

Pastor Seen Key to Council's Success

By MARTIN TOOMBS
Southern Tier Editor

Corning—"We have to get people involved" in parish activities, Helen Bavisotto said.

Emphasizing her agreement, Becky Bonomo commented, "I'd put double quotes on that."

"Too many people are just content," Janice Olmes said, "there are those people who think that everything is fine" and don't look for places that need improvement.

The women's interest in parishioners becoming more involved in parish activities was an important theme as they spoke. Their concern came from experience; they are the presidents of Corning's three parish councils.

Mrs. Bavisotto, St. Mary's, Mrs. Bonomo, St. Patrick's, and Mrs. Olmes, St. Vincent de Paul, represent an unusual situation, as a large majority of the parish council presidents in the diocese are men.

The women, meeting for the first time, spoke of their office as one of trust and challenge, earnestly discussing parish goals. Their discussion also illustrated the distinct personality of each parish and each parish council.

The three Corning parishes often cooperate for city-wide programs, and the three parishes operate the Corning Catholic School System.

All three women succeeded men as presidents of their respective councils.

Mrs. Bavisotto, one of two women on the nine-member St. Mary's council, defeated a man for the office, she reported. She wondered whether or not she reacted to events the same way a man would, but noted that men are beginning to think that women are very capable of handling most situations.

Mrs. Bonomo reported that at first she was concerned with the respon-

sibility of conducting the meetings, but she feels that everything has worked well.

Mrs. Olmes, St. Vincent's, commented that "it's strange that I am in the parish council as chairperson." She explained that she found it unusual that women are filling many important jobs in the parish, even though a majority of the parishioners are unwilling to accept women in liturgical roles.

"I feel now the parishioners are really eager to see the parish council work," Mrs. Bavisotto, St. Mary's, said, adding that parish council elections have had "terrific response." "We really have made terrific strides," she stated, pointing out that the parish council is in its second year.

Mrs. Olmes, St. Vincent's, said that "I think a lot of people in our parish don't even know there is a parish council," something she said she has been working to change. Putting a synopsis of meetings in the bulletin has been part of the effort, she noted.

Mrs. Bonomo compared St. Patrick's council to a company board of directors; parishioners "know we're there" but not much else. The council consistently invites everyone to parish council meetings, she noted, but "not too many people come."

Mrs. Bavisotto also noted that it was a weakness that "people are reluctant" to attend meetings and "speak out." She said that often she hears about a complaint second or third hand; "people hesitate to talk to you as a parish council member," she said.

St. Patrick's council has a "suggestion box that has more cobwebs than suggestions," Mrs. Bonomo reported, agreeing that parish involvement in the council's operations is important.

"I wish they would feel more comfortable to come to the meetings," Mrs. Bavisotto said, "I don't see how a council can gain any

strength" if the parish doesn't actively participate.

"It's sad that people don't voice their opinion more often," Mrs. Bonomo agreed.

Many people will become involved only after being asked personally, Mrs. Olmes said, noting "people need that personal contact."

While parishioner involvement is important, they also noted the vital role of the pastor in parish council operations.

Asked if she was trying to educate the parish about the parish council, Mrs. Olmes commented that she didn't "really know if a parish council chairperson can be as influential as the pastor."

Mrs. Bavisotto agreed, noting "it's the pastor who sets the pace" that determines the character of the council.

St. Mary's pastor, Father Michael Hogan, wants the people to "have more of a voice in the parish," Mrs. Bavisotto said, and has proven willingness to go along with council decisions even though he advocated the opposing view.

Mrs. Olmes noted that St. Vincent's council "is very loyal" to Father Joseph F. Hogan, the pastor, and probably would respect his opinion and not "approve something which he is opposed to." She noted that she sees her role as working with Father Hogan to keep events moving forward, and to work on educating the council to its responsibilities, and assessing the needs of the parish. There "are a lot of forgotten people in our parishes" who need to be reached, she noted.

Mrs. Bonomo noted an instance when Father Andrew Teuschel, St. Patrick's pastor, disagreed with the decision of the council but did not veto it, as an illustration of his regard for the parish council's role in the parish decision-making process.



The presidents of the three parish councils in Corning, are, from left, Janice Olmes, St. Vincent de Paul, Helen Bavisotto, St. Mary's, and Becky Bonomo, St. Patrick's.

Teen Pregnancy: A 'National Phenomenon'

BY MARY ANN GINNERTY

Auburn—"We are like an ostrich when these is a problem we don't want to face, but we really need to talk about teen pregnancy and all its implications for us here in Cayuga County," said Mrs. Phyllis Rantannen Glover, a Mental Health representative from the Task Force on Adolescent Pregnancy, known as the Ostrich Committee.

Mrs. Glover spoke at the meeting of the Task Force on Adolescent Pregnancy on December 11th at the Auburn Headquarters on Genesee Street.

"The main purpose of the Ostrich Committee is to help people become aware of the situation. Those of us in social service agencies have seen the implications of the problem, but it doesn't do much good to just discuss the situation among ourselves," she said.

Mrs. Glover said the rise in teen pregnancy, a national phenomenon, has been referred to as an "epidemic" in this county by Dr. Gordon Eadie, Commissioner of Public Health in Cayuga County. This rise has implications which will demand changes in school programs, the job market, approaches to the development of parenting skills, supportive services, day care systems, and other traditional supports which were once the primary function of the family.

It is not the purpose of the Ostrich Committee, she said, to take a stand on issues and tell people what to do. However, until everyone recognizes there is a problem, "we have a tendency to think teen pregnancy is a personal problem. It's always someone else's daughter, son, sister, or neighbor."

Mrs. Glover pointed out that figures can be deceiving unless one looks

at the total picture; which includes the divorce rate among young marrieds, the age of mothers opting to raise their child, and abortion figures.

"No one stops to think that if I am 15 my life is full of choices about school, what to study, whether to work, marriage, etc. If I'm 15 and pregnant, 90% of these choices have been made for me," she said.

"The costs of teen pregnancy include the costs of drop-outs, public assistance, lack of pre-natal care on health, increased childhood diseases. Single parents often become child

abusers, frustrated and depressed as the baby grows into a child and the demands on them as parents increase. These kids are raising kids and many times for all the wrong reasons."

Mrs. Glover pointed out that in Auburn a program for single mothers has a waiting list of participants. She said there is a growing recognition that parenting skills programs are necessary in a complex society which is making changing demands on the family.

According to Mrs. Glover, "Moralizing once worked, it isn't as effective anymore."

SOUTHERN TIER

AUBURN-GENEVA

Sidney Callahan To Speak in Elmira

Elmira—Sidney Cornelia Callahan, psychologist and writer, will speak here Monday night, Jan. 9, under the auspices of the Christian Institute of Man. Her lecture, "Emerging Patterns of Family Life," will open the institute's 1978 series, which has the general title, "The Christian in a Changing World: Toward an Ethic of Personal Responsibility."

The lecture is scheduled for 8 p.m. at Park Church.

Prof. Callahan, a faculty member in the Fairfield University Graduate School of Education, writes a syndicated newspaper

column, and has four books to her credit, the latest of which is "Parenting: Principles and Politics of Parenthood."

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Photo by Martin Toombs

School Wins TV

The students of St. Patrick's Junior High School, Elmira, collected more signatures than any other junior or senior high in the area, and were named the winners of a color television set in a contest sponsored by radio station WENY. Shown are the organizers of the petition drive, which netted 1,016 signatures, being interviewed by Jeff Stone for WENY television about their effort.

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