

Death Penalty Opposed by Priests Council

The Priests Council has technically approved a motion by its social action committee that the council record its opposition to the death penalty.

The motion recommends that the council, "concerned with fostering respect for life, preserving the dignity of the human person, and manifesting the redemptive message of Christ, be opposed to the death penalty; and do so actively by: using the public news media to state such opposition; encouraging the priests and people of the diocese to write to Gov. Carey supporting his veto of the death penalty bill, and to their legislators urging them not to override the veto; encouraging all priests and people to set up educational programs which sensitize and raise the consciousness level of all on the broader issue of the sacredness of life."



Photo by Susan McKinney

Fathers John P. O'Malley, Peter Clifford and Thomas Mailloux, CSB.

The motion passed 8 to 3. There were however 7 abstentions.

In presenting the motion, Father Neil Miller of the committee showed a film-strip on the question, published by the New York Times. In support of the motion, Father Ronald Stacy, also of the committee, urged the councillors to hold to a "consistency in the value of life." He said that the death penalty was but one facet of a continuing problem which begins with legalized abortion and will conclude with legalized euthanasia.

In order for the council to vote on the motion it was necessary for them to agree to a change in the ordinary procedure of reporting back to the blocs prior to a vote.

Father Miller said that the question was an "urgent one" inasmuch as the governor now has the death penalty bill on his desk.

In discussing the motion, Father David Callan noted that it was possible to hold to a morally defensible position on both sides of the death penalty debate and that the question should not cause division in the council.

Father Bertrand Scully, OFM Cap, questioned the necessity for taking up the issue since the motion is not framed as advice to the bishop.

Father Paul Freemesser wanted to expand the motion to incorporate a critique of the penal code.

In other council matters, the priests viewed a slide presentation, narrated by Albany seminarian Stanley Hattell, on Becket Hall.

"aimed at reducing the stress and strain among people working as a group." The chief aim of definite process, he said, is "respecting people and their thought." He cautioned the council that "polling is a very very different thing from consultation." He said further that council members should listen to the variety of opinion and sentiments in their blocs and reflect that spectrum rather than just count the ayes and nays given a specific proposal.

It was announced by Father Conrad Sundholm, council vice president who was chairing the meeting in the absence of Father Louis Hohman, that the priests had approved the amendments to the council constitution which allow for the election of a new council in May, to be seated in June. The new councils previously met for the first time in September.

Father Sundholm also announced that Diocesan Pastoral Council representatives elected are Fathers Joseph McCaffrey and James Hewes.

The council also heard the state-wide NETWORK program, now in its second year, in which priests maintain contact with state legislators on questions and bills which concern the Church. He invited priests to participate in the program.

To close the council's agenda Father Douglas Hoffman, at the priests' request, offered his opinion on the roles the various consultative bodies play in the diocese.

He gave his view of consultation itself as "trying to hear the Word of God over the background of noise of our daily lives together."

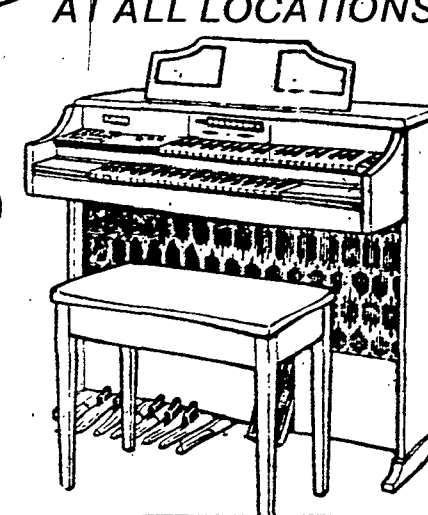
He also opined that the weight that differing counsel may be afforded by the bishop depends on the "quality of the pastoral input, the pastoral wisdom" that goes into that advice.

The process of consultation, he also said, was


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All in the Family

By Sarah Child

Spring Fever

I have moved my desk (door on top of two filing cabinets) out of the kitchen and into the dining room for the time being.

The move, prompted by the overwhelming amount of clutter the kitchen arrangement collected, may not be particularly efficient.

True it has stopped the kids from throwing their school books, sneakers and other paraphernalia on it the moment they walk in from school. Nor do I have to move last night's newspaper, yesterday's mail and assorted coloring books before I can get to the typewriter.

Best of all, I do not come down weekend mornings to find the desk being utilized as an impromptu breakfast bar with sugar, milk and cereal moving precariously from spoon to mouth by a mesmerized cartoon buff.

In its new location against the back wall of the dining room the desk now faces two windows looking out on the backyard and what used to be the open field.

From my new vantage point it is now possible to keep tabs on the latest construction efforts and

try to figure how many evergreens it will take to block out the houses springing up almost over night.

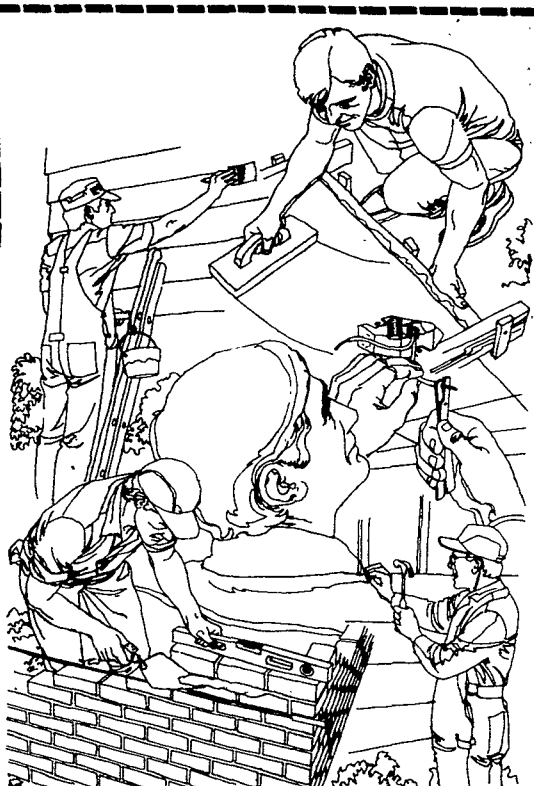
From the window I can also check on the ridge where lilac bushes, maple saplings and Norway spruces appear to have survived being buried under five feet of snow for several months.

The tiny patch of woods behind them is also visible and the sight is not particularly encouraging. Dead wood abounds and the number of healthy trees which we have delighted in for purposes of screening and shading is definitely dwindling.

The one promising note: Underneath the sickly poplars and willows are sturdy red oaks, still saplings, but large enough to hint that in a few years they will become "the woods."

But, enough of the day dreaming and time wasting. I lower my eyes to the typewriter but not quite quickly enough. A robin, the first I've seen, is scrounging around under the blue spruce for his breakfast. And I suppose I should go out and check on the progress of the clematis which was burgeoning with green buds last week.

Another morning shot. Well, there's always the laundry room. Just enough space for the typewriter and the view is definitely uninteresting.



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