



Tears for a Dead Soldier

Weeping Cambodian children who just learned that their soldier-father was killed, accompany his friend to view the body. [RNS]

Spirituality Seen as Key To Council Development

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thusiasm and optimistic about the future of councils, studied questions pertaining to them in the Year of Renewal survey.

"Half of the 7,000 Catholic households who responded (to the survey) completely skipped those questions. The other half that did answer them saw the biggest role of parish councils in financing and maintaining buildings," he added.

At the councils he's visited, members have indicated that parishioners feel the answers given in the survey are "100 per cent accurate."

He hopes to reduce this school of thought and promote council spiritual development using several methods.

One is through retreats for council members. He's also encouraging them to have five or ten minutes of shared prayer at their meetings.

In addition, he's given Sunday sermons on councils at some churches and says he'd "like to be able to do more."

He said part of the confusion surrounding council concerns could result from the fact that "councils are very new. Ten years ago there wasn't a single parish council in the U.S. In our diocese they only date back to 1967."

Stressing that his visits are not for the purpose of telling parishes how to run their councils, he said he tries to provide guidelines and a key for getting services from the Pastoral Center and his office.

He also points out that he isn't the only person available for help but urges councils to turn to people in their regions and other Pastoral Center personnel.

"At a parish's request we will evaluate their council constitution and provide them with sample constitutions from other parishes."

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"We will also give them copies of diocesan guidelines for councils and a suggested list of scripture readings they can use for meetings," he added.

He said other problems facing parish councils include getting parishioners involved in activities and how to organize, recruit and provide a sense of direction for committees, which include education, liturgy and human development.

One way to aid committee direction and also provide his office with an overall view of regional events, is a comprehensive reporting system he hopes to have in operation by Dec. 1.

Parishes will fill out council progress reports and forward them to regional coordinators (who have been appointed by the Bishop as his official representatives in the area).

Summaries of these reports will be sent to the Pastoral Center where Father Hoffman will provide the diocesan departments of Liturgy, Education and Human Development with an analysis of committee problems in their respective areas.

The final step for each department is to return recommendations and solutions to Father Hoffman who will then forward the information to regional coordinators and parishes.

Future plans also include a training course for parish councils which will be put together after a thorough study. However, he indicated that this would not take place until next year.

Father Hoffman feels parish councils are "vitaly important to the future of the Church" partly because of the current shortage of priests but also because "much more leadership is needed today to carry on the many ministries the Church has for its people."

He said people have many talents and gifts that haven't been used. "They haven't been called to commit themselves except through their wallet or purse. Now the call to the laity is to give of their hearts and their time."



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