

Call To Action Sparks Regional Debates In the Southwest

By MICHAEL GRODEN

The Southwest Regional Assembly convened at the Pastoral Office on March 14 to discuss Call to Action issues they considered most controversial.

Some 30 delegates representing 14 regional parishes participated in the assembly's final phase of Grass Roots Design, the third track of Call to Action: Diocese of Rochester, N.Y.

The approved recommendations as amended are: "That the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) assign an appropriate committee to study the possibility of changing the present discipline of the Church to allow priests to exercise the right to marry and remain in the active priesthood. That the church and Church authorities

recognize the right of those who have been laicized from the priesthood to be fully accepted as lay Catholics in good standing or be allowed to resume full priestly ministry if they so desire."

"That the NCCB offer leadership in justice to the Universal Church by providing a process which facilitates the formation of a more fully developed position of, first, human sexuality and the role of male and female in view of its understanding, and, second, on the ordination of women to Sacred Orders. A planned process and time line sharing this interpretive study should be presented to the Catholic community by November, 1977."

"That the diocesan Church affirm the value and continue to support philosophically and

financially Catholic schools where needed and desired especially where the local community is too poor to support such schools."

Before the voting process began Hank Maher, regional director for the Call to Action program, explained how the issues were selected. He said the criteria used included whether an issue was very close in the parish voting, was amended significantly, or if the issue particularly concerned the Southwest Region. Discussion on the recommendations began immediately thereafter.

Two amendments to recommendation one were discussed. The first called for the NCCB to take action on the question of celibacy rather than commit it to further study.

John Balcerak, St.

Christopher's, and Bernie Kiel, St. Mary's, Scottsville, felt that the delegation did not have an adequate idea of what celibacy meant, and that more study was needed.

Paul Oliver, St. Monica's, felt that enough study had been done and it was time for some "definitive action." The amendment was defeated.

The second amendment which allowed for laicized priests to "resume full priestly ministry if they so desired," passed easily. The delegation then voted on and approved the entire recommendation.

The second recommendation, dealing with the ordination of women, was amended to include a closer look at human sexuality "and the role of male and female" first and then a

look at the question of women's ordination.

It was passed overwhelmingly by the delegation with little dissent.

Four amendments were proposed for recommendation 3, Church support of Catholic schools. All were defeated but not before a lively discussion among delegates.

Two representatives argued that serious thought should be given about today's economy when trying to keep schools open. Spiraling costs together with inflation, they said, are making it more and more difficult to pay the bills, especially in the poorer parishes.

Jan Hansen, St. Monica's, argued that children in poor

parishes also have a right to a Catholic education. She said that her children would be very unhappy if they had to leave St. Monica's.

The recommendation was passed as originally written, 26-1-3.

Father Emmett Halloran, Southwest Regional Coordinator, mailed the results of the meeting to Father Douglas Hoffman, director of the Office of Pastoral Ministry and "Action" coordinator.

These recommendations together with similar reports from the other nine regions of the diocese will be reviewed by Bishop Hogan prior to the May meeting of the NCCB in Chicago. There all of the Call to Action recommendations will be voted upon by bishops from across the United States.

In Livingston-Steuben

By MARTIN TOOMBS
Southern Tier Editor

Lively discussion characterized the assemblies of the Livingston-Steuben Region as more than 100 delegates examined the "Call to Action" proposals.

The region had three assemblies on March 13, one in each of its clusters. The items for discussion were selected on the basis of parish council response in the region. Recommendations that were discussed were Issue 7, Campaign for Public Support of Catholic Schools, Issue 18, the Bishop's National Commitment to Reducing Crime, and Issue 20, Church Response to Racism.

Amendments proposed by parish councils were considered for each of the three recommendations, and then the groups voted on the amended statement.

The Livonia-Geneseo cluster met at St. Thomas Aquinas, Leicester, with Father Walter Wainwright chairing; the Dansville-Hornell cluster met at St. Mary's, Dansville, with Father Thomas Burr, and the Corning-Bath cluster at St. Mary's, Bath, with Father Charles McCarthy.

Discussion among the Bath group was varied and active, with most of the 30 persons attending offering their opinions on the subjects discussed. Lack of information was a problem, especially on public support for Catholic schools.

