

Family

(Continued from Page 7)

resources on every level, for family ministry programs and a review of all present church budgets in order to bring about an equitable distribution of personnel and finances for supporting these programs.

RECOMMENDATION: FAMILY AND SOCIETY

In order to assist the Catholic family to fulfill its responsibility to assist other families and participate in the redemption and transformation of society through an awareness of the constitutive gospel dimension of action on behalf of social justice, we recommend:

1. That all programs dealing in family life, at all levels in the church, address in a special way the specific education of families in making them aware of the needs of others in their neighborhood, their local communities, or in the world community. These family life efforts will work with other social justice agencies to create environments and develop programs which encourage families to get involved in an action and reflection process in the service of others and that attainment of justice.

2. That ministry to strong marriages, as well as those in difficulty, be recognized as part of the social justice dimension of family life and that organizations and movements which specialize in marriage and family life include and or develop programs dealing with the social justice dimension of family life and provide materials, models, resources and skills to enable families to open themselves to the injustices in the world, to reach out to those in need, and to provide channels through which they can contribute to the solution of such problems of injustice.

3. That the entire Catholic community regularly and systematically participate in developing a clear position on public policy and legislation. This public policy and legislation most specifically should promote societal conditions based on human rights and social justice which allow all families and individuals to function as free human beings. Further, public policy and legislation should protect the rights of families to participate in decision making regarding, but not limited to, education, total health care, and moral guidance of their members.

In order to help families arrive at positions of personal involvement and organized political action, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and each diocese should work out mechanisms for organizing families into coalitions on family-related issues. To achieve these ends, we recommend the establishment of pastoral councils on the national, regional, diocesan, district, parish and neighborhood levels. State Catholic Conferences and the United States Catholic Conference, in implementing programs for political responsibility and social action, should consult with these councils and give priority attention to developing positions on issues of public policy which affect family life. Where possible, there should be ecumenical participation.

4. That families as part of a pastoral social justice program related to media, and aided by parish and diocesan family life commissions, in cooperation with diocesan communications offices, the United States Catholic Conference Department of Communication, UNDA-USA (Catholic Association of Broadcasters and allied communicators) and the Catholic Press Association and other religious and civic organizations and coalitions.

Initiate or support efforts to evaluate the impact on family life of present and developing social communications media.

And suggest positive actions for family utilization of and involvement in media.

That families, especially with the structures mentioned above and other organizations and coalitions dedicated to better broadcasting:

Work to promote the human and aesthetic quality of network and local programming and policies in order to counteract dehumanizing values of consumerism and materialism.

Work for the further limitation of programming depicting excessive violence and irresponsible sex:

a. Through government regulatory agencies.

b. Through local station accountability ascertainment procedures.

c. Through influencing program sponsors.

That families work again through the above mentioned structures to support programming which reinforces family values.

RECOMMENDATION: THE CHURCH AND DIVORCED CATHOLICS

We pledge ourselves to a serious effort to reconcile separated, divorced and remarried Catholics within our community of faith. Toward that end we recommend:

1. That diocese and parishes extend pastoral care to separated, divorced and divorced/ remarried Catholics by the development and implementation of effective

programs of ministry, education, and group support.

2. That the people of God in the local Catholic communities put an immediate end to practices which brand separated, divorced, and divorced/ remarried Catholics as failures or discriminate against them or their children in parish or diocesan activities; further, that educational programs be developed and funded aimed at eliminating discriminatory attitudes which underlie these practices.

3. That the church leaders publicly address the request of the divorced who have remarried to receive, under certain conditions, the sacraments of the church. We ask this because many Catholic people do not understand that many divorced who have remarried are not necessarily excluded from the eucharist. We ask the bishops to develop more consistent, equitable, effective and more pastorally oriented procedures for dealing with annulment and dissolution of marriage throughout all the diocese of the United States of America.

4. That the church invest in serious study of the causes of marital breakdown with particular attention to the impact of cultural conditions on marriage and family life. These studies, conducted in dialogue with married as well as separated, divorced, and divorced/ remarried Catholics, would help shape realistic policies for strengthening family life.

5. That the bishops of the United States take the action required to repeal the penalty of automatic excommunication decreed by the Third Council of Baltimore for Catholics who dare to remarry after divorce.

