

Divorced, Separated Catholics Meet in Geneva

BY MARTIN TOOMBS
Geneva — "There are somewhere between three million and five million divorced Catholics in the United States, half of whom have remarried," said Sister Kathleen Kircher, coordinator of ministry to divorced and separated Catholics.

And to minister to their special needs, "there are well over 100 divorced Catholic groups across the United States and Canada," she told what is the newest such group, formed Wednesday night at St. Francis DeSales in Geneva.

"In 1975, one million divorces were reported by the US Census Bureau, and of these, approximately 25 per cent, or 250,000 cases involved at least one Catholic partner. It is interesting to note that Catholics comprise approximately 25 per cent of the national population also," she said. "This correlation refutes the often-repeated argument that Catholics divorce significantly less than other religious groups."

Sister Kathleen, "two weeks old on this job" and Father James Lawlor, associate pastor at St. Charles Borromeo in Greece, spoke to 30 persons at the meeting, organized by Claire Nowak, religious education coordinator at St. Francis. Father Lawlor, who has worked with a divorced and separated group at St. Charles, will be working with Sister Kathleen as a liaison to the diocese's clergy.

The original group for divorced

and separated Catholics, Sister Kathleen said, was based in the Paulist Center in Boston, and has had 3,000 members. The year-old group at St. Charles has members who travel many miles to meetings.

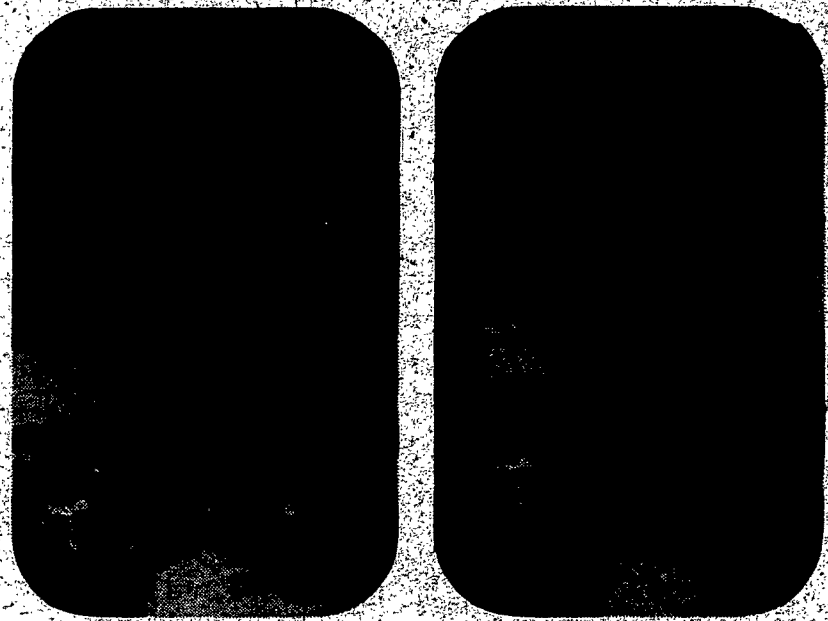
Several persons asked if it was true that because they were divorced they could not receive the sacraments. One person had been divorced and had stayed away from the sacraments for five years. Father Lawlor and Father Gennaro Ventura, pastor of St. Francis, assured them that they were not prohibited from the sacraments by divorce, that prohibition is caused only by a second marriage.

Sister Kathleen also explained the recent changes in church thinking about marriage, and what constitutes a valid marriage. She cited a statement of Vatican II that "mutual love constitutes marriage," and said that this definition replaced "contract terminology." In 1969, the statement was declared to have the force of law, she said, and that it is the "basis for the extension of reasons for annulment."

Father Lawlor had greeted the group, and thanked them for having the courage to come. He told the group to remember that they are not alone, but are part of the three million to five million divorced Catholics in the country.

