

# Bishops Hold Regional Meeting in Syracuse

Continued from Page 1

Syracuse, Edwin Broderick of Albany, and Francis Mugavero of Brooklyn.

The first order of the first day, after Mass, breakfast, and orientation, was the presentation of a paper, "Family Life and Christian Marriage," by Bishop Stanislaus Brzana of Ogdensburg. His paper set the stage for discussion and comment from the participants.

Bishop Brzana described the Christian view of marriage and family life referring to Pope Pius XI's 1930 encyclical letter "Casti Connubii," as a summary of "the teaching and tradition of the Catholic Church on marriage."

Bishop Brzana said, "Pius XI taught that the purposes of marriage are to beget and raise children, and to allow spouses to give help and love to each other. He stated further that Christian marriage is permanent, and that contraception is wrong."

The state of marriage today, Bishop Brzana said, is "grim." The high divorce rate, especially in teenage marriages, he said is caused by "rapid cultural change; threat of an unknown future; greater freedom and per-

missiveness; more education; women's liberation; personalism; attitudes of expediency and materialism; lessening of moral leadership by the Church and all authority; widespread birth control, including abortion; increased expectations in marriage."

Bishop Brzana referred to Mike Kekich and Fritz Petersen, the two baseball players who "swapped their wives, re-arranged their children, and even their family dogs."

"All of this makes us painfully aware," he said, "of the great difference between the Christian view of marriage and family life and the actual condition of marriage and family life in our society."

The problems, however, cannot be run away from. "We must not bury our heads in the sand, but must face issues squarely."

Cardinal Cooke then opened the floor for reaction.

Msgr. Charles Fahey, chairman of the State Council of Catholic Charities Directors, said, that in attacking the problems of marriage and family life, "the jeopardy of family life among the

poor" and those in special situations must not be disregarded.

Bishop James Mahoney of New York added "We must be aware of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds of people."

Mrs. Irene Tomonto, of the Christian Family Movement in New York City, said that the "first point of reference" regarding the family "should be the couple, rather than the children." A strong relationship between husband and wife, she said, is most crucial in a marriage.

Frank Knight, from Brooklyn, representing the Marriage Encounter Movement, agreed. "Parents should be the focal point of the family," he said. There should be an open exchange of feelings between husband and wife, he said, and "this openness is love."

Fifty per cent of all teenage marriages currently end up in divorce. Father John Malecki from Albany suggested the possibility of setting up guidelines on marriage for people under age 21.

[The Rochester Diocese already has such a program.]

Bishop Broderick said that there is too much pressure on young people today to marry. It must be realized, he said, that "some people should never marry."

Sister Marguerite Tierney, CSJ, director of the Family Life Division of Catholic Charities in Syracuse, added, "We should help young people feel good about themselves."

Father Hammond, whose seminars for teenagers have been successful in the Rochester diocese, stressed the needs of young people for education. "There need be some firm Catholic doctrine taught," he said, specifically mentioning that Vatican Council II's statements on marriage merit explanation.

After everyone was heard, Cardinal Cooke called a time-out for coffee and collection of thoughts.

The assembly split itself into five divisions and headed out to Parlors A, B, C, D, and E, for the small group discussions. Each group considered two questions on marriage and family life.

One member of each group acted as recorder and took notes on the discussion. After the group sessions and lunch, the recorders gave their reports to the panel for their reaction.

Then the topic of youth was covered in the same fashion, with Bishop John McCann of Rockville Centre making the address. The small group discussions and reports were taken up the next day, as was a closed session of the bishops.

All the reports will be synthesized and condensed into a regional report by a committee that includes Bishop Hickey. The reports from all 12 regions will be submitted to the headquarters of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, collated there, and subsequently presented to the NCCB administrative committee.

The administrative committee will review the conclusions of the regional meetings and refer recommendations for action to a general meeting of the bishops in November.

## Time for Analysis

Syracuse — In order to give various issues concentrated thought and analysis, delegates to the Region II meeting of bishops here were organized into smaller discussion groups with specific issues assigned to each.

The 15-member team which included Bishop Joseph L. Hogan and Father Daniel Brent, superintendent of diocesan schools, met to size up their reactions to a talk delivered by Ogdensburg Bishop Stanislaus Brzana on Christian Marriage and Family Life.

The first question the group dealt with was:

**How effective are the intelligence and action programs of the Church with regard to legislation and litigation affecting family life? If improvement is needed, what form should it take?**

Two suggestions were made. Bishop Patrick Ahern of New York City questioned the kind of effect that diocesan newspapers had on the Church's constituents, and wondered about the feasibility of a diocese buying a weekly page in the secular press.

