



I got into a big shouting argument the other night with some friends about the staffing of the American church. They were wrong, but they made a good case.

They did not deny my contention that most of the "professional" staff of the Church at both national and local levels is underpaid, underfinanced, undertrained and under-intelligent. They were even prepared to concede that many of the statements, publications, directories, research, campaigns, studies and meetings coming out of these various staffs in recent years were disgracefully bad. The sort of excellence one ought to expect from the Church, they admitted, has been invisible for the last several years — with some notable exceptions, especially in ecumenism.

They even went so far as to agree that some of the bureaucrats involved were painfully ambitious.

We agreed, I think, that the Church has blundered into such complex areas as international agriculture, income distribution, Latin American politics, political campaigns, catechetical theory, family life, race relations and ethnic pluralism without the competence and expertise to do much besides making itself look ludicrous.

But, my friends argued, the staff people responsible for these disasters are still honest, hard working, well-meaning, and openminded, with an eagerness to learn despite the immense financial limitations imposed on them by their superiors. They try hard, I was told, and want to improve their professionalism. What's more, they are sensitive and their feelings are hurt when I delicately hint that they are incompetent bunglers.

Now, my friends may have a point — at least in theory. But in fact they're wrong.

I cite two arguments to prove my theory that with obvious and well-known

exceptions, those who staff the Catholic bureaucracy are not professionals in any sense of the word and do not want to learn.

1. Each time I have been consulted about the "surveys" (and lately it hasn't been often because what I would say has gotten around), I have taken time to respond, in careful and restrained tones designed not to hurt anyone's sensitive feeling, that little purpose was to be served by using such research techniques because they were totally lacking in validity. I was told (and have been told repeatedly by those later defending the "surveys") that they were not trying to do a "scientific study." I cautiously replied that there were two kinds of surveys — the good ones and the bad ones and that a bad survey was worse than none. I was thanked for my opinion and the research went on as planned.

In other words, they didn't want expert advice. They wanted an expert to wave a magic wand and tell them that white was black and that a rotten research design was a good one.

So strong is this faith that when Bishop Mark Hurley called recently for representative surveys he was dismissed as merely echoing my "opinion." Now, quite apart from the fact that Mark Hurley is hardly a spokesman for anyone but himself, he was not echoing my "opinion," but merely a truth known to everyone who has had an introductory course in research methods. But you see what the issue has become: it is no longer what constitutes good research but the personality and the opinion of the "expert."

2. Such staff members (again, for the most part) avoid as though they had the plague any Catholic laity who are first-rate professionals, and with unerring instinct seek out the mediocre and the second-rate instead. They did not threaten their bureaucratic employers by knowing too much or being too smart. Just what the USCC wants. But in two areas of considerable concern to the Church — moral education and public policy law — the very top men in the country are practicing Catholics who are invisible to the Church leadership and have never been asked to do a thing by the ecclesiastical bureaucracy. And one of the country's outstanding experts on mass transportation policy is also a Catholic — and a Hispanic woman to boot. She also gets ignored.

Why? Because they are good at what they do and the staff doesn't want such people around any more than do a lot of the bishops.

So I won the argument. The staff of the church, locally and nationally, needs to be cleaned out from top to bottom (again, with notable exceptions) and replaced by people who know what they are doing and are threatened neither by excellence nor the excellent.

Bread Walk Scheduled In Greece

A Bread Walk in Greece to raise funds for CROP, the community hunger appeal of Church World Service, will take place from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday, May 15.

The 10-mile hike will begin at Arcadia High, move west on Latta Road to Long Pond, south on Long Pond to Maiden Lane, east on Maiden Lane to Mt. Read, and north on Mt. Read to Mother of Sorrows Church, where a victory celebration will be held from 6 to 8 p.m.

A rally to enroll support for the Bread Walk is being planned at 8 p.m., Monday, April 25, at the Greece Town Hall. Speakers, movies are scheduled and it will be the first opportunity for walkers to pick up sponsor sheets.

A goal of \$15,000 has been set. Of this, 25 per cent will go to local hunger fighting agencies. Anyone interested in more information or in helping should contact Linda Insalaco at 663-3230, 6635068, or Pat Amato at 621-5605.

School Board Named

Eddie Meath, Stan Zawacki, Len Delesky, Marie Vasile, Al Pelusio, Harry Thornton and Anthony Syracuse were elected to the Board of the School of the Holy Childhood recently.

Roger Harnish, Board President, expressed his gratitude to the new members and those retiring from service.

SUMMER SESSION

Day classes in the Nazareth College summer session will begin eight days later than originally scheduled to accommodate teachers in elementary and secondary schools that have extended the school year. Fifteen minutes will be added to each class period to make up the time. The session will begin July 5 and end Aug. 6. Late registration days have been changed to June 30-July 1. Evening summer school will run from June 27 through Aug. 5.

TORONTO!

Reservations still are open for the Toronto bus trip arranged by the Divorced, Separated or Widowed Catholics of the Southeast Region. Contacts are Joan Keirsbik, 482-5957; Sue Ritzel, 271-8086, and Joyce Luce, 654-8665. The excursion is planned for April 22-24, coincident to a board meeting of the North American Conference of Divorced and Separated Catholics.



Special Mass

Photo By Susan McKinney

Father Mark Miller accepts gifts at the offertory of a special Mass on April 1 at St. Helen's School in Gates. The Mass, which included Holy Communion in the Matzoh form was followed by a special meal, the Seder service of the Passover, which commemorates the liberation of the Jewish people from the bondage of the Pharaoh. The Mass and Seder were planned by the school's sixth grade with the help of teacher Mrs. Patricia Costello.

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