

For Diocesan Teachers, A Busman's Holiday

By SHARON DARNIEDER

Teachers attending the annual Diocesan Teachers Convention at Bishop Kearney High School, Sept. 24, didn't want to get away from the classroom situation. Not even for a day. Only this time the teachers became students.

For the second year the convention offered hour-long mini-sessions, taught by people who are recognized as experts in their field. They included a combination of parochial, public school teachers and administrative people.

Several weeks prior to the convention at their faculty meetings, teachers picked which session they would attend. Topics included religion and the adolescent, the school in social justice and education and a model program for drug abuse prevention.

"The idea originated from suggestions made by teachers and principals," said Sister Roberta Tierney, SSND, assistant superintendent for instruction.

"We try to have subjects, areas and topics that will appeal to every teacher," she added. "The idea is to provide an opportunity for stimulation on the subject, and to spark a little enthusiasm."

She also said another objective of the mini-sessions was to provide teachers with ideas for new courses or lectures.

Apparently the teachers didn't mind giving up part of their convention day to return to the classroom, and many were pleased at the outcome.

Dave La Tulip, a fifth grade teacher from St. Mary's, Waterloo, signed up for "Simulation Games for Social Studies," taught by Judith Giannavola, a former teacher at St. Boniface.

"There's a lot more to social studies than just a textbook," he said. "The idea of involving kids in games that actually teach them about the world situation gives them responsibility, leadership ability, and lets them come up with solutions to problems themselves."

Sister Francis Mary, SSJ, teaches art, social studies and language art to fourth, fifth and sixth grade students at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

She found "Art in the Classroom," taught by Sister Marie Martin, SSJ, Immaculate Conception, "good, but it was too short a time to absorb the techniques and material we were shown. I would like to have seen each session last longer."

Favorable comments continued as Mrs. Ann Schubmehl, a fourth-to-eighth-grade reading teacher at St. Joseph's, Wayland, remarked about "Poetry in the Classroom," taught by Patricia Janus, a public school teacher.

Happy Birthday, Msgr. Schmitt

Msgr. George Schmitt, pastor emeritus at Holy Family Church, Rochester, will be feted at his annual birthday celebration given by the parish Rosary Society, Oct. 10.

Msgr. Schmitt, who is 85 this month, will be honored at an Oktoberfest in the school auditorium. A 6:30 p.m. happy hour will precede a buffet dinner to be served at 7 p.m.

Reservations, which must be made before noon, Oct. 8, can be obtained by calling Mrs. Joseph Smarsh, 436-0327 or Mrs. Robert Spahn, 235-3136. Tickets are \$4.50. Transportation can be arranged by calling either of the above numbers.

"It was all I hoped it would be," she said enthusiastically. "I hope we'll see more mini-sessions next year."

A seventh and eighth grade math teacher at St. Rita's, Webster, Ihor Hoshowsky enjoyed "Towards Individualizing High School Math," taught by Sister Margaret Ryan, SSJ, St. Augustine's.

"I found it very useful," he said. "I think we should have sessions like it more often, possibly two or three times a year, and possibly in smaller groups."

Although this was the second year for mini-sessions for teachers from first through eighth grade, it was the first time parochial school kindergarten teachers had sessions at the conference.

Mrs. Gail Moynihan, who teaches kindergarten at St. Cecilia's, Irondequoit, expressed what many teachers felt.

"I liked our kindergarten session, (taught by Christine Ormsby, St. Boniface) but I was disappointed that I could only go to one. There were so many I wanted to hear," she sighed.

Father Brent Optimistic On Schools

Father Daniel Brent, superintendent of schools, told diocesan teachers at their convention that he felt "very optimistic on the future of the schools."

"My optimism is based on dealing with the parents, who really want what we have to offer, and also in my own enthusiasm on what we can do in our Catholic schools," said Father Brent.

He also said he thought schools and administrators were using their resources more efficiently.

"The two things that have created the fiscal crisis for Catholic schools have been the reduction in contributed services of the Sisters, and a decrease in class size," said Father Brent.

He hastened to add that even though the elements are still present that created the fiscal crisis, "I think we've come to the end of the tunnel now." — Darnieder.



Teachers attending a mini-session listen attentively.



Sister Elizabeth O'Byrne takes a coffee break.



Sister Joanne Hasselwander

Keynote of Catholic Schools — Service

Focus on service is what makes the Catholic school system unique, according to Mary Reed Newland, chairman of the adult education program for the Albany diocese.

Her remarks, laced with humorous yet relevant examples, were addressed to an audience of about 1,260 teachers attending the annual Diocesan Teachers Convention at Bishop Kearney High School, Sept. 24.

Mrs. Newland, who has authored eight books, makes her home in Massachusetts. Her lectures across the country have included topics such as family, life, liturgy and youth.

"The reason for wanting to keep the Catholic schools alive isn't just for the sake of auld lang syne," she said. "There is a need to have in the larger community, a smaller community of people whose whole focus is to keep alive the message of service in the gospels."

She thinks the reason that so many kids have wandered away from the Church ("I prefer to think they're taking a sabbatical") is that the focus on service was missing.

"They've walked away from the thing they're looking for in order

to find it," she said, shaking her head.

Mrs. Newland told the educators that in order to pass along the idea of service to children and their parents, they must first practice it themselves.

"Even in the very lowest grades, think out ways children can be praised for their services and appreciated because of them," she added.

She used current issues as an example to get the service idea across to young people, and brought up the grape and lettuce boycott.

"Parents are afraid to confront the grocer they've perhaps known for a long time, to tell him he should only be selling union lettuce or grapes and that they won't buy it unless it is," she said.

Instead of being timid, she urged parents to do a "lot of background reading, and then be prepared to state the issues and the reasons why they believe in them."

"Then children can be drawn into the discussion, and told why they should support the boycott," she added.

She gave other examples of

service projects for children such as visiting the elderly, taking those less fortunate into their homes, or reading a passage from scripture each night at dinner and discussing it.

She told the teachers that "you do the project at the level of the child and you draw in the family. It takes the place of hypothetical textbook situations."

Mrs. Newland said that often parents have not thought about teaching religion this way, and that many still think it's a special language taught in a special way.

"The best resource you have is the experience of your life," she said, "and many people just don't trust it. They think it should come out of a book."

"When these services are nourished by prayer and love, they're trustworthy," she said.

"Our families ought to understand this is the teaching of religion. Everything is the teaching of religion," she said emphatically.

Mrs. Newland went on to say that lack of government funds for parochial schools was "not a bad thing."

Teachers will probably end up

having the most creative programs of all now that you have money problems, because the ideas must come from you, and not other sources," she said.

"You have to budget, and the strained circumstances of the schools will provide chores that you can use to turn your students into service-oriented people," she added. — Darnieder.

Retreat Schedule

The retreat schedule at the Notre Dame Retreat House, Canandaigua, is once again in full swing. Anyone from the following parishes wishing to make a retreat for the weekend of Oct. 5-7 should contact those listed: St. Stephen's, Geneva, S. Coggi, 789-7292; St. Francis, Geneva, T. O'Brien, 789-8658; St. Joseph, Penfield, D. Costich, 385-1808; Holy Family, J. Reber, 436-0478; St. Paul, Webster, rectory, 671-2460; St. Rita, Webster, W. Yaeckel, 671-3674. Retreat arrangements can also be made by phoning the retreat house itself, 315-394-5700.

CARD PARTY

The Catholic Mission Guild's annual card party is scheduled for 1 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 10, at 513 Monroe.