Bishop Hogan answered him, saying that Bishop Fulton Sheen looked into the idea when he was ordinary of the Diocese of Rochester. "The price is prohibitive," said Bishop Hogan.

Msgr. Charles Fahey, group chairman and chairman of the State Council of Catholic Charities Directors, offered that he would like to see more people reading the reports of the New York State Catholic Committee. The NYSCC reports, he said, are a good source of information on legislation and bills in progress that are of interest to the Church.

The second question, to which the group devoted more time, was:

**How effective is the education in human sexuality now provided in Catholic schools and CCD? In what areas is improvement needed?**

Bishop Ahern acknowledged a need for a guidance program in sexuality, but thought there should be a way to "prepare parents for it," a way to "defuse this tremendous fear" many parents have about sex education.

The Rochester diocesan sex education program was discussed at length by Father Brent. He explained that the program, "Education in Love" is a series of 26 "understandings" which took the diocese two full years to prepare.

The program was presented to Rochester parents for their approval. Father Brent said that they responded "remarkably favorably." He added that the most recent statistics met with 88-92 per cent approval.

"We explain to the parents," he said, "This (sex education) is your job. We will support you but it's your responsibility."

"Education in Love" is a gradual program, Father Brent said, and teaches Christian values as well as providing information on the mere physical aspects of sex. The "understandings" are brought to the students in an informal manner, within the contexts of other subjects, such as religion and science.

Because of the program's informality, parents do not have the option of refusing "Education in Love."

He again stressed that "the program is reinforcement." It is better, he said, for the parents to teach it first.

Msgr. Fahey said that he sensed among the group "a consensus of the necessity of sex education in schools."

No one argued with him, but a couple of suggestions were offered in reference to the Rochester program.

Cardinal Terence Cooke, chairman of the three-day conference, entered the discussion later. "What worries me," he said, "is that the type of sexuality we have in our society is a violent sexuality." He agreed with the need for a kind of sex education that teaches values.

— RANDISI.

## 'New Emphasis'

Continued from Page 1

that it is time for the Church to look more closely at the conjugal aspect of marriage, a personal union of two persons. For too long, they indicated, the Church has been biologically-oriented in its approach to marriage, stressing the child-rearing function.

At the same time, they said, support should be given to those who choose to have a large family.

In a special emphasis on the question of abortion, the bishops urged that a constitutional amendment or "some other answer" to the U.S. Supreme Court Jan. 22 ruling be given first priority at the NCCB general meeting in November.

In this connection, the bishops noted that heretofore the Church has not sponsored "political lobbying," but perhaps should consider it on questions like abortion.

Recognizing a counseling gap which exists for married couples, the bishops said that for too long counseling has been seen in its "negative aspects," but should be a part of the Church's positive role in promoting and strengthening marriage.

Priests should be capable of some counseling, the bishops pointed out, and should be trained in the dioceses to know when to refer couples or in-

dividuals to counseling specialists.

In calling for greater emphasis on the parish ministry, the New York prelates said parish priests "are the most important priests in the diocese." They added, "too many young seminarians place an emphasis on 'careerism' and don't want to go into parish work."

Auxiliary Bishop John McCann of Rockville Centre, speaking on the second-day topic of "youth," agreed that most current studies show an "estrangement" of today's young people from the Church.

"While the words used may be different," he said, "deep down today's youth are striving for the same values as the rest of us."

"When they speak of community and brotherhood, is not this also what the Church speaks about and what she should be by definition? When they seek peace, is this not also Christ's gift to us? When they speak warmly of Jesus, is He not the same Lord and brother of us all?"

Urging that both youth and the Church "build on what we have in common," Bishop McCann said that if the Church appeared to youth as it comes across in the Vatican II documents, "then young people would be among the more ardent supporters of the Church and would not be alienated from it."

McCurdy's



Mother's Day is May 13th

save up to 50% and more!

FASHION FABRIC SALE

reg. 2.50 to 4.00 yd. NOW 1.49 yd.

Step into spring and summer in crisp, cool fabrics just waiting to turn into a lovely new look for you... priced so low you can whip up a wardrobe without a dent in the budget!

WHIP CREAM PRINTS of machine washable 100% polyester crepe, 45" wide. reg. 2.50 yd., 1.49 yd.

MILK AND HONEY machine washable Boucle knits of Antron nylon in solid colors, 45" wide. reg. 4.00 yd., 1.49 yd.

McCurdy's Fashion Fabrics, Third Floor, Midtown, also at Long Ridge and Geneva