

## Pastoral Perspective

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

# A Profile of the Church of Rochester

PART III

### RESPECT FOR DIFFERENT VALUE SYSTEMS

Each person affirms values in his daily living. Personal options, such as the manner of dress, the style of hair, the use of free time, friendships, sports — all of these demonstrate values affirmed or denied. Many would stress the truth that the past offered wise customs. Others affirm the truth that we must change customs if they constrain and diminish genuine new possibilities for human living. To call individuals liberal or conservative and dismiss or embrace them merely because of this tag seems superficial.

As a result, these differences pose questions well worth our calm, careful reflection. Differences in life style occur everywhere. Some see the military service as a place where boys become men through discipline. Others are conscientious objectors. Some say that only those who have worked for years have the knowledge and experience to question society. Others see students as people who speak for the Spirit. Some treasure private family living; others live in communes. Some prize order in society; others prize freedom. Some question the motives of government; others stress the need for loyalty. Some question new approaches in religion; others question the whole established Church. Divergence often brings new stresses even in our homes. Frequently the values affirmed on both sides are valid.

We cannot let the churches of this diocese become captives of a particular life-style. A church must never exclude those who have chosen to affirm such differences. Each individual is ultimately unique. We must reverence each and listen carefully to the values his life affirms. A particular uniqueness may characterize social groups. The Church in Rochester of necessity must provide a forum where a reverent dialogue can occur. Violence and hatred toward those whom we do not understand is a sure sign that the compassion of Christ is absent. "Do not let your love be a pretence . . . Love each other as much as brothers should, and have a profound respect for each other" (Rm 12:9-10).

### THE ECUMENICAL DIMENSION

In the Church of Rochester, as in many other areas of our country, past relations between the various Christian traditions have been marred and marked by non-Christian actions. Suspicion, prejudice, slander and reprisal are shameful blots on our common history. But if prior to Vatican II our ecumenical approach was to place strong emphasis on the first element in the phrase, **separated** brothers, the wisdom of a great leader, John XXIII, has moved minds and hearts to shift that emphasis, no less strong, to the second element, **separated** brothers.

Realizing, therefore, that the religious fragmentation of the past has been a confusing sign of the unity we have been called to, we have in recent years endorsed a deep commitment to ecumenical endeavors. To offset the theological conflicts that erode willingness to work within a total Christian

context, we have been exploring, with varying degrees of success, a series of ecumenical formats. Especially in the areas of prayer, social involvement, ministries, and religious studies, cooperative effort has brought us closer together in true Christian fellowship. More, of course, can be done; indeed, it needs to be done.

While we may leave to the professional theologians the task of forging the formulas that will eventually bring unity and not conformity, our ecumenical efforts will be the sign of our faith in and with our fellow Christians, an expression of our common hope that all may one day be one.

Meanwhile, the ministerial associations that dot the diocese, the intercommunion efforts directed at bettering the social order, the living room dialogues, the ecumenical Scripture study groups and prayer sessions — all of these are ways in which genuine Christian love attempts to heal the wounds inflicted by too zealous a faith that had forgotten the winning ways of genuine concern.

The hand of fellowship is extended to all who strive for recognized religious and human values, the Jews whose spiritual heirs we are, the Zen Buddhists, and even those who cannot identify with organized religion. A common bond binds us: where the image of Christ is not a mutually accepted incentive, the image and likeness of God in man and even the basic calling to be thoroughly human, provide a basis for mutuality.

[To Be Continued]

# Making a Good Marriage Better

By CHARLES RANDISI

Rich and Sue Regen have a good marriage, a good life — a Fenfield home, two children, two automobiles, college degrees, a white picket fence around the back yard perimeter, and a play house for the kids that's painted just like the real one.

After 11 years, they thought their relationship deserved some encouragement. Marriage Encounter, some friends told them, was what the doctor (and his wife) ordered.

The friends, who had just made an encounter, said Rich, "were glowing from ear to ear. They had obviously changed . . . They went for it in such a big way that they really sold us on it."

Rich and Sue recently took a weekend off, headed for the St. Joseph Motherhouse at Nazareth College, and made a marriage encounter.

Now they have a "better" marriage. "We learned to communicate, to be more open and honest with each other," Sue said.

With a dash of pride, Rich added, "We're getting to be pretty good at it."

