parishioner responsibility.

This shift of responsibility is most evident, Catholics say, in parish administration and in the Liturgy (wider lay participation and a greater variety of Masses).

Throughout the Diocese, lay involvement has increased more in Liturgy and administration than in

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

In your parish, to what extent is the parish council participating in the following?

	Very High	Little Above Average	Average	Little Below Average	Very Low
Financing the parish and maintaining the building	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working to create a feeling of community among parishioners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning & providing educational programs for adults	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning & providing educational programs for youths	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing & participating in community projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In your parish, to what extent do you feel that the needs of parishioners are being met by:

	Fully	Adequately	Improvement	Poorly	Don't Know
Sermon (homily)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of guidance and help for families in trouble	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parish leadership understanding of young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parish administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meaningful Masses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parishioner involvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of counsel and guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religious education of young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religious education for adults	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

council more in terms of finances and administration than of broader Christian responsibilities.

Most Catholics desire changes that will benefit them individually, like improved religious education or spiritual guidance. Many Catholics already see the need for parish action in the wider community; but they think of this action less in terms of national causes (civil rights, war protests), than in terms of local necessities (youth drug programs, flood relief programs).

Generally speaking, Catholics of the Diocese of Rochester have responded

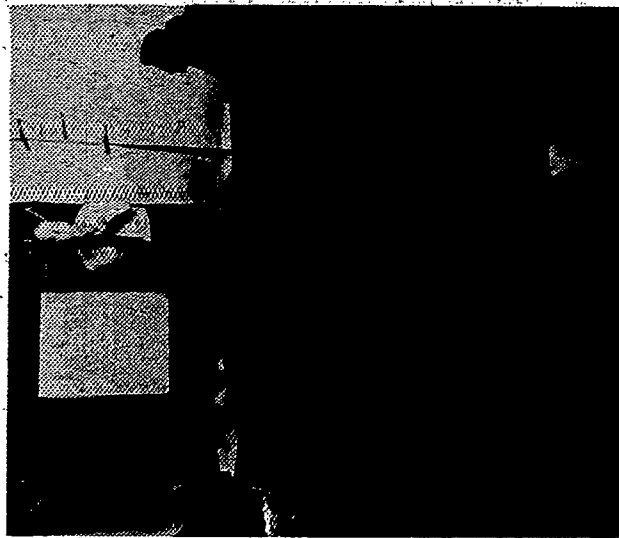
Church Commentary

The Catholic who reads this advertisement; how aware is he of the changes that have taken place in the Church?

That depends largely on how active and well-informed a Catholic he is. Say his only contact with the parish is attendance at Sunday Mass. He will at least have grown used to the novel sight of laymen and women engaged in leadership roles in the sanctuary. He will also have read a lot of strange new terms in the parish bulletin.

... Parish Council, Worship Committee, Education Committee, Human Development Committee. But unless he is also a "weekend Catholic" he is not likely to know how many Catholic parishioners are donating much time from Monday to Saturday, to bring Christ to men through these parish structures. In the parish council and its committees the priests and people have a forum and a medium for serving human needs. They create more meaningful celebrations of Mass and the sacraments. They broadcast more faithfully the full message of Christ. They provide not only for the necessities of the parish plant, but for the needs of the sick, elderly, the poor, and the disadvantaged of the world.

In other words, the parish council is designed to bring about just those sorts of "improvement" for which the people are asking in the survey.



Neighborhood group discusses the formation of a parish council.

assistant. Today, a growing number of churches are adding a variety of full-time members to their staffs. In some places, Sisters serve as assistants to pastors. In more than 70 of the 190 Diocesan parishes, nuns and lay people have been hired as specialists to develop education programs for adults and for the increasing numbers of Catholic children in public schools. A few churches have even engaged professional counselors, available to individuals and families in the parish. There is among American Catholics a long-standing tradition of financial generosity to the Church. Thus churches have been built, the schools have been built. But now the Second Vatican Council points out to Catholics new ways to give of their talents, of their know-how, of themselves.

More than ever before, the Catholic parish today is an assembly of people—priests, sisters, laymen—praying, studying, working together. Each member has his own special role to perform. For that reason, the parish welcomes diversity.

Next week, Part IV: The Value of Human Life. A CATHOLIC VIEW.



Diocesan teen seminar.