

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

They Said 'Yes' to the Spirit

Last November I asked permission of three young women whom I confirmed in a beautiful ceremony at Ithaca College if I



might use their letters of petition for the Sacrament. They agreed, and so I present portions of the three letters to you to illustrate how a mature commitment to the Spirit expresses itself.

Each year I read thousands of letters from 7th and 8th graders who are preparing for Confirmation. I insist that they make a formal request for the Sacrament to give them an opportunity to express their own understanding and to give me some assurance that they are making a personal decision and have been involved in doing something for others. Many priests, Sisters and religious educators have often wondered whether the Sacrament should be received at a later age. Since I often share the same concern, I have never hesitated to accept their decision to postpone the reception of the Sacrament until the latter years of High School.

But, I had no doubt last November about the seriousness of the intent of these three who so expressed their 'yes' to the Spirit.

"Dear Bishop Hogan,

I hope you will not be shocked if I admit that I am happy to be asking for this Sacrament during my adult and not my adolescent years and to have come to Catholicism slowly by a long, arduous, but joyful search of myself in my search for God. I have not the least doubt that 'cradle Catholics' are as deeply sincere as myself in their own various quests for God. I do believe, however, that my journey has given me a peculiar zest and joy in being a Catholic. I cannot say the Lord's Prayer or sing a Christmas carol without the feeling that this time — every time — is the first time."

(After describing her conversion from Judaism, due largely to the inspiration of the example of the priests she has met on the Cornell Campus and the Catholic community gathered there in the joyful Sunday liturgies, she expressed her desire to renew her baptismal promises.)

"I would like to proclaim once again before God and the community my pride in my faith and my commitment to a greater service of the people. And I would like to commit myself to explore in breadth

and depth the dimensions of the Spirit.

"If someone were to ask me how I viewed the Spirit, I would have to say that the Spirit is the one member of the Trinity that I haven't really made friends with yet. I feel it will take me the rest of my life to create a close friendship with the Spirit and I cannot do it without the Spirit's constant help.

"I have always known the Father. And Jesus, by His own attractiveness and force, drew me to Christianity. The Spirit remains elusive, yet the Spirit is the power of Jesus here on earth, the dynamic, even explosive factor that propels Christians to a true expression of Christianity. Jesus still is on earth but only insofar as we permit the Spirit to grow in us, push us into constructive service, constructive thought and clarity of vision. Since the Spirit demands so much of us, we often fear responding. Now, more than ever, I need the Spirit. In addition, I believe the Spirit needs me and every Christian to live in the world more effectively. **I would like to dedicate myself forever to the Spirit and celebrate this dedication before the public in the Sacrament of Confirmation.**

"Thank you for your time and patience in reading this.

Sincerely yours,
Judith Lightfoote"

"Dear Bishop Hogan,

I am a senior in college and since the beginning of my freshman year I have been on a search for faith. During these four years I have moved from being uncomfortable in my atheism to having a faith that I cling to tightly. I was received into the Church in October of 1973:

"I wish to have you confer the Sacrament of Confirmation on me because **I feel a need and desire to publicly proclaim my faith, to reveal who I truly am and hope to be.**

"During the past four years I have been enhancing my personal and inward search by taking part in the life of the Newman Community and in my home parish.

"I feel that I am now ready to take responsibility for my faith and for my part in the priesthood of the

people. This, however, by no means indicates that my search has ended. Searching and growing is a lifetime proposition.

"I am looking forward to November 3 with a lot of excitement and sober Christian hope. Thank you.

Jane L. Shelly"

"Dear Bishop Hogan,

My preparation for Confirmation has taken place over many years, by many years, by many people and on both sides of the Country. I was baptized as a Presbyterian and was very active in the church's Youth Organizations, Young Peoples' Retreats, and Summer Conferences on World Missions. As a College student I ceased to attend Presbyterian services and began to read a great deal of Catholic writings, especially Thomas Merton, Thomas a Kempis' Imitation of Christ, St. John of the Cross, and the documents of Vatican II. I also attended Mass for part of a year; but it wasn't until I was married and had been living in Eugene, Oregon, for almost three years that I began regular study in Catholic faith. After further reading, including The Life of St. Therese of Lisieux, and some very wonderful instruction from Father Wilks at the University of Oregon Newman Center, I received my First Holy Communion in March of 1973.

"From Oregon, my husband and I came directly to Ithaca where I became a regular member of the Cornell Catholic Community. Father Callan and I have talked several times about my growth as a Catholic. My entire college career and early adulthood has been a time of growth in learning about my Catholic faith. And, while I see further change and growth as an adult, I feel ready for the Sacrament of Confirmation as a **statement that I am happy about my decision to live as a Catholic and that I want to accept more responsibility as part of the larger community.**

"It is my hope that you will grant me permission to be Confirmed on November 3. I'm looking forward to meeting you..

Sincerely,
Mary Emily Gray"

I am grateful for the permission to share with you these inspiring personal expressions of the meaning of saying 'yes' to the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.

Nazareth College To Build Center

Construction of a \$4.1 million college community center on the Nazareth College of Rochester campus will begin next month, according to an announcement made last week by Dr. Alice L. Foley, president, and Supreme Court Justice Emmett J. Schnepf, chairman of the board of trustees.

The decision to proceed with construction of the new facility "designed to enrich both the college and the community" was made at a special meeting of the board.

The center is expected to be ready for use by the fall of 1976, Dr. Foley said. It will include a student union, a life activities and physical education wing and an

interfaith religious center — all interconnected in one 67,000 square-foot complex centrally located behind the college's administration building.

The center will furnish facilities to help expand educational opportunities beyond the classroom and provide a nerve center for the recreational, social and spiritual needs of Nazareth's rapidly changing student population, Dr. Foley said. She noted, however, that the new facility would also offer programs designed specifically for community residents and that such recreational facilities as the gymnasium and Olympic-size swimming pool will be available to the public.



Clergy Leadership Conference

Dr. Padraic O'Hare, parish education organizer emphasizes a point while Sister Michael Lapetito, director of Religious Education Division, Sister James Lynch, coordinator of Educational Services, and Father Daniel Brent, superintendent of Catholic schools prepare for their presentations on "total parish education." The Education Department's program was included in the Diocesan Clergy Conference held May 19-21 at the Notre Dame Retreat House, Canandaigua. Bishop Joseph L. Hogan and Father Alfred McBride were featured speakers during seminar.