

COURIER-JOURNAL

Southern Tier-Auburn-Geneva

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Conferees Agree

Church Should Take Greater Rural Role

By MARTIN TOOMBS
Southern Tier Editor

The need for increased ministerial efforts in rural areas and the form that ministry should take was the subject of a National Rural Life Conference sponsored by the National Conference of Catholic Charities in Chicago April 16 and 17.

A recurring theme during the conference, which preceded the annual spring meeting of National Catholic Charities, was the need for the Church to accept a greater role in rural ministry, according to Father Neil Miller, who attended the conference.

He became involved in the conference and a member of the Catholic Charities Rural Task Force, although not a Catholic Charities worker, because of his activities as part of the Rochester diocese's Office of Human Development (OHD) rural staff, Father Miller explained.

He participated in a panel discussion on existing rural community projects, during which he described the efforts of the rural OHD staff.

Father Miller works with

Sister Mary Kruckow in the diocese's Southern Tier. Father William Spilly and Sister Anne Urquhart cover the northern section of the diocese for OHD.

A staff person for National Catholic Charities visited the diocese recently. Father Miller said, and, after studying the diocese's program, commented that it is the only such diocesan-wide program in the country. She invited him to participate in the rural task force as a result, Father Miller said.

He doubted her statement concerning the program's uniqueness, he pointed out, but added that he failed to learn of any other diocesan programs while at the Chicago conference. He noted that many of the persons involved in rural ministry he talked to were working on a parish rather than diocesan basis.

Another issue discussed throughout the conference, he noted, was the relative values of community organization and parish ministry. Father Miller noted that through the parish Human Development committee training program, the Rochester diocese is working to utilize existing

parish structures for rural ministry. Several delegates to the conference, which had representatives from about 50 dioceses, favored the building of community groups outside parish structures, he said.

One result of the panel discussion, Father Miller noted, was that he had several requests for further information on the parish committee training program.

Father Miller also attended hearings conducted before the conference, for which a working paper was written on the rural situation, and the future role for the Church and for Catholic Charities.

Many of those who testified at the hearings "didn't feel that the Churches were into" farm issues enough, Father Miller said.

The working paper called on Catholic Charities to increase efforts in rural areas, noting that "Catholic Charities should commit itself to enable the local rural parishes to rebuild community through service and action."

"The logical base for rural social concern is the Church and particularly the parish," it was stated.

Church leaders also were admonished for past failings: "In many ways, the Church contributes to this demise itself by participating in depleting the resources of rural people, by often exporting its clerical problems to rural areas, and by providing languid leadership."

"Yet, in spite of its sometimes skeletal form, to which many rural people sometimes cling tenaciously, the parish is often the last vestige or remnant of rural community life."

Other issues raised included the decline in the family farm; the financial pressures that make it difficult for new farmers; a shrinking of rural services and community, as the number of persons living on farms declines; farm children who leave the farm, and

what is seen as the unfair property tax burden farmers carry.

"Farmers felt they pay a disproportionate share of the tax base," it is noted in the report, "particularly in regard to school taxes."

A recorded comment was that "schools should not have to be supported just by people with property. We put thumbs down on a lot of things being done in our schools because we are the only ones paying for it. A more equal school tax system would also create better schools."

Farm income also was a topic among those who testified at the hearings; "my income in 1977 was \$1,000," one farmer was reported to have said.

Another noted that "we

buy retail and sell wholesale," a third declared "I'm going to turn my debts over to my sons."

Other problems, such as the need for adequate housing, and the availability of health and mental health care also were mentioned.

The point also was made that many rural residents feel ignored by what they see as an urban press. "The press won't show up when someone tries to do something for agriculture," was one comment.

"It's not even that we're put down," the report quotes a farmer as saying, "we just don't exist in the eyes of our society. Try communicating your values to your kids when the rest of the world ignores you."

Divorce, Separated Group Meets in Auburn

By MARY ANN GINNERLY

Auburn—Forty-five people concerned with the needs of the divorced and separated met at St. Mary's School here on April 13 to hear Father Gennaro Ventura speak on the annulment process.

Father Ventura, pastor of St. Francis DeSales parish in Geneva, began by saying that one common misunderstanding is that if a person is divorced, he or she cannot be active in parish life or receive the sacraments. "The only thing separating you from the sacraments is yourself," he said.

He added however, that if a divorced Catholic remarries, the circumstances are more complex and he suggested contacting a parish priest for guidance.

He warned the assembly to "Go to the right source for information and don't depend on hearsay. One does need a civil divorce for an annulment, but the place to begin is with the parish priest to determine if there are grounds to start the procedures for consideration by the Diocesan Tribunal."