Marriage Encounter, Inc., is a non-profit entity which sprung out of the Catholic Family Movement in Spain in the early Sixties. From there it spread to the United States, where it is now estimated that at least 50 encounters are held every weekend, with an average of 20 couples at each.

In the Rochester area, encounters are held every weekend, mostly at the motherhouse and at Notre Dame Retreat House, Canandaigua.

Father Leo Klem, CSB, is the full-time spiritual director of

Marriage Encounter in Rochester. He explained that although Marriage Encounter is an independent organization with no official tie to the pastoral office, it is a Catholic group in that the concept of marriage used is the Catholic concept of the sacrament of Matrimony, and in that it has the approval of the diocese.

A priest and three team couples lead the weekend, which according to Father Klem, is "not a retreat, not dogmatic teaching, but . . . an experience."

"It's an enriching experience," said Regen.

Marriage Encounter differs from "sensitivity" sessions and group dynamics precisely because of its emphasis on "the couple."

"You're not put in the position of sharing with others," Regen said "During the presentations to the group, there are no feedback periods, and all the communication is between husband and wife."

An encounter weekend carries a very structured format. "It's always the same no matter where you have it," said Rich.

But the format itself is something of a secret, reserved only for couples who are making the encounter. Explained Father Klem:

"When a couple knows all the details of a marriage encounter they are hampered because they are constantly comparing the experiences of others to their own." Telling people what they would go through on an encounter, he said, "would be like spoiling the end of a good movie."

Marriage Encounter also provides the opportunity for continuing communication



between husband and wife. The "daily 10 and 10" is the name of a tool through which each partner first writes his or her reflections on a certain topic for 10 minutes, and then discusses what was written with the spouse.

The Regens said they have solved some of their "little" difficulties through their encounter and the "daily 10 and 10."

For instance, Sue said, they always had problems when preparing for a trip. "We'd always end up doing our packing on the last day, and the tempers really flared. We both had our own ideas on what should be packed and how."

Their last packing experience turned out to be enjoyable, she said, "because we had learned new techniques of communication."

Father Klem said that although Marriage Encounter is a Catholic organization, non-Catholics are welcome as well.

The Regens, Quakers, said that they found no difficulty with their denominational difference, except with some of the Catholic terminology used, which, Rich

said, "I had to translate into my own terms."

Rather than looking for Catholics, Marriage Encounter, says the official brochure, tries to recruit "any couple who desire to enrich their marriage."

However, said Father Klem, Marriage Encounter is not for couples who are having serious problems, or "bad" marriages. "It is not intended to be a problem-solving weekend, or a marriage counseling weekend, or anything like that."

Father Klem said that any priest is urged to make an encounter with a fellow priest. "First," he said, "if a priest wishes to be personally involved with things

concerning his own people, this way he can have first-hand knowledge. Secondly, we believe that the sacraments of Orders and Matrimony, which are the social sacraments, complement each other."

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan has made an encounter.

"The focus eventually goes beyond the couple," said Rich. "We've found that we can relate as a couple better to the world and to God."

"When we came back," said Sue, "our kids could notice the difference in us right away." The difference, she said was that they were able to "love each other better."

## Pope Cites Moral Decline, Calls for Objective Law

Castelgandolfo [RNS] — Deploping "the decline of the moral sense," Pope Paul VI has called for a development of consciences that will be responsive to "norms" and "laws," and not merely the expression of "instinctive and intuitive" judgments.

Speaking to tourists and pilgrims at his general Wednesday audience here (Aug. 8), the Pope said he found evidences of a decline of moral sense in the widespread "exclusion of the sense of sin," in the "giving way to selfish instincts," and in the tendency to "argue against fidelity to the natural law, and against the magisterium (teaching authority) of the Catholic Church."

Emphasizing that the moral sense needs revitalization, the pontiff said that conscience needs to be "instructed, informed and guided on the objective goodness of actions we might wish to perform."

"Instinctive and intuitive judgments are not sufficient" in this area, he went on. "Norms are necessary. Laws are necessary. Otherwise, the judgment of conscience can easily come under the influence of the example of other people."

"When this happens," he affirmed, "we become — not free and strong — but servile and weak. And to the extent that we compromise the rectitude of our consciences, we become a mass of reeds tossed about in the wind."

Pope Paul insisted that the "directive (moral) criteria" of human conduct "cannot be — as some people would have it — merely social and psychological criteria."

"Rather," he said, "the directive criterion of our conscience and conduct must be the imitation of Christ."