



THE CHURCH 1973

Fr. Andrew Greeley

On the Catholic lecture circuit nowadays there are always two sure-fire questions: one about abortion and the other about the ordination of women. They rarely come from the same people. Those who are concerned about the rights of women seem less concerned about the rights of the unborn. And those who worry about the unborn generally seem little worried about the rights of women. But no matter what the subject of the talk, no matter how far removed it might be from these two issues, the two questions still pop up — usually in one-two order.

In fact, one gets the impression that the questioners really can hardly wait for you to finish your talk and are so busy getting ready to ask their question (or to make their point, to be precise about it) that they really don't pay much attention to what the speaker is saying. But then they didn't come to hear the speaker; they came to grind their own axes.

The question about the ordination of women is usually raised by a tense, tight-lipped female with a twinge of righteousness in her voice. I know I'm in trouble. And I'm even more in trouble when I begin my pre-fabricated reply. "The ordination of women is a non-issue . . ." A look of pain and outrage flits across the questioner's face; she closes in for the kill of another male chauvinist pig. "There is absolutely no reason in the world why women should not be ordained," I continue, "and we should ordain them and get on to issues which are worth fighting about."

And that's the end of that.

When the first women are ordained (I hope next year or even next month) I suspect my interrogators will find another crusade to be angry about. But it's time we stop letting them have that issue. There are no grounds, historical or theological, for not having women priests. The refusal of the male leadership in the Church to recognize this fact is a reflection on their biases and their fear of change. I don't suppose that ordaining women will solve any major problems in the Church. But it will at least remove one foolish, irrational bit of historical injustice. And it won't cause anyone anything — except perhaps a little hurt-masculine pride.

The historical research, reviewed in detail in Charles Meyer's forthcoming book *Man*

Vera Calnan Heads LAAOH

Mrs. Vera Calnan, a parishioner at St. Andrew's Church, was recently elected president, for a two year term, of the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, in America, New York State Board.

The election was held at a state convention in Syracuse. Mrs. Calnan succeeds Miss Marion I. Guilfoyle of New York City in the post.

Mr. and Mrs. Calnan live on Furlong St.

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of God (Doubleday) leaves little doubt that women have been in Sacred Orders and have held ecclesiastical jurisdiction many times in the course of the history of the Church. Consider some of the cases (based on an article by Joan Morris in the Times of London):

Until the reign of Pius IX there were abbesses *nulium* (of no diocese) in Spain with their own separate territory and such episcopal emblems as mitre, cope, pallium, crozier and ring. The Cistercian abbey of Las Huelgas (in Burgos) had control over some 64 towns with parish churches. No bishop had the right to visit these parishes, and the abbess appointed the clergy and confessors. It was her duty to punish any offense in the execution of clerical office. Sins normally reserved to bishops could not be forgiven by confessors without her permission. In short, as far as jurisdiction goes, she was for all practical purposes, a bishop.

In the fifth century in Ireland there were women in the "first order" (bishops) of church office though by that time, according to the historians who lived in that era, there were no longer women in the "second order" of the hierarchy (priests). But there was a time when they were in the "second order," too.

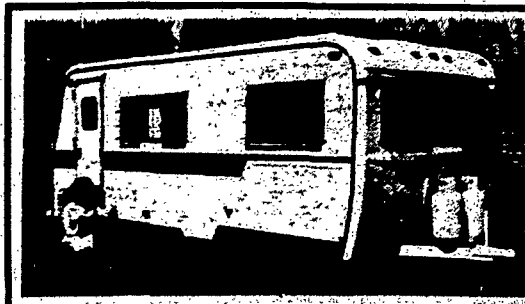
Some German abbesses were called "sacerdotes maximae." The Cathedral of St. John in Monza in Italy was served by men and women "sacerdotes." The mixed community of St. Hilda in England was the site of the synod of Whitty (and the area was considered to be her "diocese"). One of her successors, the Abbess Aelfeld, was the main speaker at the Synod of Nidd.

There is certainly no grounds for arguing that such "sacerdotes" were common in the Church. And there is only dubious evidence that they said Mass — though some historians I know think that further research will indicate that they did. The point is that the historical argument against women priests is in a state of collapse. And the theological argument — which presumes that women are inferior — is no argument at all.

Come to think of it, maybe we ought to begin by restoring some of these abbesses *nulius* and send them off to the meeting of the American hierarchy. They certainly couldn't make things any worse in the American Church than they now are.

BREAKFAST AT CONESUS

Parishioners of St. William Church will serve breakfast in the Conesus Legion Hall from 8 until 11:30 a.m. Sunday, August 5.



