

COURIER-JOURNAL

Dialogue for **Renewal**

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

INTERVIEW: Theresa Sadonick, Teacher

American Catholics have a "selective respect for life" that allows them to be concerned "about abortion" but not to worry about "lives being aborted at 19."

This provocative view comes from Theresa Sadonick, head of religious education for Guardian Angels parish in Henrietta.

Miss Sadonick was interviewed about the results of the diocesan survey which pertain to confession and the average Catholic.

"For a minority, morality is more than a private thing," she said. But for a larger number, there is a "lack of community conscience. War, social problems, in no way do they see these as a moral problem. Sin is a private matter, what I did that I shouldn't have, not, I didn't get involved when I should have."

Miss Sadonick taught for eight years in Rochester parochial schools as a Sister of St. Joseph before taking her present job, and has also taught CCD and religious education at the State School at Industry.

A native of Elmira, she graduated from Nazareth College with a major in history.

The survey showed that in recent years Catholics have been going less frequently to confession.

"It's obvious they have," said Miss Sadonick. "Maybe the need for private confession is not as great as before because there are other means of penance. There is the penitential rite in the Mass. Before, when it was in Latin, nobody understood it."



THERESA SADONICK

"There is a growing understanding of the Church doctrine about Confession, that it is only necessary after serious sin."

"And there are other means of being forgiven."

"The Baltimore Catechism even said it, but we didn't see it. For example, there is immediate penance."

"We took one part of penance and called it confession, but it still is just one part of penance."

But there is another side to the decrease in confessions.

Miss Sadonick suggests it is the "physical set up" of confessions, the "dark confessional, the screen."

"Really, to be honest, people ever since their childhood have feared and dreaded the uncomfortableness of confession because it is uncomfortable to

admit to someone how you have failed.

"You can more readily acknowledge your failures to somebody you know loves you, too. Maybe some are too embarrassed to admit their faults to someone who knows them — a lot depends upon the relationship with the priest."

Asked about Church doctrine on the need for confession, Miss Sadonick emphasized it is necessary in the case of "serious sin," which she defined as "something to radically change one's relationship with God. It's a direct rupturing of that relationship, and it means consciously doing it."

"If a person has done that, I'm not even sure they'd go to church," much less go to Communion.

"I don't believe the rupture takes place suddenly," she said. "You don't stop going to Mass suddenly. You stop saying your prayers during the week, for example."

"Our approach to doctrine has changed," she added. "Now it's on a more personal basis, on relationship with other people, with God."

"Previously it was an action, and in rare cases, the person would be considered."

"The person orientation blows everybody's mind, because with it, you can't always say that a certain act is everywhere and all the time wrong."

"It opens up a lot of grey areas."

Analysis**The Survey and How Catholics See Confession**

Confession, once as typical of Catholicism as fish on Friday, has shown a marked drop in attendance in the years since Vatican II.

This conclusion is one of several to be drawn from survey results released this week on the role of confession in the Catholic faith.

Although fewer attend the sacrament now, it is still seen as having important spiritual value.

In response to the question, "Do you go to confession more or less often than you did or would like to?" 70.8% responded they went "less."

Only 3.2% go "more," and 21% go "about the same."

A strong link between confession and communion still exists in most minds, with 49% reporting that they confess before communion either as a matter of course or if they have a "serious sin" since their last communion.

Another 34.2 report they find confession "helpful for spiritual growth and counseling," although whether they make use of this help is not clear from the figures.

Most Catholics have gladly or willingly accepted the move away from rigid, doctrinal pronouncements, and no longer find them necessary for their spiritual life.

However, approximately one fourth of those surveyed still think that "clear cut directives like the Church used to have" constitute the "most important" kind of guidance for the conscience.

An expanded role for the individual conscience seems to be accepted among many who might previously have asked a priest for precise instructions on what to do in a moral dilemma.

More than 45% use Church "guidelines" or "opinions" for moral guidance, and another 21% rely primarily on their "own interpretation and conscience."

However, whether this moderate degree of independence from rigid and doctrinaire regulations will lessen the influence of the Church and the priests on the parish level must be doubted; the analysis of the survey reveals that the most self-consciously "Catholic" of those responding still want clear cut directives. These are the ones also most likely to be active in parish life.

Regional Report:**Father Henry Adamski, Chemung-Schuyler**

The head of the Chemung-Schuyler Regional Council says his program is "moving along slowly, but moving carefully so we don't have to waste time when we are ready to join the overall council and end up having to revise, revise, revise our plans."

Father Henry F. Adamski, coordinator of the regional council for two of the Southern Tier counties in the diocese and pastor of St. Casimir's Church in Elmira, said he can't speak for all the pastors within his region; but, he said, parish councils are functioning organizations in at least three of the 13 parishes which make up the regional council.

"The parish council situation at St. Casimir's, St. Charles Borromeo in Elmira Heights and Our Lady of Lourdes in West Elmira are moving along quite well," Father Adamski said.

He said the movement towards a full-fledged regional council is also advancing at a good pace. "We have had three full regional conferences already."



FATHER HENRY ADAMSKI

He said the last regional conference dealt with ways to implement various sections of the program.

Father Adamski said one lay person from each of the 13 parishes is a member of the regional conference.

Heading up the three specific project areas of the regional council are Father Edward Foy, pastor of St. Peter and Paul and St. Cecilia's in Elmira, human development; Sister Jean Redman, coordinator of religious education at St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads, education; and Father David Fedor, assistant pastor at St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads, liturgy.

Father Adamski said he also has an assistant coordinator to run the regional program. That's Father Joseph Gaynor, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo.

The parishes comprising the regional council are, in Elmira, St. Casimir's, St. Anthony's, St. Patrick's, St. John's, St. Cecilia's, Sts. Peter and Paul, St. Mary's; Our Lady of Lourdes, West Elmira; St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads; St. Mary of the Lake, Watkins Glen; St. Charles Borromeo, Elmira Heights; St. Benedict's (Mission Church), Odesa and St. Pius X, Van Etten.