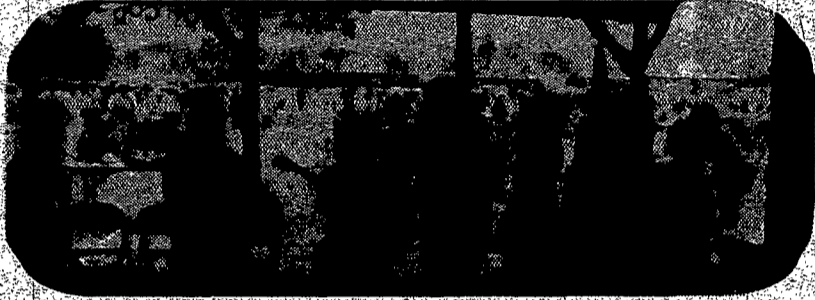
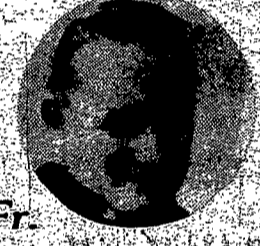


God's Country

The wooded hills of Apalachin served as a backdrop for a field Mass celebrating the nation's 200th anniversary. "Peace — Gift of God, Work of Man" was the theme that ran through readings, homily and songs. Father Elmer Schmidt, pastor of St. Margaret Mary, is shown offering the Mass, with Thomas Baratta and Paul Ver Valin as servers... in a flag-bedecked pavilion on the church grounds. A procession of eucharistic ministers, lectors and ushers preceded the Mass, which was planned by the parish liturgy committee. Uniformed Boy Scouts took part. Mrs. Joanne Lynn directed a group of folk singers and Shawn Casey, Steve Cook and Joe Federowicz Jr. controlled the sound equipment.



The Church 1976



Fr. Andrew Greeley

We have heard a lot lately about the Church not being in a popularity contest. Moral decisions, we are told, do not depend on majority vote; public opinion surveys are not the norm of Catholic doctrine.

It often comes out sounding that the Catholic Church — meaning its leadership of course — doesn't give a hoot about what its ordinary members think.

But I would like to strongly argue that such an impression is certainly not true. The leaders of the Church in the United States do indeed care what the laity think and they are concerned about popularity. Indeed, the very bishops who insist most vigorously that they are not in a popularity contest are hesitant to take actions which would destroy their popularity — even if such actions are dictated by what they hold to be Catholic doctrine.

The birth control issue is an excellent case in point. With public unanimity the hierarchy continues to endorse the prohibition of "Humanae Vitae." Birth control is against the authentic teaching of the Church, we are told; it violates the doctrine of Jesus as taught by the pope; it is a matter of faith. A change will not occur. Public reaction is not relevant.

One must ask then why so little has been done to enforce the teaching.

Outside of the famous Washington case, virtually nothing has been done to see that the teaching is obeyed. You cannot preach actively against it, but a priest can give almost any advice he wants in the confessional or in private conversation and absolutely nothing is done to stop him.

If the leadership of the Church is really convinced that the birth control prohibition is a matter of Catholic faith, why are they so lax in enforcing that teaching?

It could be done, you know. The clergy of a diocese could be called

in and required under oath to swear that they would challenge married people in the confessional as to whether they were practicing birth control and to further swear that they would not give absolution either to those who were or to those who refused to answer the question.

It would be a drastic measure that would stir up a hornet's nest of reaction, but if the issue is the teaching of Jesus on a matter of faith, do we care? So what if we lose four-fifths of the laity and perhaps the same number of clergy? It is a matter of faith, after all.

Who cares about being unpopular? Are we in a popularity contest?

The answer is yes. The hierarchy knows what are the effects of a serious and forceful attempt to give people the choice of the Church or birth control. The people would probably pick the latter — and the leadership would become very unpopular indeed.

I frankly don't see how you can publicly persist in a claim of loyalty to the pope and his teaching and privately decide not to take action that would force people to choose between his teaching and leaving the Church, as well as forcing the clergy to choose between the teaching and getting out of the priesthood. Sure the costs would be high, but so what?