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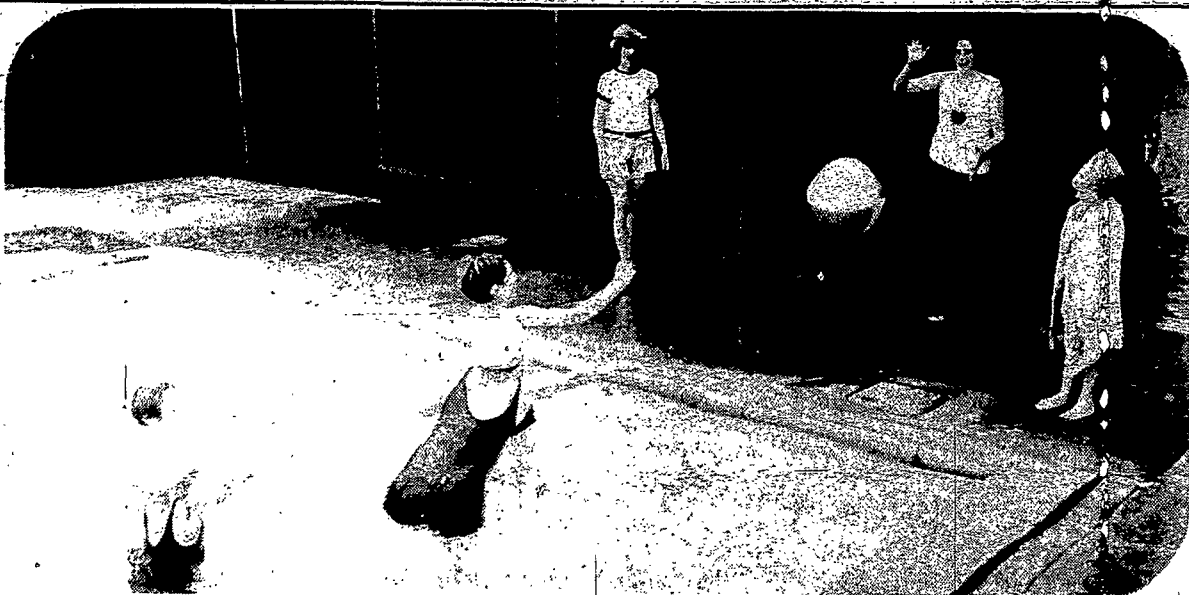


Photo by Laurence E. Keefe

Family Camping

Seven of the Hanley family would be enough material to start their own day camp if they wanted to, but instead, all of them attend Camp Silver Birch, now in its fourth year at Mercy High School. Playing dodgeball in the pool are Kathy, Jim, and Ann Hanley, all counselors, and their younger brothers and sisters, Timmy, Tommy, Brigid and Maura.

Sister Patricia Donovan Takes Pennsylvania Post

Sister Patricia Donovan, a Sister of Mercy of the Rochester Diocese, will begin work in September in Harrisburg, Pa., where she will be employed by the Attorney of the State of Pennsylvania in the Human Service Section of the Civil Litigation Department.

Sister Patricia recently graduated from the University of Virginia Law School. This summer she has been taking the required 8-week Review Course for the Pennsylvania Bar Examination which was July 25 and 26.

Sister Patricia is known to the Rochester Catholic Diocese for the Donovan Report, (1970), a special research project called "Education — a Pastoral Issue" a study of Catholic education in the diocese. Sister Patricia had been commissioned by the diocese to undertake this study as a special assistant to Father, Daniel Brent, Rochester Diocesan Superintendent of Schools.

The Human Service Section, in which she will be working in Harrisburg, is primarily assigned matters involving health, education welfare and civil rights. Sister Patricia considers the position "a very fortunate opportunity" because of "the diversity of legal experience involved and the emphasis on the human element."

Last summer Sister Patricia was employed in Rochester by the law firm of Martin, Dutcher, Cooke, Mousaw, and Vigdor.

The study of law had been her lifetime ambition. As long as four years ago and one year before she entered law school she had stated that "there is much legal study and research to be done to clarify, define and establish the civil rights of children. The reform of penal practices and

institutions, probation and parole procedures, bail practices for poor persons, rehabilitation of criminals, and other social issues are of great concern to society in general and to 'professional' Christians in particular."

Prior to attending law school and working on the Catholic education study, Sister Patricia was principal of Notre Dame High School, Elmira, taught in the social studies department at Notre Dame, served as chairman

of the social studies and guidance staffs, and taught at Aquinas Institute and Our Lady of Mercy High School, Rochester.

She took her BA at Nazareth College and an MA from Niagara University. She has also done post-graduate work at Georgetown, Cornell and the University of Massachusetts.

Sister Patricia's parents are Mr. and Mrs. Raymond E. Donovan of 757 Hinchey Rd.

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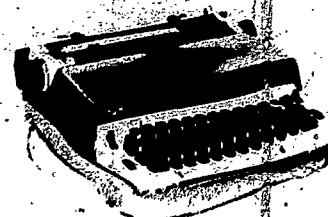
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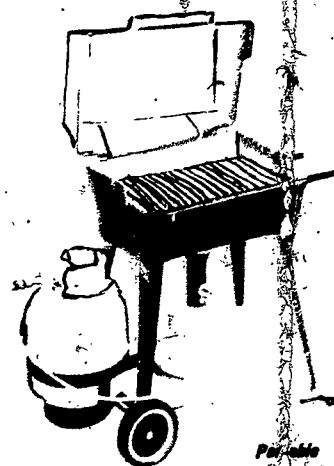
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