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Lenten Regulations

Today, Ash Wednesday, is a day of fast and abstinence from meat. Good Friday is the only other day of both fast and abstinence.

Other Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence from meat.

The fast is defined as one full meal a day, with two lighter meals. It is required of those 21 to 59 years of age.

The prohibition against meat on Fridays applies to those 14 years of age and older.

A Catholic should not lightly excuse himself from these practices.

State Looking 'Favorably' On Hornell Hospital Merger

By Martin Toombs
Southern Tier Editor

Hornell — The members of the Interim Advisory Committee on the merger of the Hornell hospitals who traveled to Albany Feb. 13 to present their plans to the state Office of Health Systems Management (OHSM) reported the following day

that the plan received positive comments.

Thomas P. Weil, who is consulting with the hospitals on the merger, termed the reaction of the OHSM staff "favorable," and reported that they would study the proposal and visit Hornell sometime in the next six weeks.

The visit is "a most favorable sign," Weil said, noting that if they didn't think the proposal was good enough or close enough to what was needed, "they wouldn't be making the trip."

At the press conference Feb. 14 at Bethesda, the issue of sterilizations and abortions in the merged facility was raised, as it has been by a local doctor who is a member of the Interim Advisory Committee.

Concerning sterilizations in the merged hospital, Carl Wellington, the Bethesda board president, read a statement approved by his board which called for guarantees that sterilizations would be performed in the merged facility "without prejudice" before the board's executive committee would "sign off and enter a consolidation agreement."

Questioned about the St. James position, Sister Rene McNiff, administrator, said that the St. James board agreed to that stipulation in the Letter of Intent that was

The hospitals have prepared a booklet explaining the merger process that has brought them to this point in their discussions. It may be obtained by contacting either St. James Mercy or Bethesda hospital.

approved in the fall of 1978 and explained at that time. She further explained that the provisions of the Letter of Intent will be binding on the new corporation's board.

Wellington and Sister Rene confirmed that an agreement also was made at the same time, after a legal study, that abortions would not be performed in the merged health care facility. Attorney Judy Norman of Nixon, Hargrave of Rochester, also at the press conference, repeated the opinion she gave the hospitals that they have the legal right to make such a rule.

Sister Rene further noted that the doctors in the area were in agreement with that stipulation when it was made.

Wellington noted that while Dr. Robert Hammond has been publicly asking

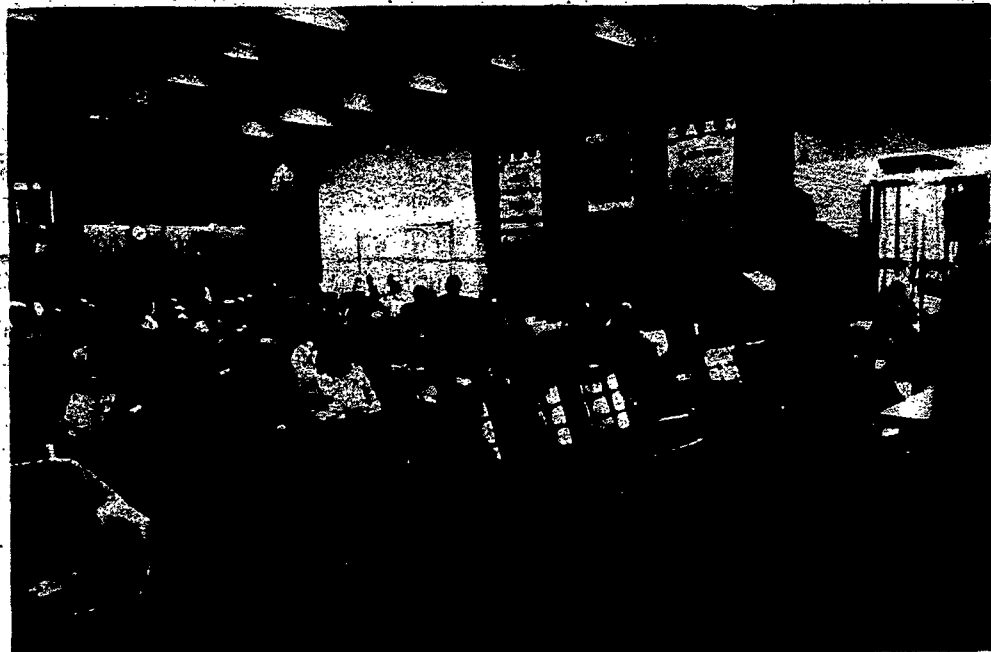
questions about the plans for sterilizations and abortions, he has had access to the information, including a letter sent to him a year ago, from which he read sections. Dr. Hammond is one of the representatives of the local physicians on the Interim Advisory Committee, and had the opportunity to be one of those going to Albany for the conference with state officials, he said, although he did not go.