He noted three pressures that divorced people must face. First is the personal sense of worthlessness, the feeling that "I'm a failure. I didn't make it," he said. The second problem a divorced person faces is family relationships, he said, as some families treat divorced persons as though they have "some sort of disease." The third pressure a divorced Catholic faces, he said, is from the Church. He noted that the Church is usually a source of security, but when a person is divorced, their relation with the Church suffers. "We perceive the church as looking on us as failures," Father Lawlor said, and when approaching a priest, wonder "What is he going to think of me?"

He also said, divorced persons should remember that "you aren't alone. God is with you and you



FATHER LAWLOR

SISTER KIRCHER

with him and together you can do beautiful things." He pointed out that he has seen caring and loving support grow among groups of divorced and separated people, and that that is "a sign of a real holiness in their lives."

Those attending the meeting weren't sure exactly what they are going to do, but they did know they wanted to form a group. Another meeting is planned for some time in October. Information may be obtained from Claire Nowak at St. Francis.

SOUTHERN TIER AUBURN-GENEVA

Auburnians Hear Report On Brazilian Missions

By MARY ANN GINNERTY
Auburn-Geneva Correspondent

Auburn — Feeding the poor a steady diet of religious education and concern doesn't fill the stomachs of the hungry, but may eventually lead to better conditions.

This is the hope of Sister Ellen Kuhl, SSJ, who has returned to a diocesan mission in Brazil, after a rest in Auburn. She has served in Brazil for three years.

Sister Ellen's appeal was for concern and awareness, not funds, as she narrated a slide presentation during Masses recently at St. Mary's Church where she taught school for three years prior to her Brazilian assignment in 1973.

Interviewed later, Sister Ellen said, "When I entered the homes of the poor I knew they needed more to eat than what they had. At first I felt guilty. Why do they have so

little and I so much? Then I began to feel angry and frustrated when I realized the problem was with the whole power structure and attitudes."

Sister Ellen explained a few people own huge amounts of land and employ field laborers for little money. In the midst of abundant crops and cattle, people suffer from malnutrition, she said.

The average income is \$45 a month. Parents have great difficulty in feeding their families. It has taken its toll in retarded physical and mental development and a high mortality rate, Sister Ellen said.

Much of Sister Ellen's educational ministry involves teaching nutrition, changing health habits, pre-natal care and the care of children.

"It is hard to get across to people in the United States that the poor have little expectations that they will get out of their condition. In the United States we are taught to be self-made people, to strive to get ahead. The poor have little hope they can get an education or better jobs. Poorly nourished, many are sick and find it hard to work with little energy," she said.

Sister Ellen said the basis of religious education is the same in Brazil as it is here. It is the "Good News" that Christ brought us that we have a Father who loves and cares for us. He wants us to be happy and Jesus came to offer a way to do this.

Blue Cross Withdrawal Explained by St. Joseph's

Elmira — St. Joseph's Hospital has gone to the people of Elmira with a slide program to explain the hospital's possible withdrawal from Blue Cross. The program has been made available to interested groups, local industry, St. Joseph's employees, and at two public showings at Elmira College.

(St. Joseph's and Arnot-Ogden hospitals in Elmira notified Blue Cross Sept. 6 that they would withdraw from the program at the end of 1976.)

A statement released by Sister Martha Gersbach, administrator of St. Joseph's and Robert T. Jones, of Arnot-Ogden, said that "the governmentally controlled Blue Cross and Medicaid reimbursement rates are inadequate, presenting a serious threat to services and the quality of care rendered patients."

"Hospitals in New York State," continued the statement, "including the two Chemung County facilities are not yet in receipt of official notice of their individual Blue Cross rates for 1976, thus

prohibiting sound projection of anticipated revenues."

The statement also explained that the withdrawal could be canceled before it took effect, and that during the rest of 1976 Blue Cross payments will be accepted as they have been.

If the Blue Cross contract is dropped, Stanley Douglas, community relations director at St. Joseph's said, persons would still be covered by Blue Cross, but they would have to pay the hospital themselves, and bill Blue Cross. The amount they would receive from Blue Cross would be lower than the amount billed by the hospital.

