

Task Force Urges Confirmation Changes

By MARTIN TOOMBS
Southern Tier Editor

Elmira—The Confirmation Task Force, originally charged with writing diocesan guidelines for Confirmation, expanded its role to an analysis of the theological basis for the sacrament and has delivered a report that recommends significant changes in current practice.

Msgr. William Shannon, a member of the task force, explained those suggestions to a group of 50 clergy, religious education coord-

inators and school educators at St. Patrick's Oct. 24, as part of a series of meetings in the diocese on the task force report.

Msgr. Shannon described how the task force decided to examine the theological basis for the sacrament of Confirmation, and then draw up guidelines from their conclusions. The group found that "present practice didn't fit the theology," he reported.

The task force determined that Confirmation shouldn't be considered an

independent sacrament, but "only in organic unity with Baptism and Eucharist." He noted that the early Church's procedure was to baptize and confirm at the same time. He also pointed out that when infant Baptism became the common practice, Confirmation continued to be given at Baptism.

The practice of confirming infants at the time of Baptism has remained in use in the Eastern rite, Msgr. Shannon added, pointing out that Church's tendency to cling to the ways of the early Church.

Msgr. Shannon then traced the history of the sacrament in the Church, noting its reservation to bishops, and a time when it was not common for everyone to be confirmed. He concluded that the "reasons for the changes were not theological," and in some instances were "deplorable," as they were the result of neglect.

He also said that the common use of Confirmation as a renewal of baptismal vows, which were spoken for the infant, has "no basis in theology or tradition."

Considering the "present practice untenable," the task force then worked to determine ways to "restore Confirmation to its proper place in the rite of initiation," preceding First Communion, he said.

To implement the Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion order for the sacraments, the task force saw four options as available, Msgr. Shannon reported. The first is to restore infant confirmation, as it is currently done in the Eastern Rite. The second option would be to receive

infants into the catechumenate, and then give Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist at one rite, after the child has had catechetical training. The third is to have a naming ceremony at infancy, with the child being received into the catechumenate at about age 6. The three sacraments would be administered when the child had completed preparation. The fourth is for the infant to be baptized, with Confirmation following at about age 7.

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'Nothing Happening?'

Nearly 40,000 Attend Charismatic Meeting

Atlantic City (RNS) — "Who says nothing is happening in the Catholic Church?"

With those words, Archbishop Peter L. Gerety of the Newark Catholic archdiocese greeted some 25,000 Catholic charismatics in one part of the Convention Hall here.

Minutes later he offered the same greeting to another 12,000 persons in an adjacent part of the huge building.

He said that he told those attending the Eastern regional conference of charismatics that the renewal movement is at least a partial answer to Pope John XXIII's prayer for a "new Pentecost" as he opened Vatican Council II.

"Nothing is more necessary to this secularized world than the witness of this spiritual renewal," the archbishop declared. "God's grace is being poured out all over the Church and you are part of it."

"Who says people are not praying and raising their hearts to God ... and

renewing the Church? The charismatic renewal is part of a large renewal in the Church — and we praise God for it."

Some 36 bishops, including four cardinals, endorsed the conference and about a dozen took part in it. Auxiliary Bishop James Schad of Camden, N.J., the host diocese, welcomed the three-day gathering which included more than 500 priests and 115 ecumenical guests.

The main speaker, Father John Haughey, a Jesuit theologian, told the huge gathering that the charismatic renewal is at a "crossroads," with newly emerging "visions" of the movement creating tensions that must be confronted with a new outpouring of love, wisdom and unity.

He said there is room in the movement for "more than one response to the Holy Spirit" and warned charismatics against "putting labels on one another." He said they must make room for "surprising" differences in the renewal movement in the times to come.

Father Haughey, a

member of the Woodstock Theological Institute and a former professor of theology at Fordham and Georgetown universities, focused on two emerging "visions" of the charismatic renewal. The first, he said, seeks to bring charismatics — or at least a portion of them — into the heavily structured communities or groups of communities that would serve as a bulwark against evil in the world; the second, he said, would be less structured, less withdrawn from the common culture and would seek to provide a "spiritual haven" for the world's social and cultural ills.

Other speakers included Dr. David Du Plessis, Pentecostal leader and preacher; Catherine de Hueck Doherty, founder of the Madonna House apostolate in Combermere, Ont., and Mrs. Ruth Carter Stapleton, evangelist sister of President Carter.

Because of the growing numbers attending the annual assembly it was announced that a separate conference would be scheduled, probably in Providence, R.I., in addition to the Atlantic City meeting.