Obviously I am rather happy that the bishops are not consistent on this one, but should they not acknowledge that there is a serious theological problem at stake in this "non-acceptance of authentic teaching" and their implicit decision not to enforce it? Apparently, as far as enforcement goes, popularity, majority vote, and what ordinary people think is tremendously important.

Some bishops — Bishop Law in his column, Bishop Rausch on Chicago television — have said that if the data on rejection of the birth control teaching are accurate (and they don't seem disposed to deny it), then there is a pastoral problem of persuading the laity to accept the teaching once again.

One would think so — a problem of monumental proportions. But is it enough to call it just a pastoral problem? Should not a vast educational campaign be launched to teach the prohibition of birth control? I see no signs of such a campaign, and I doubt very much that there is a serious intent of trying one.

It wouldn't be very popular.

ON THE RIGHT SIDE



Fr. Paul J. Cuddy

How many priests are there in the Rochester Diocese?

As of January 1976 there were 140 pastors, 16 co-pastors, 71 associates (assistants), 23 priest interns, i.e. newly ordained assigned for three years to be trained by a wise pastor who has been especially trained to train trainees through a course called "The Salt Program." There are 4 priests in the Military; 70 Special Workers; 50 retired.

How are pastors appointed?

When a pastorate is vacant, a profile describing the parish is sent to all priests. The parish is then open for applications, somewhat in the manner of a labor market. Applications are sent to the Diocesan Personnel Board, composed of Bishop Dennis W. Hickey as chairman, four parish priests and two special workers, all elected by the priests of the diocese. The present board priests are Fathers Ray Wahl of Auburn, Bernard Carges of Ithaca, John Whalen of Mt. Morris, John Rosse of St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, Daniel Tormey of Human Development, and Albert Delmonte, associate of Father Richard Hart at Guardian Angels, Henrietta. These study the application and recommend an appointment to Bishop Hogan, who makes the final decision. He is not bound by the committee's recommendations, but usually follows them. It seems a complex, time-consuming, cumbersome system, but that's the way it is, and as a docile priest I say: "Amen."

Is there a shortage of priests?

There is a trend to take priests away from parish work to become special workers. This does bring a squeeze for the general service of The People in the parishes.

Are priests allowed to retire?

Allowed! At 70 they are put out to pasture. I think if a priest wants to retire at 70 he should be given that option, and a sufficient pension to cover his needs. However, many priests want to continue to serve after 70. It does seem to me that priests who have gained competency and wisdom over the years are terribly wasted not to have those years of experience, knowledge and wisdom kept in use.

But when a man is 70 he's about done!

Chancellor Konrad Adenauer wrote his Memoirs in his 80s. He wrote:

"At the end of September 1944 I was arrested again and sent to the Gestapo prison at Brauweiler near Cologne. When I arrived, the commissar in charge of the prison asked me not to take my own life as

this would only cause trouble for him.

"I asked him what made him think I might take my life. He replied that as I was now nearly 70 years old and had nothing more to expect from life, it seemed reasonable to suppose that I would put an end to it. I told him not to worry. I would not cause him any trouble." [Konrad Adenauer: Memoirs 1945-1953... p. 17]

During the next ten years Adenauer was responsible for the domestic and economic and political stability of a nation which had been beaten to the ground. He was also greatly instrumental in the reconstruction of Western Europe after WW II. It was not in spite of his 70 years, but because of his 70 years, which gave him wisdom, patience, experience, ability to deal with diverse and contending people and ideologies. At 73 he became chancellor, and from his 75th to his 80th year he was Germany's Foreign Minister, a beacon of light to the democratic world. Wasn't Pope John 77 when he was elected Pope?

What do you suggest?

In light of the shortage of priests serving in the parishes, a reconsideration of the policy of retiring healthy, able, experienced and willing-to-serve priests at the age of 70.

COLLEGE AWARD
John DeSantis, a member of St. Louis Parish in Pittsford and a third year student majoring in French and Russian at the University of Toronto received the St. Michael's College Scholarship in Italian for summer study and travel in Italy. He is at the University of Siena in Italy.

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