Father Burr called the Dansville discussion "quite good," and commented that the delegates were not as well prepared as they could have been.

The Leicester group's discussions were "lengthy," Father Wainwright reported, and thorough. Several of the 10 delegates expressed the feeling that "intensive and deep education" was needed to vote

knowledgably on some of the issues, he added.

The first recommendation the three assemblies discussed was: "That there be launched immediately a strong campaign to bring about federal and state government recognition of and respect for the parents' right of choice in the education of their children through a just distribution of taxes for the establishment and maintenance of non-public schools. This should be brought about even if it requires a constitutional amendment."

The Bath group approved the first amendment offered, adding the word "accredited" before non-public. An amendment to change distribution of taxes to a tax deduction was defeated unanimously; the hardship for those with low incomes was cited as a problem. An amendment adding the phrase "without government control" to describe the schools also was defeated; the opinion expressed reflected concern that schools meet basic criteria. The last amendment, which would require government funding only for certain items, also was defeated. The amended issue was approved with one negative vote.

The Leicester group also approved the first amendment and defeated the second. When considering the third, they defeated the "without government control" statement, but approved a suggestion for a voucher system. The assembly also defeated the fourth amendment. A further amendment was then proposed, adding "such as a qualified tax deduction or a voucher system" to the recommendation. The amended statement was then approved.

The Dansville assembly approved the amendment after adding the word "accredited," and also defeated an amendment from the floor that the

words "without government control" be inserted.

The second issue was number 18: "A national commitment to economic and social justice and the elimination of poverty and of racism as an effective means of reducing crime. This policy should include programs to involve citizens, neighborhoods and organizations in preventing crime and in monitoring the criminal justice system; knowledge of the rights of the accused, adequate legal representation, representative juries, competent judges, speedy trials, due process and judicial integrity; just compensation to victims of crime; abolition of capital punishment; development of alternatives to prisons, rehabilitative services and reintegration of offenders into the community."

The Dansville group defeated the first amendment, which was a statement made by a parish council that the proposal was confusing as written. The second amendment called for the addition of "development of religious moral values" as a goal, which the delegates approved.

The Leicester assembly defeated the amendments, but then approved the recommendation with an additional motion stating that the recommendation was confusing.

The first amendment was not discussed by the Bath group as several delegates noted that it wasn't really an amendment but a comment. The second amendment was defeated; the point was made that the additional wording was already implied in the statement.

The Bath group then voted the issue as it was stated in Section II of the booklet. The first statement, calling for the re-statement of the bishops' position against capital punishment, was defeated 12-11. The second portion dealing with



Livingston-Steuben delegates discussing the "Call to Action" issues at St. Mary's, Bath.

the criminal justice system was approved 23-1.

The third recommendation discussed was Issue 20: "That the church leaders and the whole Catholic community recognize the persistence of the evil of racism in American life, a system of individual and institutional attitudes, actions, policies and practices which subordinate people on the basis of race or color. This evil we must also admit infests the life of the church as well as society. That we call upon church leaders to act vigorously on this issue to the end that the Catholic Church become a force of leadership in eliminating racism from American life. We recommend that the NCCB write a pastoral letter on the sin of racism in both its personal and social

dimensions to be published not later than April 4, 1978."

The Leicester assembly considered an amendment to drop the word "American" from the recommendation, and defeated it. They then approved the issue as written.

The Bath group approved dropping "American" to show the need for world awareness of racism. They also approved a motion to delete "discussion-action unit" from the statement, noting that other methods could be used. They approved of the amended motion unanimously.

The word "American" was also stricken by the Dansville group, followed by a motion from the floor that the word "global" be

inserted in its place, which was approved.

Further issues were raised in two of the assemblies. In Leicester, the discussion moved to Issue 14, Re-evaluation of Rural Ministry. Father Wainwright noted that some delegates were unhappy with the attitude expressed in the clarification. Amendments were offered, stating that the needs of rural areas be determined "in conjunction with rural representation" and "in consultation with the people of God in the areas concerned."

In Dansville, a proposal was made and passed that the ecumenical collection taken up in January be returned to the regional coordinator for regional ecumenical programs.