

COURIER-JOURNAL

Dialogue for **R**enewal

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

INTERVIEW: Bishop McCafferty, Rochester Auxiliary

What's the average Catholic like?

Does he respect his priest when he's on the altar and when he's on the picket line?

Is he fed up with all the change in the church, or is he starved for more?

The final conclusions of the survey released this week try to show what this mythical beast, the "average Catholic," wants and where he will go.

Bishop John E. McCafferty, auxiliary of the diocese and currently at Sacred Heart Cathedral, thinks the categories proposed by the researchers "can't apply to a single person."

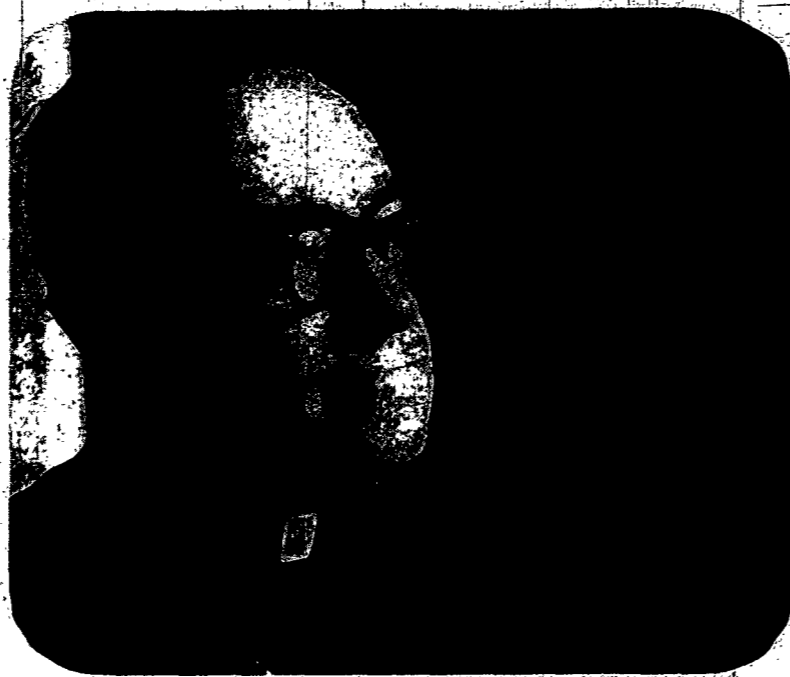
The three categories of "nostalgic, belonging, and searching" Catholics set up by the researchers he thinks are "much like American society."

"In the center you have a large group who are loyal, flexible, perceptive — they are the backbone of the country and the Church.

"Then you have the two extremes: the one group constantly reminding us of traditions, the other group doesn't let us get lazy, and they are pushing us into an uncharted future."

Sitting on the living room couch at Sacred Heart rectory, Bishop McCafferty held a much worn copy of the Documents of Vatican II, and indicated his dissatisfaction with some of the changes that have come since that historic council.

"Vatican II was something of a surprise to the average Catholic. He was unprepared. Implementation of the decrees was done sometimes prematurely,



Bishop John E. McCafferty

even before some of the bishops had returned from Rome.

"And it occurred simultaneously with changes in our political and social life that were connected with violence. This led to confusion.

"Another problem was piecemeal implementation.

"On top of that, interpretation often was undertaken by individuals who weren't qualified theologically or canonically to understand the documents."

Bishop McCafferty cited the "interpretation of general concepts" which he thinks were "exaggerated."

"Experimentation was translated into annihilation, dialogue became confrontation exercised in a far from fraternal atmosphere, collegiality turned into political democracy, and renewal became a rejection of whatever

Another problem, the bishop observed, is that the church leadership is "only human." He said, "The present leadership was not trained in dramatics for the liturgy, in diplomacy for ecumenism, or in reading the signs of the times."

Different people have different aesthetic sensibilities about the liturgy, he noted. "You can't force your own artistic concepts on the parish priest who spent 40 years saying Mass facing the wall. He's simply not a dramatist."

But Bishop McCafferty is not a pessimistic man, nor overly conservative.

"Take ecumenism, for example. I really believe in that, it's something that is important. But then, because I won't say Mass without using one of the four approved canons, people might think I was a hidebound reactionary."

Analysis

The Survey And Different Kinds Of Catholics

As Catholics become less active in the Church and less aware of their religious affiliation they become more liberal.

This is one of the more striking conclusions that can be drawn from the final researchers' report on the diocese-wide survey of Catholic attitudes and mores.

The conclusions, released this week, bring to a close nine weeks of wide dissemination of the survey, which contacted Catholics from all parts of the diocese, from Elmira to Auburn to Rochester.

In their final report, the researchers said they found three kinds of Catholic, conservative, middle of the road, and liberal, a rather predictable finding that should surprise no one.

They labelled these groups the "nostalgic," the "belonging," and the "searching" Catholics.

The "nostalgic" Catholics seem to be the least alienated from the Church and have a definitely high "Catholic consciousness," say the researchers.

This means the "Nostalgics" attend Mass and confession more frequently than others and profess a greater awareness of their Catholic identity.

The "belonging" Catholics, who make up the bulk of the survey population, have greater tolerance for "many moral and social attitudes that the Church has traditionally opposed," and even for the Church itself when they find that its demands conflict with their own needs or perceptions.

Most of these Catholics prefer "modest" actions by their parishes, either because they have a sense of the limited means of the parish or because they do not want to get more actively into Church affairs.

In an intriguing phrase, the researchers note that the "searching" Catholic is "more liberal than tolerant" in his attitudes on abortion, birth control and premarital sex — in general, where his attitudes differ from those of the established Church.

The Catholic in this category wants priests and nuns to take up an activist position fighting poverty, goes to confession less, and consults his spouse rather than his priest when facing serious problems.

The survey results run in this space each week have not broken any major news by turning up previously unsuspected trends, but have reflected the changes that have swept the Church in the last decade.

The study's most important function has been to provide a statistical profile of the changes all knew had come.

Regional Report:

Father Robert Smith, Yates, Ontario, Wayne

The process of getting the Yates, Ontario and Wayne Counties Region into shape is, in one word, "slow," according to Father Robert Smith, regional coordinator for the area and pastor of St. Januarius Church, Naples.

The 20 parish, six mission region has five parish councils, two steering committees for parish councils and two steering committees in the works. Six parishes, however, "have nothing."

So on paper it looks good, says the burly priest-composer-musician. "Twenty-five per cent of our parishes have parish councils. But what kind are they? On paper."

Father Smith cites the recent bestseller "Future Shock," by Alvin Toffler to explain why, after 10 months, so much organizing needs yet be done.

"There's been so much change," he says, "a lot of people close right in and take a 'wait and see' attitude. Some pastors are becoming entrenched in pre-Vatican II patterns."



FATHER ROBERT SMITH

Yet, "Hope springs eternal," he says with a chuckle. "I don't want to seem negative, just realistic."

One reason he has for hope stems from a recent meeting at which 16 representatives of the region's parishes showed up. "The spirit at that meeting shows we're beginning to catch on," he says.

Father Smith is aided by three associate coordinators, Father Robert Hammond in Newark, Father John Coonan in Clyde and Father William Endres in Geneva.

So far the region has an education committee head in Robert Bierhile of Naples and a liturgy committee head in Mrs. George Doeblin of Geneva. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Cass are the heads of the youth committee, Fred Burgess has charge of the region committee and William Kanaley is chairman of the vocations committee.

Plans for a regional conference have not yet been discussed.

"But you bang your head against the wall long enough, things are bound to get moving."