He said that the factor sought in the annulment process is whether or not the marriage was a good one from the beginning. He indicated that the insights of psychology have shed light

on the way the Church looks at marriage. Real love, he said, includes the capacity for sharing, caring, concern and consideration among other factors.

Father Ventura added that the annulment process is not costly. The Tribunal does ask people to share in the expenses of the tribunal, but no one is denied consideration based on their ability to pay.

After Father Ventura's presentation, Dr. Stephen Coleman, a clinical psychologist, led a group discussion on the special problems facing the single parent. It was announced that if anyone interested in a program dealing specifically with the needs of single parents and their children, they may contact Cayuga Counseling Services in Auburn.

Rev. James Hughes, a pastoral counselor from King Ferry, touched on the need to identify real problems in life and how to muster the inner resources to deal with them.

Sister Dorothy Quinn, SSJ, pastoral assistant at St. Mary's and chaplain to the Auburn Area Divorced and Separated Catholic Organization explained her role and the role of a core of volunteers who are preparing to work with the divorced.

She said these men and women are preparing themselves to be contact persons for people struggling with the pain of divorce and separation and who need someone to talk to. They will also serve as resource persons knowledgeable in church and community services available. They will plan occasional meetings of interest to the divorced and separated.

C-S Assembly To Meet May 7

Elmira Heights—The Chemung-Schuyler Regional Assembly will meet Sunday, May 7 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Charles Borromeo here, with the goal of developing specific programs to meet needs identified at an assembly earlier this year.

At the September assembly, the delegates listed efforts of concern to the Teaching Mission Committee as the most important, followed by Worship and Life, Social Mission, Pastoral Organization, and Ministerial Review. At that time the assembly also discussed the needs of various segments of the population, especially youth, the elderly and the homebound.

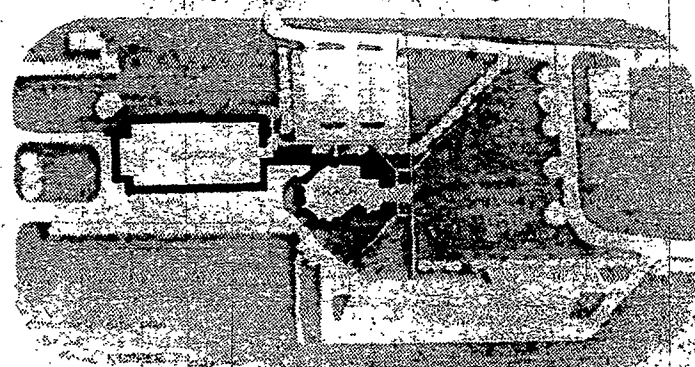
St. Mary Our Mother Groundbreaking May 14

Horseheads—Ground-blessing and ground-breaking ceremonies for the new St. Mary Our Mother parish church have been scheduled for Sunday, May 14 at 4:30 p.m.

Father Bartholomew O'Brien, pastor, will officiate at the ceremonies, which will start with a benediction ceremony on the site of the new church's altar. The groundbreaking will follow.

St. Mary Our Mother has not had a church building since 1965, when all parish liturgies were moved to the chapel in the school. Planning for the new church, primarily by lay committees, has involved several years' work.

Assisting with the groundbreaking will be Father John Firpo, assistant pastor; John Kremer and Robert Ivers, building committee co-chairmen; James Kildeaz Sr., Mrs. Arlene Gilbert and John Gough, fund drive co-chairmen; James Hilton, architecture committee chairman; J. Roger Joy and William Crowley, parish trustees; Aloysius Stanton, parish council president, and Cecelia Widman, will



Groundbreaking ceremonies Sunday, May 14, will mark the beginning of work on St. Mary Our Mother's new parish church, to be built on the site of the current parking lot next to the parish school.

participate as a representative of all parishioners. Gough also is finance committee chairman.

Members of the parish's four choirs have been invited to lead the singing for the event.

Parish council president Stanton noted a special significance in the selection of May 14 for the groundbreaking. As the Church of St. Mary Our Mother "it is especially fitting to conduct the ceremony on Mother's Day," he said. The day also is Pentecost Sunday, he added, a special day for the parish since the parish mortgage

was burned on Pentecost three years ago.

Parishioners expressed their wholehearted support for the church construction last fall when a fund drive with a goal of \$300,000 received pledges exceeding \$550,000. Currently the building fund has more than \$130,000 on hand.

Anticipated total cost for the building is \$750,000. Teitsch and Kent of Cazenovia are the architects. Stanton noted that construction work could begin in late May or early June with the dedication ceremonies tentatively scheduled for fall, 1979.

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