

Church Doctrine Can't Be Accommodating -- Archbishop

Washington, D.C. (RNS) — Archbishop William W. Baum of Washington was critical of a survey which suggested that Pope Paul's encyclical on birth control had caused the Catholic Church to lose credibility among its members in the U.S.

The archbishop, responding to a survey headed by Father Andrew M. Greeley of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, said that no matter how unpopular a teaching of the Church is, it must not accommodate itself to what people think it should be.

Archbishop Baum acknowledged that for many Catholics there is a problem of acceptance of the Church's teaching on birth control — namely that no artificially-induced controls are to be used.

"At every age, at every moment in the Church's life, many of its members have had problems with the teachings of the Church," the archbishop said. "The Church, though, must be faithful to its understanding of the Gospel, of its vision of God's plan. It cannot, in the interest of accommodation, change its doctrine."

"In other words," he said, "the acculturation of Catholics in the United States to American mores is something which is not an unmixed blessing, and the Church, as the community of faith, should not be expected to accommodate to the mores of any nation or any culture."

He said that the "teaching office" of the Catholic Church has the responsibility of transmitting what is believed to be divine revelation to the Church membership.

"Any question of doctrine must be submitted finally to the teaching office of the Church, and that is what I think every believing Catholic accepts and is obliged to accept — that after debate, study and reflection, there is the voice of the teaching office to guide us," the archbishop said. "We believe this is a gift which Christ has left us, without which we could easily go astray."

NORC Study

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attendance, daily prayer, support for a son becoming a priest, and three quarters of the decline in financial contributions can be accounted for by a combination of the erosion of acceptance of the Church's teaching on birth control and divorce and a weakening in the willingness of Catholics to accept papal authority, according to Father Greeley.

He said, "It is rare for a social researcher to explain a correlation completely, but this turns out to be one of those rare cases. Support for the Vatican Council correlates positively with religious devotion," he added, and the birth control position and decline in respect for papal authority accounts for the whole deterioration.

The study also claimed that the most serious problem for the Church may be the decline in support for priestly vocations in the family, traced once again, it said, to disillusionment caused by the 1968 papal encyclical.

"Take the case of that population which has produced a steady stream of priests for more than 1000 years, the Irish with Catholic educations," said Father Greeley. In 1963, he said, 88 per cent of Irish families favored priestly vocations; in 1974, that percentage had fallen to 44 per cent — six points below the national average.

Father Greeley concluded that "The encyclical turned off precisely those people who were most likely to want their sons to become priests."

School

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oversees the operation of the current five Catholic schools in Elmira which run on a consolidated basis.

The decision to close St. Peter and Paul was made after the board spent 5 hours and 45 minutes discussing and debating the fate of the school system for the 1976-77 school year. The consolidated system is facing problems similar to those in the public school system — declining enrollments and rising costs.



Photo by Ben Susso

Staff members of the Genesee Settlement House are protesting the way the house is being operated. They carried their protest to the Catholic Charities office March 23 by picketing outside.

Settlement House Staff Protests Its Administration

Staff members of the Genesee Settlement House picketed the Catholic Charities office Tuesday, March 23, to protest the administration of the settlement house. The 10 marchers walked in front of the 50 Chestnut St. location of the office for most of the afternoon.

A lack of communication is the center of the staff members' protest. They cite requests made for improvements in the 10 Dake St. location of the settlement house, and for more heat in the Day Care Center that they say were ignored. They also protested the allegedly forced resignation of the former executive director Richard Williams.

The Genesee Settlement House is

operated through its own board by Catholic Charities. The board of the house has control over hiring and firing, and the management of the operations, while Catholic Charities is the sponsoring organization. Funding comes from the Social Services, from per diem payments for the adolescents living at the home, and from the Community Chest.

Father Joseph D'Aurizio, director of Catholic Charities, says that he feels the problems at the House can be corrected, and that procedures to do that are under way. He points out that the protestors want him to take immediate action, and to investigate the situation. He feels that the investigation needs to be done first, and says it already is under way.

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