

COURIER-JOURNAL

Dialogue for **R**Renewal

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

INTERVIEW: Mrs. Pat Schmidt,
Regional Leader

As one of the two laywomen on the Pastoral Council Formation Committee, Mrs. Pat Schmidt sees herself as "the grass roots response."

Representing the North Region of Monroe County on the Parish Council Formation Committee, she necessarily has a "very close contact" with Father Douglas Hoffman, regional coordinator, and with the region as a whole.

It is also her role, as a member of the formation board, to help "bring into existence a pastoral council."

The nurse, a mother of seven, feels that the topics covered in this week's diocesan survey report are "the most ticklish to respond to" of any so far.

She thinks the survey shows "a great unrest about the Church's stand on birth control. Abortion is better understood."

At the same time, however, she feels that there is a need for more education on abortion. The 46 per cent surveyed who feel that abortion is appropriate in the case of rape, she said, indicates that a lot of people do not realize that pregnancies resulting from rape occur "so infrequently."

"Most of the time," she said, "it's an emotional problem" of the mother that is a given reason for



Mrs. Pat Schmidt

abortion. But rather than allowing a woman to abort, she says, "we must give her emotional support."

Only 16.1 per cent of those interviewed feel that birth control is never justifiable. "This is an era of forming your own conscience," she says. "Everybody knows what the Pope says about birth control but how many people know what the American bishops said?"

She pointed to a statement from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops which said that people "must avoid immoral means of family limitation."

"But what are immoral means?" she asks. "Many Catholic couples are asking, 'Do I have this moral right to continue populating this planet?'"

She doesn't see the situation as a rebellion against papal authority, but as a decision to say, "I will let God judge me."

The 40.8 per cent who said that a good Catholic should actively work for legislation against abortion, Mrs. Schmidt feels, will in truth "not actively work" against the issue. "It's just a number," and numbers, she says, cannot be encouraged.

The reason that one third said that a white couple was within its right to refuse to sell a home to a Negro family, she says, is that many people feel that "that is not the role of the Church. They say, 'What is the Church doing in politics?'"

The same reasons, she says are applicable to those who felt that the Church should have avoided the issue of the Vietnam war.

Education, she says, should be a primary objective. The pulpit, she feels, "where you have a captive audience," should be utilized more effectively for this goal.

Some straight answers from an open mind on some "ticklish" subjects.

Analysis**The Survey
And the Value of
Human Life**

The question of the value of human life sharply divides the Catholic community.

On the issues of the war in Vietnam, contraception and abortion, there is no consensus among Rochester Catholics, according to statistics released this week by the diocese.

The Church's position on abortion is the best understood of all the questions about human values, although only 24.1 per cent of those surveyed agreed fully with the Church's stand that abortion is justified "under no circumstances."

When the survey was taken, American troops were still engaged in the fighting in Vietnam. Asked what a Catholic should do, "who feels strongly about the Southeast Asian War," the largest number (35.8 per cent) replied he should "make his position known while supporting the rights of others."

This answer did not indicate a stance on the war; some other answers did. For instance, 16 per cent of those asked felt Catholics should "support your government without question." This seems to indicate that a surprisingly large minority of Catholics fully accepts the values of a secular state.

On the other end of the scale, less than half as many Catholics (7.9 per cent) favor "peaceful demonstrations and parades" to protest the war.

In general it seemed that Catholics were more willing to take a stand for life where sex was connected with the issue than when war and governmental authority were a factor.

There is a diversity of opinion among Catholics about the papal condemnation of artificial modes of contraception, but except for one significant area, most do not completely favor contraception.

The one significant area where a large minority (36.3 per cent) were prepared to ignore the condemnation was when "the couple can't afford to provide for more children."

Only 16 per cent thought that not wanting children was an adequate reason, and only 9.5 per cent considered it right in the case of an unmarried couple who did not plan to marry.

This leads to an interesting inconsistency.

Half the people polled feel that abortion is justified in certain extreme medical cases, but 40 per cent feel that good Catholics should try to keep abortion illegal, and more than a fifth would also like to see public education programs about the Church's position.

Regional Report:

The Tompkins-Tioga Counties Region is coming to life.

Father Albert Ryan, regional director for developing the pastoral council in this region, reports that he is very proud of its progress.

Ten regional coordinators have been named by Bishop Joseph L. Hogan to prepare the way for a diocesan Pastoral Council. In addition to this work, the regional coordinators are supposed to help encourage parishes in the formation of parish councils, and help the people in their region to embark on joint projects that span parish lines.

There are 9 parishes, 2 missions and 2 campus communities in the Tompkins-Tioga region. All but one have formed parish councils.

A steering committee has been appointed towards forming a regional conference. Regional educational and liturgical meetings are being held regularly, with liturgical



FATHER RYAN

meetings being held at Immaculate Conception, Ithaca, and St. Catherine's, Waverly.

Educational meetings have held at Immaculate Conception, Ithaca; the next one

**Father Albert Ryan,
Tompkins-Tioga Region**

will be in Catatonk. Father Ryan reports very good enthusiasm on the part of the laity about their chance for greater participation.

Heads of the three standing regional committees have been named. Chairman of Human Development is Father David Mura, associate pastor at Immaculate Conception in Ithaca. For Education, Sister Raymond Mary, principal of Immaculate Conception School in Ithaca has been appointed and Mr. James Raftis from St. Patrick's, Owego, has taken over Liturgy.

Father Ryan's assistant coordinator is Mr. John Evans from St. Patrick's in Owego.

Member churches are St. James the Apostle, Trumansburg; Immaculate Conception and St. Catherine, both in Ithaca; St. Anthony's in Groton, All Saints in Ludlowville; Holy Cross, Dryden; St. John the Evangelist in Newark Valley; St. Francis in Catatonk; St. Patrick's in Owego; St. Margaret Mary's in Apalachin; St. James in Waverly and the campus community at Cornell and Ithaca College.