

Cursillo for the Deaf

With These Hands He Speaks to Them

By PAT PETRASKE

At the start folded arms swayed back and forth. Then the hand briefly touched the chest. The sentence ended with the finger spelling of Abraham.

Thus the participants, from all over the east coast of the United States and Canada, "sang" the first stanza of the old spiritual, Rock My Soul, during the sixth annual Cursillo for the Deaf.

Hymn singing is one attempt at fostering Christian community during the intense three-day Cursillo (Spanish for "short course"), which reviews basic Christian truths in an effort to develop leadership and renewal in the Church.

Fifteen talks by laymen and priests were packed into the weekend at Becket Hall. Some of the speakers who work with the deaf were able simultaneously to speak and use sign language. Others were provided with an interpreter from their team of 20 fellow cursillistas or Cursillo alumni who conducted the course.

"The emphasis of the weekend is action oriented. We try to define what we mean by action and how people can go back to their environment, whether it be a factory, the home or the Church, and become leaders," explained Dan DePalma who helped plan the first English-speaking Cursillo in Rochester in 1967.

The Cursillo was started in Spain in 1949 by Bishop Juan Hervas y Benet who believed it to be "the most effective method of presenting Christianity to modern man." Spanish air cadets brought the idea to the United States, where the first Cursillo was held in 1957, at Lackland Air Force Base in Waco, Texas.

Chicago was the setting for the first Cursillo for the deaf, and since 1972 they have been held each year in Rochester and San Francisco.

Problems have cropped up in conducting a Cursillo for the deaf. To get the 30 participants' attention, overhead lights are

flicked quickly. Lights are used also as alarm clocks in the morning.

"One of the problems has been with time. The sessions are sometimes prolonged because of the need to speak slowly with an interpreter," DePalma said. Speakers also must become more vivid and concrete in their talks to facilitate translation.

Communication is achieved by various means, said Father Thomas Erdle, a cursillista and coordinator of the apostolate to the deaf in the diocese. Many at the Cursillo used the sign language called *ameslan*, whose gestures represent a concept in English. "Visible English" was developed at the Rochester School of the Deaf. This "Rochester Method," as it is now called, follows the English construction of the language by spelling out words with the fingers. "A combination of the two methods gives you 'siglish,'" Father Erdle said.

Humor is evident at every Cursillo. A speaker once used a



FATHER RUDY GAWLIK

picture of a monkey as a concrete illustration for a talk on how man is different from animals. Posters are made as part of the summary of these talks and one participant drew a hearing aid on the monkey in his poster. Christ Himself was given a hearing aid during one drawing session. The joke session that follows every meal and the evening of skits that summarize the ideas found in the Cursillo bring to the stage some fine pantomime artists.

The talks themselves contain moments of levity. Father Rudy Gawlik from Galludet College, one of the few colleges for the deaf in the country, was explaining the concept of grace. He stated that with God's grace "I can do anything." This brought chuckles from his audience for

this phrase has been used as a translation for the letters ICDA, the International Catholic Deaf Association.

The Cursillos are serious, however, in the attempt to develop Christian renewal, leadership and unity. "While the three days are vital, it is the fourth day or the future that is the most important," said DePalma. Participants are encouraged to meet with their groups each week to give encouragement and to discuss Christian growth.

Support for the success of a Cursillo is given by alumni who send in letters telling of prayers, offerings and sacrifices for the Cursillo. "It is a sign of what the Christian community is doing," DePalma said.

St. Helen's to Offer Adult Education

By PAT PETRASKE

Forty-eight seminar courses ranging from slimnastics to Yahwistic biblical studies will be offered this Fall at the new St. Helen's Adult Education Center in Gates. Residents of the southwest regional conference are invited to enroll. The idea for the education center sprang from the fact that St. Helen's School is one of the few schools in the diocese that operate without tuition fees; it is underwritten by the whole parish. A continuing education program would offer all contributors a direct return on their investment.

"The costs of education are rising and not everyone is receiving educational benefits," said Michael Vigue, who has been principal at St. Helen's for one year.

