

State Conference

Divorced Must Learn to Care For the 'Earthen Vessel' of Self

By Martin Toombs

Taking care of the "earthen vessel" of self was the theme of the second annual state Convention of Divorced and Separated Catholics at St. John Fisher College June 1-3.

"Yet we who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots, in order to show that the supreme power belongs to God, not to us," was the quote from second Corinthians 4:7 upon which the theme was based.

The 200 participants were involved in three days of workshops and lectures designed to help them deal with the changes in their lives.

An unspoken theme was mutual support -- it was evident throughout the weekend. It was common to see a reassuring hand placed on a shoulder, or a comforting word spoken when it was needed.

Many had attended the convention last year, bolstering community spirit. The Mass Saturday evening celebrated by Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, and a closing session, when the convention's workshop leaders handled questions that seemed to be on the minds of many, were especially noteworthy events.

Some of the country's experts on the pain of separation and divorce provided counsel and support: Sister Josephine Stewart of Forth Worth, Tex., designer of the Beginning Experience Weekend; Father Kenneth Metz of Milwaukee, Wisc., who delivered a talk on the healing of memories; Sister Paula Ripple, executive director of the North American Conference of Separated and Divorced Catholics, and Virginia Clemente, a clinician with a family treatment program in Fort Worth.

The delegates filled Kearney Chapel for the Mass Saturday evening. In his homily, Bishop Hogan noted that there are "moments in the history of the diocese of Rochester in which I am especially proud," and included the diocese's sponsorship of the convention as one such moment.

He repeated statements he made at the October 1977 diocesan Mass for the families of divorced and separated Catholics at St. Mary's in Canandaigua: "I regret deeply any word of mine at any moment in my life which may have con-



Four of the conference workshop leaders answer delegates' questions. From left are Sister Josephine Stewart, Virginia Clemente, Sister Paula Ripple and Father Kenneth Metz.

tributed to that sense of separation" from the Church. "I beg your forgiveness."

He noted that "when Church, churchmen, hurt, cause pain," they are not acting as Church should.

He concluded his homily as he had before: "I look upon you as a great renewal group in our Church. Your presence among us is a call to awareness of each of us to our need for reconciliation. . . . You make us aware of how much loving can hurt. . . . I thank God for all of you -- for this day which has brought us together -- and for all of you who have made this celebration possible."

Following the Mass, Mary Ann Rivoli of the St. Charles Borromeo, Rochester, group, recounted the importance of Bishop Hogan's support to the ministry to the divorced and separated. She then presented him with a specially inscribed earthen vessel, which occasioned a standing ovation for the retired bishop.

The earthen vessel theme will be carried back to the dioceses who sent delegations. Each delegation received a vessel that had been used to distribute Communion for use in its own diocesan celebrations.

Discussion of two emotions dominated a wrap-up session Sunday morning: fear and anger.

Asked how the divorced are to deal with the fear they feel, Sister Paula Ripple noted that some are plagued

by false fears, commenting that "fear is real with you but not real" in some instances.

The pre-Vatican II approach to morality and sin causes problems for many, she noted, as they fear rather than love God. "Those fears are our chains," she said, and can be gotten rid of. It is important, she noted, for divorced persons to learn to love themselves, as they will be unable to love anyone else if they don't.

In a tear-filled question, one woman said that since her marriage broke down, she has been "angry at God." She asked, "How do you deal with that?"

Father Metz congratulated her for being able to express her anger, and pointed out several instances in the Bible in which persons expressed anger at God, noting that it is important for people to express their anger, as Job did, and not suppress it. He noted one woman he counseled who was able to write her hatred for God, but not speak it. It was necessary for her to come to accept her feelings before they could be resolved, he said.

Sister Paula added that many people are afraid to express anger, but they shouldn't -- anger is an emotion as is any other. She added that it is not wrong to "get angry with someone you love."

Virginia Clemente, divorced 10 years ago, reported that it was five years after her divorce

before she was able to return to her faith.

Speaking on remarriage Saturday, Ms. Clemente noted that "remarriage is a beautiful thing, but it requires a lot of work."