Neighborhood

RECOMMENDATION: THE PARISH AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The parish, a fundamental unit of the church, in its worship, witness, and service, must interpret, understand, respond to and celebrate the life experiences of its people. Therefore, we recommend:

1. In response to today's cry for community, parish liturgies and interfaith prayer services as celebrations of community life and neighborliness that on a regular basis, express neighborhood concerns and issues. This will require:

a. The renewal and continuing education of all parish leadership;

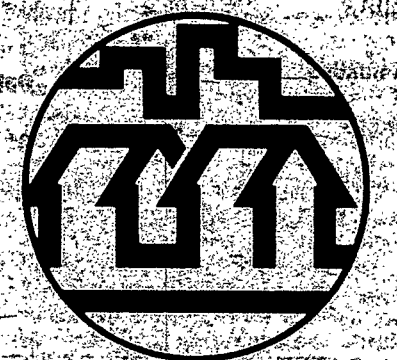
b. The formation of strong, small, sensitive eucharistic communities, recognizing diversity;

c. The identification, authentication, and institution into ministries and/or orientation of leaders from the community.

The prayer life of the parish will include discussion, reflection, and action on the implications of the gospel for issues of current importance to the community.

2. That the sacramental life of the neighborhood church should reflect the relationship between Christian commitment and community realities. Each sacrament should have specific and required preparation using lay participation and all available resources. There should be special concern about the preparation for the commitment in the sacrament of matrimony. Christian responsibility for public life and commitment to Christian values are to be emphasized at all levels of participation in the sacramental life of the church.

3. That the parish personalize its outreach into the neighborhood community to develop an increased level of human concern and positive interchange and intervention. Special efforts should include activities which would



a. Establish and or support neighborhood community groups;

b. Find and welcome newcomers;

c. Include ministry to the alienated, mentally, physically and socially handicapped, and any others whom society shuns;

d. Be knowledgeable of and respectful toward racial, cultural, ethnic, political, economic and religious diversity.

4. That the parish community educate itself in its role of "neighborhood servant" and implement this commitment by these or other methods:

a. By reaching out to interfaith and neighborhood coalitions;

b. By participating in parish-based diocesan programs;

c. By initiating programs to meet specific local needs not met by other groups;

d. By committing its spiritual, material, and personnel resources to this mission, even to the extent of funding a parish coordinator of social ministry.

5. Within the parish family stronger and closer relationships for mutual support and ministry among laity, religious, and clergy should be developed. In the selection and tenure of personnel great consideration and sensitivity should be given to the needs of the neighborhood.

RECOMMENDATION: THE CHURCH AND NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION

To enable the church, as a nourished community of faith, to be a sign of Christian presence and mission in the neighborhoods, a caring community inculcating the virtue of neighborliness, we recommend that parish churches and other Catholic institutions recognize themselves as part of the neighborhood in which they exist and working with and involved with the multicultural, pluralistic situation of neighborhoods, assume responsibility for supporting, strengthening and developing instruments through which people can determine their needs and improve the quality of their lives.

Toward this end we recommend:

1. As that sign of Christian presence and mission, the parish and other Catholic institutions should be a rallying point for immediate person-to-person assistance, as well as a facilitator to work with the people to determine and find remedies for their problems. That parish facilities and resources, meeting places, program space, personnel, office equipment and other in-kind contributions be made available to existing action groups seeking to deal with neighborhood issues or to aid in the promotion of such action groups.

2. That a budgetary item of every parish to financially support competent neighborhood community action groups be considered a necessary investment for neighborhood preservation and development; that diocesan agencies should provide resources training current and potential neighborhood leaders; that each diocese provide as a minimum, matching funds in support of any parish contribution to competent

neighborhood community action groups.

3. That the church should initiate and be actively involved in the development of community organizing projects among all peoples in the promotion of and the support of these neighborhood actions, the church should develop cooperative relations among parishes and with other religious, social, civic, governmental and health services organizations.

4. That people may become the true determinants in their own lives, each diocese shall establish an office for community affairs or shall expand its existing office:

a. To initiate, facilitate and support, financially and/or with personnel, neighborhood offices of community affairs;

b. To work with other diocesan community affairs offices and other community organizations on a state-wide level to support neighborhood issues;

c. To provide support services for these neighborhood offices of community affairs.

5. That church leadership, state Catholic conferences, bishops,

(Continued on Page 10)

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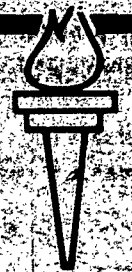
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