With the grammar school and pre-Kindergarten program, St. Helen's now offers educational opportunity for "everyone from age three to ninety-nine," Vigue noted. He favors adult education because "the structural and theological changes in the Church have caught the middle-aged and senior parishioner off guard. They have a need to deep-

en their education," he maintained.

Courses, conducted by clergy, religious and lay people, will meet monthly on the first, second or third Thursday for a total of nine-two hour sessions. Vigue decided that a monthly schedule would be less restricting. He pointed out that other obligations disrupt a weekly schedule and half of the participants are lost midway into the course.

"This way, a busy person can plot in advance what Thursday of the month will be taken up in class."

Having a class only once a month does pose some problems. The burden falls on the teacher to maintain a continuity from one month to another. Vigue has suggested that a paperback which encompasses the ideas put forth in the course might help to tie the seminars together. He said the language courses are not designed for the beginner who wants to learn French, Italian or Spanish but will afford an opportunity to "practice up on skills."

Classes fall into three basic categories. The religious



MICHAEL VIGUE

education division offers 18 courses in biblical studies, ecclesiology, morality, liturgy and spirituality, philosophy and Christian humanism, and building the kingdom of God. In the humane and social arts division there are 12 courses in

maximum of 15 participants per course is reached.

family life and the development of person; in quest of beauty, in quest of meaning and the nature of the individual and society. Lastly, the general or continuing education division includes 18 courses in language arts, foreign languages, consumer education, health, recreational arts and physical education.

"We didn't want to limit ourselves just to the spectrum of religion. We're trying to respond to all the needs of the people. If a person is lacking in religious studies he may be shy about signing up for a course in biblical studies. He will get the same basic truths in the area of humane and social concerns," said Vigue, who added that every course will be approached from a Christian perspective.

Application has been made to Albany to operate a licensed Continuing Education Center affiliated with the State University of New York. Vigue views the center as "somewhere between a high school and a community college."

The center will issue a certificate of achievement, which, Vigue said, "looks good on your application to a college or on an employment application."

Vigue explained that under New York State law students who take a religion course offered at any school can earn one-fourth credit per course up to a total of four courses. The accumulated credit can be applied towards a high school diploma.

About 350 to 400 registrations are needed for the fall schedule of projected courses.

The 23 instructors have been "committed to an area of interest" and will be assigned to classes after the cut off registration date, September 6. Registrations will be taken by mail or by phone until a

PRIEST JOINS TAIZE

Taize, France (RNS) — A Roman Catholic priest has become a full-fledged member of the famed Protestant-founded Taize monastic community here. Father Klaus Beurle from Stuttgart, West Germany, who came here with the permission of Bishop Karl J. Leiprecht of Rottenburg, is the first Roman Catholic priest to join the community.

Institute Will Open On Friday

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will attend this weekend's Liturgy Institute at St. John Fisher College.

Father Robert Hovda, a nationally known liturgist and lecturer, will be the featured speaker for the program which opens in St. Basil's Hall, Friday, Aug. 17, at 8 p.m.

Father Hovda's topic "Liturgy, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," will be developed in three lectures. Practical workshops in liturgy, chaired by area experts, will augment Father Hovda's remarks.

The institute, sponsored by the diocesan liturgy committee with Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, is geared to the development of parish and regional liturgy committees.

A highlight of the program will be a Saturday morning meeting of regional leaders with Bishop Hogan, the diocesan liturgy committee, representatives of the diocesan education unit, the Office of Human Development and St. Bernard's Seminary.

The meeting is seen as another step in the expanding cooperation of the interdepartmental staff of the Pastoral Center and St. Bernard's in planning formation programs for Church ministry.

Mrs. Barbara Cardner of the liturgy office said that planners of the event were enthusiastic at the response received.

She noted that those wishing to attend will be able to register at the door on Friday evening. Overnight accommodations have been provided on the campus.



Battle of Belfast

British troops on alert after a bomb explosion in Belfast, where acts of terror have become commonplace. (RNS)