

A Parish Sets Its GOALS

By SHARON DARNIEDER

One cold, snowy February Saturday, 17 dedicated people from St. Thomas the Apostle parish met at St. Bernard's Seminary at 9:30 a.m.

Their dedication was matched only by their courage at getting up so early but as parish council members, officers and committee chairmen, they came to attend a council goal setting session, and down to a man (and woman) they felt its importance justified the sacrifice.

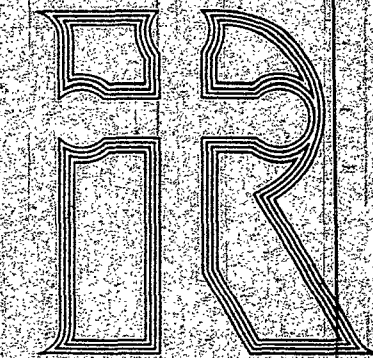
(James Cotter, council chairman and responsible for much of the planning involved, was unable to attend because he was recovering from pneumonia.)

A goal setting session. For some it's a nebulous phrase but for others it provides an opportunity to do some soul searching.

But why a session for a parish council?

"It gets parishes to look toward their future and to plan for the growth of Christian communities years down the line," according to Father Douglas Hoffman, director of the office of Pastoral Ministry and responsible for helping parishes start parish councils.

"It affords people the opportunity to have a meeting of the minds about directions and values and what people hold dear in their faith," he added.



St. Thomas' session was conducted by Father Daniel Brent, diocesan school superintendent, after council members had consulted with Father Hoffman about having one.

The format used by Father Brent was "fairly typical" of such sessions and was "the one I like the best," he said.

Basically, it consisted of listing long and short range goals and after discussion, setting up a list of priorities for the council.

"If I'm successful today," commented Father Brent, "it'll be because I haven't told you a thing. I'm here to referee, moderate or whatever. The purpose of today is to offer a forum to bring ideas out into the open—your ideas."

Goal setting is one of three things Father Hoffman recommends for parish councils. The others are role clarification and a retreat.



Members of St. Thomas the Apostle parish council share a lighter moment at their recent goal setting session. From left is Father Andrew Kalafsky, Mrs. Agnes Lauer, Father Daniel Holland, Donald Argenbright and Richard Erbeling.

"I'd like to think that half the parishes in the diocese are heading in that direction," he said hopefully.

St. Thomas the Apostle formed its parish council in May 1973, and although it's taken them a while to get organized Father Hoffman thinks they held their goal clarification session at just about the right time.

There's no special order in which a council should schedule the three things but Father Hoffman added that role clarification sessions (clarifying the role of the council and its committees) usually comes after a year or two of operation.

"Committees are more of an action group," he said, "while the council is a planning and evaluating group."

The third item that should be high on parish council priority lists is a retreat which Father Hoffman thinks should "develop a sense of Church in members, what it means to be a member of the Church and a leader in it."

"You can't build community in the parish unless you have it in the council," he said. "If you have division in the council it won't help the parish."

Although Father Hoffman feels all three are of immense value to parish councils, "of them, I think the retreat is the most important."

St. Thomas' council had its natural growing pains and some of these were ironed out before and during the goal setting session.

After listing and discussing long and short range goals, Father Brent urged them to pick out those that they felt were the most important.

After voting on them (there were 56) those which rated the highest number of votes (13) were chosen.

Among these were liturgy, the council addressing itself to important social issues, better communications between the parish council and the parish as a whole and more involvement of parents in religious education.

He also had them list things they were proud of as a council and those that caused concern. High on the first list was getting organized and their commitment as a group.

Their concerns included parish attendance at council meetings and the nonexistence of a human development program.

How was the session viewed by those who participated?

Mrs. Richard Burns, pastor, called it a "most realistic ap-

proach to our problems, how we want to go and how to get there."

Sister Roberta, RSM, council member and St. Thomas School principal, thought it was a "beautiful sharing experience. It helped us to broaden our thinking and begin to evaluate ourselves as a council."

Bill Bleier, parish representative to the North Region, said a lot of credit should be given to Father Brent for an "excellent job of stimulating thinking and helping us to establish goals."

"I think it's been really helpful," commented Sue Whalen, coordinator of the parish life committee. "I found the whole strategy of putting down everyone's ideas and working from there helpful."

Mrs. Chris Haney, liaison with the liturgy committee, compared the session to a "plan of attack. It was some place to begin, something to aim for."

However, she expressed concern about those who would become committee chairmen and officers in later years.

"I don't know if it (a goal setting session) should be held

every year," she said, "and yet the new ones coming in should have some idea of what we've done."

The final goals agreed on by the council included supporting the finance committee's efforts to build a sound fiscal future, to support the education committee's efforts to promote educational opportunities for all age groups in the parish, and to provide parishioners with programs to know and serve the needs of the community.

At a council meeting several days after the goal setting session, all agreed that either committees or the council as a whole would work on one goal every other month.

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ALL IN THE FAMILY

Some quotable quotes encountered in a week of reading, TV'ing and koffeeclatching.

"From humorist Art Buchwald: 'Watergate is pure entertainment. It has comedy, mystery and melodrama. I would prefer that it have a little sex as well but we can't have everything.'"

Cardinal Invites NCC to Share In Holy Year

Los Angeles [RNS] — The National Council of Churches, made up of 31 Protestant and Orthodox Churches, was invited here to share in the U.S. celebration of the 1975 Holy Year proclaimed by Pope Paul.

Cardinal Timothy Manning extended the invitation in welcoming the Council's Governing Board to Los Angeles. He is chairman of the U.S. Catholic bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for the Holy Year.

The prelate listed the Holy Year, which has the theme "Renewal and Reconciliation," as one of several present and forthcoming observances in which all Christians can participate.

The 1974 World Population Year, sponsored by the United Nations, and the U.S. bicentennial were other items on Cardinal Manning's ecumenical agenda.

The Archbishop of Los Angeles said that he knew a more formal invitation to the National Council to share in the Holy Year would be issued by Bishop James Rausch, general secretary of the U.S. Catholic Conference.

"Dr. Jean Mayer, Harvard nutritionist speaking about human obesity: 'Every farmer worth his salt knows that to fatten an animal you feed it and keep it penned up.'"

"Henny Backus, wife of TV's Jim Backus: 'The wife who wins every argument doesn't win much else.'"

"Our perceptive school counselor: 'EVERYBODY needs at least four hugs every day.'"

"Ronald Gold, publicity director of the National Gay Task Force: 'Nothing is more likely to make you sick than being constantly told that you are sick.'"

"An R.N., now a seasoned mother of four: 'It's unfortunate but true that most women are judged by the way their homes look and their children act.'"

"Psychiatrist Dr. Thomas Szasz speaking of the 130,000 persons in mental institutions: 'Many are simply innocent Americans who have done nothing wrong except they have behaved in some manner not acceptable to someone else.'"

"Author Howard N. Meyer: 'Now for howards too long, we have been without a living exponent.' Richard M. Nixon could serve his country well if he were to appreciate the gravity of this problem and volunteer to fill the need.'"

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