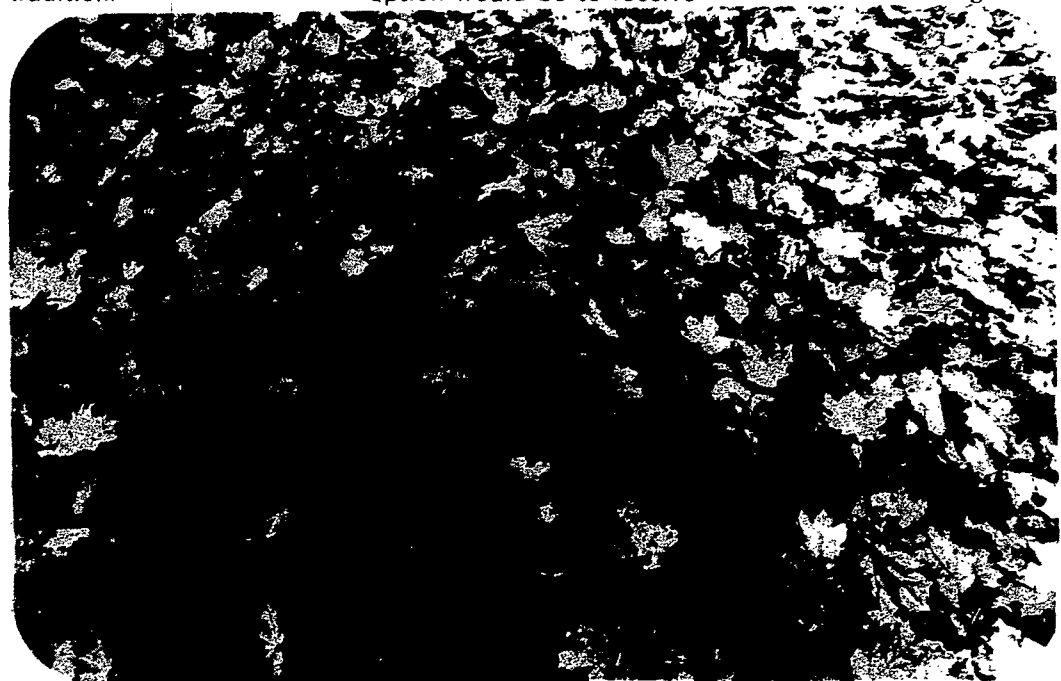


Photo Editor Susan McKinney captures autumn in these fallen leaves.

Bishop Backs Bond Issue

Calling the present high unemployment rate "intolerable," Bishop Joseph L. Hogan has urged voters to approve the Economic Action Bond Issue which may be on the ballots Nov. 8 as Proposition One.

As of presstime the state Court of Appeals had not decided on the constitutionality of the bond issue. If it satisfies the court then it will be on the ballot.

Bishop Hogan and the other bishops of the state endorsed the issue as a necessary expenditure to

approve the economic climate of New York and to provide jobs for those on the unemployment lists.

The bishop, in a statement, declared, "I strongly support legislative efforts in Congress that are directed toward the creation of a full employment policy in which every person willing and able to work could do so."

Noting that "slow-moving processes in Washington" are of little immediate help for the jobless, Bishop Hogan said "it is the generation of 300,000 immediate short-term jobs and hopefully the stimulation of more jobs in private industry that attracts our strong support of the state-wide economic

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What are these people listening to so intently? Turn to page 14.

Pope Paul: 'Yes to Peace'

Vatican City (RNS) — "No to violence, yes to peace" is the theme and the slogan chosen by Pope Paul for his World Day of Peace message to be issued Jan. 1.

A Vatican press office statement said the theme is a natural extension of the application of the previous theme. "If you want peace, defend life."

Violence may come, it said, from people or groups seized by a frenzy of domination (power) or of consumerism (possession), a frenzy which tends to limit or suppress the lives of other people or societies through forms of racism, genocide, and the imposition by force of an unjust and discriminatory political or economic structure.

The statement noted that violence existed everywhere. Violence breeds violence, it said. "It is a misfortune and a moral evil. One must therefore freely, as a duty in conscience, refuse it. Combat it, replace it."

It added that the slogan clearly showed what was involved on the evangelical level — the need to identify causes of violence, to control their spread, attack their roots, to study and develop the many possibilities of authentic non-violence and to educate public opinion, especially through the mass media, in order to find other paths leading to peace.