Spencer Crow, St. James board president, reacted to the discussion by noting his concern that such issues should command "so much attention" when the merger deals with so many issues vital to the future of health care in Hornell. He termed it an "extremely unfortunate situation."

Weil related that the meeting in Albany began with congratulations from the health planners for the Hornell effort to merge the hospitals.

Weil noted that seven persons representing the hospitals, the administrators, board presidents, a doctor, Ms. Norman, and himself,

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Clergy Conference

More than 280 diocesan priests gathered last week at the Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua for the diocesan Clergy Conference. Among those in attendance at the pair of two-day sessions were Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Auxiliary Bishops John E. McCafferty and Dennis W. Hickey. Above, Bishop Clark and Father Robert Kennedy lead the opening prayer service in the lounge of the retreat house.

Stewardship Report Issued

(Stewardship catching on across country. Story on Page 7.)

The diocesan Office of Development issued a summary report on the Christian Stewardship 1979 program last week to all parishes. The report showed that although fewer parishes participated in last year's program the average number of parish respondents increased nearly 13 percent.

Stewardship '79 involved some 3,000 volunteers who visited an estimated 20,000 homes on Stewardship Sunday last October. The development office reported that more than 25,000 commitments were given by parishioners who were visited. The number of commitments increased 12.5 percent over Stewardship '78.

James Georger, development administrator,

said he was very pleased with the results and plans for Stewardship 1980 are well under way.

Christian Stewardship is a year long project that culminates with a visit to families living in a parish by a trained volunteer. The volunteer asks members of each family to fill out a Stewardship Commitment Card. The card is designed to find out the spiritual needs each family member has so that the parish may serve them more effectively.

The card also asks each parishioner what he or she may be interested in doing to help the parish. These cards are then filed by the parish for use in the coming year.

Two priests who took part in Stewardship '79 commented on the program last

week. Father Francis Blighton, associate pastor at St. Stephen's, Geneva, said that their Stewardship program was a success. One result of the program was an increase in hospital visits by parishioners. Father Blighton said that 60 parishioners volunteered to take communion to hospital patients.

He said that these people have found a real joy in this ministry, and the work they perform is very important.

Father Edward Steinkirchner, pastor of Holy Ghost Church in Gates, reported that Stewardship "worked very well in our parish." Father Steinkirchner said that one concrete result of the program was an increase in parish revenue through the Sunday collections. In the Jan. 12 parish bulletin Father Steinkirchner reported that

"Stewardship commitments have increased the collection \$13,500 since the first week of October over the same period last year."

He added that the parish plans to participate in the program on a yearly basis.

Georger said that all parishes are being encouraged to participate annually. "Yearly participation keeps parishes abreast of the needs of its parishioners and allows the people to reassess their commitments to the parish each year."

Stewardship 1980 has begun and Georger said that speakers and slide shows on Stewardship are available for those parishes interested in the program. The development office is located in the Pastoral Office, 1150 Buffalo Rd., (716) 328-3210.

Education Council To Be Discussed

Canandaigua — A committee meeting to study the feasibility of and possible structure for a "diocesan educational council" has been opened to the public and will be held at Notre Dame Retreat House, this evening, Feb. 20, at 7:30 p.m.

The group is a subject committee of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and is being convened by Anthony J. Rosati, who more than a year ago introduced a proposal for establishing a central Diocesan School Board into DPC discussions.

Rosati was charged with studying the feasibility of such a proposal last November.

The ad hoc group will attempt to "define a broadly based educational structure that can identify, define, and set priorities among Catholic educational objectives; specify programs for achieving goals; and make decisions concerning implementation," Rosati said last week.

He stated that he will introduce an outline for the organizational structure of such a council at the meeting. The proposed outline calls for all members of the diocese to elect educational committees at the parish and regional levels, and for the regional committees to elect the diocesan council.

Rosati also said that he will present models of such structures already functioning in other dioceses. He stated that he has been told by Dr. Mary Angela Harper, chairperson of the National Association of Boards of Education that 135 other dioceses in the U.S. have established such structures. The NABE is a part of the National Catholic Education Association, Rosati said.

Rosati urged interested diocesan to voice their concerns, either for or against the proposal, at the meeting. The snow date for the meeting is Monday, March 10.