Her most emphatic point was that a divorced person must take sufficient time before making a marriage commitment. She said that a divorced person should not marry again until they feel comfortable as a single person. Then they will be getting married because they want to, and not to fill the void left by the parted spouse.

While many pitfalls face a second union, she said, "work is the key" to a successful second marriage, but "remarriage is not an impossible situation."

Father Metz listed several blocks he feels deter divorced persons from full participation in the Church. The first is sin, he said; "psychologically, we've got to tell somebody our sins," he stated.

The second is "unresolved emotional turmoil," that "becomes a block to healing, a block to loving God."

Lack of emotionalism, and lack of spiritual dynamism also cause problems, he said.

Events concluded Sunday with a Benediction, and the announcement that next year's convention will be May 2-4 in Lake Placid.



**FATHERS DAY SPECIAL** — At Rochester Museum and Science Center's Eisenhower Auditorium, 2 p.m. Sunday, June 17: Eliot Fintushel of MIMeworkshop plays his story, *The Moon Is in the Way*; \$1.50 adults, \$1 under 12. Box office opens 1 p.m.

**CLASSIC FILMS** — Ever Since Venus (1944), 2 and 8 p.m. June 14, RMSC museum auditorium; covered by museum general admission fee.

**SENIOR CITIZEN MATINEE** — Charles Laughton, Binnie Barnes, in *Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), Dryden Theatre, Eastman House, 1:30 p.m. June 14.

**MEMORIAL ART GALLERY FILMS** — Two short features on American music, 3 p.m. Sunday, June 17; part three of *The Long Search*, on Buddhism in Japan, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 19.

**CORNERSTONE PARK CONCERT** — Roger Eckers, noon-1 p.m. Friday, June 15, at Broad and Stone streets.

**AUCTION** — Antiques, glassware, linens, at Schnacky Community Center, Rt. 64, Mendon, 1 p.m. Saturday, June 16; doors open at noon. Organized by Seton Branch 28 for benefit of St. Mary's Hospital.

**SETON BRANCH 80** — Work meeting at home of Mrs. William Dadey, Saddleback Trail, 7:30 tonight, June 13.

**ROCHESTER DIABETES ASSOCIATION** — Open meeting 8 p.m. June 19, Asbury First United Methodist Church, 1050 East Ave. Talks on new programs and plans developed at national headquarters, American Diabetes Association. Information: 271-1260.

**STAR THEATRE** — Juggernaut, science fiction spectacular June 18-Sept. 9, 8 p.m. and matinees, at RMSC Strasenburgh Planetarium. Complete schedule information: 442-7171.

**BOOK SALE** — At St. John Fisher College, in Lavery Library after-hours study room 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, June 16.

**RAIN** — Rights for American Indians Now, open meeting 7-9 p.m. Tuesday, June 19, School 37, 353 Congress. Speakers: Lee Lyons, Onondaga chief; Prof. Robert Venabels, Syracuse University Iroquois scholar.

25th Jubilee

Father William Geiger, CSSR, will observe the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood for the Redemptorist Congregation with a Mass of Thanksgiving in his home parish of St. Andrew's on Sunday, June 24 at 10:30 a.m. Father Geiger was ordained June 20, 1954 at Mt. St. Alphonsus, Esopus, N.Y. He is presently pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Church in Lancaster, Pa.

An invitation to College Students and High School Seniors:



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Keuka Unit Gets Loan For Housing

A no-interest loan of \$16,750 to the Keuka Housing Council has been announced by the Bishop Sheen Housing Foundation.

The council, under Luke Carpenter, director, will use the money to purchase and rehabilitate a home in the Penn Yan area. The home will be re-sold to a low or moderate income family.

qualifying for an interest-subsidy mortgage.

This will be the third major rehabilitation project utilizing Bishop Sheen Housing Foundations undertaken by the Keuka council, a non-profit housing association.

The funds are used to purchase the home and building materials. The labor for rehabilitation will be provided by Project BEST, a

BOCES program, as part of its apprenticeship training program.

Deadline

In order to handle copy and photographs properly, all news releases must be received by the Courier-Journal by noon Thursday for the following week's edition.