



Benefit Dance

Dr. and Mrs. Charles R. Salamone (co-chairmen) and Dr. and Mrs. G. Keefe Jackson (chairmen) have charge of the St. Thomas More Pre-Lenten Dinner Dance. The festivities, open to parishioners and friends of St. Thomas More parish, will be held at Oak Hill Country Club on Saturday, Jan. 18. The evening will feature the Beale Street Bandwagon for entertainment. All proceeds will benefit St. Thomas More School. Reservations may be made by calling the rectory.

The Church 1975



Fr. 1
Andrew Greeley

The Vatican Council is beginning to look like one of the most successful events in all human history. The downward journey from euphoria to pessimism in the years after the council has obscured the fact that most Catholics have enthusiastically accepted the "new Church." The traditions of centuries—in some cases many, many centuries—were overturned in a few short years. The result was not outraged protest but eager acceptance.

The current NORC study of the last ten years of American Catholic development leaves no doubt that the Catholics of this country, totally unprepared for change, nonetheless advanced for it.

More than seven eighths, like the English liturgy, more than two thirds think that the changes in the Church are for the better. The guitar Mass, the kiss of peace, nuns in lay garb, priests called by their first names, new methods of religious education, sex education in the schools—all are accepted by more than two thirds of our national representative (strict probability) sample.

I do not think anyone would have anticipated this quick acceptance of fundamental change a decade ago. Indeed, until our study most Catholic liberals were convinced that the laity were against the changes, as were not a few bishops. And we kept hearing of the "conservative resurgence." There is no evidence of such a resurgence. Less than one fifth of the Catholics in America are opposed to the new Church.

Change is as popular with the old as with the young, with the high school educated as well as with the college educated. A majority of every major ethnic group in the Church endorses the Vatican reforms. Graduates of parochial schools are even more likely to approve the new Church. Ninety per cent of those who went to Catholic colleges are in favor of the changes.

The conservatives, the "Wanderer" gang and their ilk, have made a lot of noise.

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hounded a lot of scholars, scuttled some good textbooks, and frightened a few timid bishops; but they are trivial in importance and have no right to be taken seriously by anyone. I hope such journals as Newsweek, Time and The National Catholic Reporter will find better things to fill their religious news columns with than mythological accounts of a conservative "revival." There ain't any such animal.

My colleague William McGreevy will shortly demonstrate that the "Wanderer" gang's claim, that the decline in Sunday contributions (real enough) is the result of dissatisfaction with the new Church is pure farce.

But is not the council responsible for the decline in religious practice, the respect for the Church as teacher, and the acceptance of the Church's sexual morality? The case that the recent changes have undermined the traditional faith of Catholics (made vigorously if acrimoniously by Pro. James Hitchcock) is simply not supported by our data. We could find no connection between support for change and decline in religious commitment.

The forces that have led to the decline were already at work long before the council. They would have hit the Church hard whether there was a council or not. In 1963, only 29 per cent of the Catholic population accepted the Church's teaching on all three issues of birth control, divorce, and premarital sex. Now only 7 per cent accept all three teachings. The decline, in other words, set in long before the Vatican Council.

Nor could the council be blamed for the massive apostasy of the generation under 30. They are part of the disillusioned generation which grew up in the 1960s, those about which no institution in the world has been able to do anything. But they account for about half of the decline in Church practice.

So it appears that the council has won overwhelming support and is not responsible for most of the losses of the last decade. Whether more able leadership in the post-conciliar era could have cut the losses, even increasing the payoff from the council, is still a hard question to answer.

But you can make a case that if it had not been for the Council, the losses among the laity (as opposed to the religious and the clergy) would have been much greater than they were.

NFPC Members Eye 5 Selected Topics

Chicago — The five areas judged by member councils to be most in need of reconciliation were determined by the executive board of the National Federation of Priests' Councils as it approaches its 1975 House of Delegates meeting under the theme, "Reconciliation: Risks and Possibilities."

Priests-USA, NFPC's monthly publication, in its January issue outlined the areas:

1. Distribution of world resources.
2. Alienated youth.
3. Liberal-conservative Catholics.
4. Divorced and remarried Catholics.
5. Resigned priests.

The federation's 28-man board

devoted the major portion of its December meeting to planning the March 9-13 convention, in St. Petersburg, Fla., a departure from traditional NFPC meetings because there will be no speeches and the format is based on a case study to which affiliated councils have reacted.

Planning the upcoming convention has consumed virtually the entire year since the 1974 meeting. Delegates from that meeting were first asked for suggestions for topics for the next convention. The board sifted through these proposals and agreed that reconciliation was the overwhelming favorite.

The past September the board submitted to the local councils a taped re-enactment of an actual senate meeting in which reconciliation as a goal of the 1975 Holy Year was discussed. Councils were then asked to come up with a definition of

reconciliation as well as their idea of the five dominant areas needing reconciliation.

Early in January, councils were to be mailed data sheets compiled by resource persons in the respective area of concern. For the next two months councils were asked to select their respective preferences from among the five areas; to prepare action steps approaching reconciliation for their choices; and to have their delegates going to the convention prepared to discuss the particular areas of concern during the work sessions.

The new convention format will call for a full day of parliamentary sessions, after two days of working sessions, for the purpose of hammering out a statement that is to be used for a base for the federation's program for the coming year. The format also means that no resolutions will be considered until the final day, when they may be raised under new business.

St. Joseph's Hospital Gets 'Royal Flush'

Elmira — The Bike-a-Thon held last October recently provided the burn unit at St. Joseph's Hospital with a "royal flush", thanks to the Elmira fire department, promoters of the 20-mile ride and the many cyclists who pedaled for pledges.

Fireman David Potter Jr. presented the total collected, \$9,000.00, to Dr. James H. Marshall, medical director of the burn program, in a most unusual way.

Potter, assisted by southport volunteer fire department chief, Donald Robinson, simulated turning on a Kennedy Valve fire hydrant, which in turn provided the "royal flush."

The funds are earmarked for purchase of two additional Apollo Warmers for the use of burn patients admitted to the hospital burn unit and other equipment used to assist in the treatment of burn victims.

Chief Robinson, who also participated in the bike hike was awarded a prize for having carried the largest dollar amount in pledges — \$1300.00; second prize, 10 year old student at St. Casimir's, Patrick Gilboy, 307 Mary St., Elmira, \$272.85; third prize, Richard Hamula, 169

Fr. Kuchman Issues Report

Van Etten — Father Bernard Kuchman, pastor of St. Pius X Church here, has noted 4,360 Holy Communion, an increase, in his spiritual report for 1974.

Father Kuchman said there are 140 families in his parish and reported 16 Baptisms (four adults), 20 Confirmations, 1 marriage, 6 deaths, and 14 First Communion.

Although not providing figures, Father Kuchman reports that Mass attendance has increased.

Briarcliff Drive, Horseheads, \$210.45.

The "oldest" participant was Arlene Overton of Fred St., while the youngest was 22-month old Jennifer Osborne of 407 Breesport Rd., Horseheads.

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