The rates that Blue Cross is paying are those set for Medicaid payments, which for 1976 are lower than 1975 rates. New York State Health Department officials, Douglas explained, have tied Blue Cross, Workmen's Compensation and Medicare to the Medicaid rate. Those programs involve 77 per cent of the patient days at St. Joseph's, Douglas said, and even the 1975 rate would be inadequate to pay 1976 costs. After cost cutting procedures, the hospital projects a deficit of \$343,000 for the year, "due primarily to inadequate reimbursement" from those four programs, according to a fact sheet prepared by St. Joseph's. Toombs.

AT ST. ALPHONSUS
Auburn — The annual St. Alphonsus Oktoberfest will begin at 7 p.m. on Friday Sept. 24 at the Parish Center, 101 E. Genesee St.

Dr. McRoberts to Speak To St. Ann's Alumni

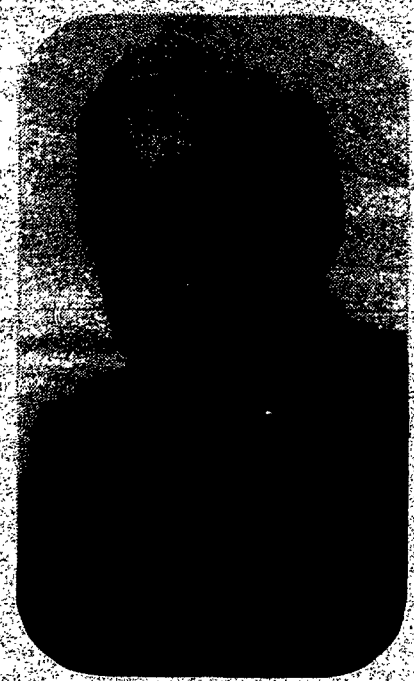
Hornell — Dr. John S. McRoberts, formerly of Hornell, will return here Oct. 2 as dinner speaker at the first St. Ann's Alumni Dinner-Dance at the local Knights of Columbus hall.

Preceding the 7 p.m. dinner-dance, an open house is scheduled at St. Ann's school from 1 to 3 p.m. and photos and memorabilia dating back to 1907 will be on display at the Knights of Columbus.

Toastmaster will be James J. Dagon. Invocation will be given by Father Robert C. MacNamara, St. Ann's pastor, and benediction by Father John P. O'Malley, pastor of St. Mary's, Bath.

A native of New York City, Dr. McRoberts was graduated from St. Ann's and attended Hornell High. After becoming a doctor he served with the armed forces in Korea and "Operation McRoberts", a program to help distressed youth in the war, was named for him.

He practiced pediatrics here from 1953 to 1963 and since that time has been associated with a clinic in North Palm Beach, Fla.



Dr. McRoberts

Music will be provided by the John Larsen group and tickets are \$6 per person. Co-chairmen are Francis Argentieri and Joseph Aini.

Knights Set Pilgrimage

Canandaigua — The ninth annual pilgrimage to Notre Dame Retreat House will be held on Sunday, Sept. 26 by the Fifth New York District, Fourth Degree, Knights of Columbus. The Fifth New York District is made up of assemblies within the Diocese of Rochester, and each year nearly one hundred Fourth Degree Knights in uniform get together for this pilgrimage.

The Rosary will be recited at approximately 2:30 p.m. followed by Celebration of the Eucharist at 3:30. Thomas S. Burns, Faithful Navigator of Father Paul J. Lynch General Assembly, is general chairman for this year's pilgrimage. While this is a function of the Knights, the general public is cordially invited to attend.

Those attending the pilgrimage and any other function at Notre Dame are warned that Middle Cheshire Road out of Canandaigua is under construction and they should use West Lake Road, turning west at Foster Road to reach the retreat house.

SOUTHERN TIER NEWS

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ANTI-CANCER VIGIL

Geneva — A vigil to ask God's help in finding the cure for cancer is scheduled for Sept. 24 at St. Stephen's Church. The vigil will begin at 8 p.m. Friday with benediction and close at 8 a.m. Saturday with Mass. Old Testament readings will give references to the healing acts of God among His people.

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