



A White House Conference that Worked

When I told a friend that I had agreed to serve on our state's White House Conference for Families and also to present a workshop at the Conference, he said, "I knew you were a writer but I didn't know you were a masochist to boot."

Actually, it was risky, what with people in other states all but hitting one another with picket signs in order to save the family from each other and every special interest group in America trying to use the Conference to foster its own interests. But I agreed because I sensed what the Conference could be and do for families.

In many countries there is a family watchdog commission in government whose purpose it is to let legislators know the impact of proposed legislation and rules on the family. Our country has no such official body working on behalf of the family and we complain loudly about that. "Who cares about the family in Washington?" we ask. "Who's listening to the family?"

But when the White House called a Conference to listen to families and to find ways of their impacting legislation and federal monies, there was an immediate national reaction: "The federal government is trying to take over the family." Placards were made, meetings were called, and most of the state conferences effectively demolished by special interest groups.

Dolores Curran

Talks With Parents



I'm happy to say that the conference in the state of Colorado was not one. Therefore, it didn't receive the national publicity of those who self-destructed. From the beginning, our planning commission worked toward cooperating and sharing ideas and facilities for supporting the family instead of competing for the controlling religious ideology or secular philosophy of the family. We were almost successful on both counts.

I had some trepidation about my workshop because of its topic: "The Church as Family Support Center." I spoke on the use of local churches as effective centers for neighborhood parent education, family communication, drug education, day care, elderly, and other services. I mentioned many churches around the country that are already doing this, the problems they encountered and the gratifying results. There were 80 in my workshop, and they could have used it to battle one another

over ideologies but instead they were intensely interested in learning from one another.

Some told of how their churches offer space to a federally sponsored program for the elderly which involves weekly blood pressure clinics, nutrition and prescription checkup, and other services. "How can we get in touch with the program?" other participants asked, and addresses were exchanged. This sharing expanded to embrace many areas and when the two-hour workshop ended, participants clustered to share more.

Sure, we had differing ideologies and hidden agendas. One woman spoke emotionally of the need to go back to the Bible for family happiness, stating that "if we all read the Bible 15 minutes daily, we would have no more family problems." Participants listened politely and gave her acknowledgement and respect, but it didn't prevent them from talking about more tangible ways of dealing with subjects like lack of housing, isolation and child abuse.

Our conference showed me that large groups of people truly interested in the welfare of families can work together without diminishing the beliefs of one another. I've lost patience with those who come to such efforts to sandbag them and then later complain that the government doesn't care. It cares as much as we care, no more, no less, and if we indulge in the luxury of battle rather than the more prosaic effort of sharing, we have no right to gripe.

A Rich Confirmation Program

"Will the candidates for confirmation from the city of Corinth please come forward."

Father James Lang issued this strange invitation to a group of eight young men and women on a recent Sunday afternoon at St. Augustine's tiny church in Baldwinsville, N.Y. However, he seemed the logical person to make that summons. After all, this priest from another parish had guided them through a unique live-in retreat which began on Friday night of the eventful weekend and concluded but a few hours before they received the Holy Spirit in Confirmation.

There was reason behind the "city of Corinth" label. This column explains that, and describes the highlights of St. Augustine's remarkably rich confirmation program.

It all started two years earlier when the candidates were seventh grade students. Gathered in clusters of eight, they began an every-other-week, year and a half long preparation session in a specially trained couple's home. During that time they followed the standard curriculum for a confirmation class. These meetings and the companion service projects, nevertheless, kept pointing to the retreat on confirmation weekend.

Each leadership couple knew they would be responsible for one of St. Paul's cities on this weekend and consequently studied their assigned letter(s) for months in advance under the direction of

Fr. Joseph M. Champlin

Our Church Family



the pastor, Father Thomas McLaughlin.

Upon arrival at the renewal center, each cluster received a new leader couple and was given the name of a city addressed by St. Paul in his epistles — Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, etc. Throughout their three days they examined the main themes of that specific letter. In addition, the "Church at Corinth," to illustrate, ate, prayed, discussed, worked and played together.

Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Costello of Syracuse, who was to confirm them that Sunday afternoon at 3, opened the retreat on Friday evening, thus developing a closer relationship with these young men and women which would greatly enhance the later celebration of this sacrament.

Father Lang assumed the dynamic leadership role for the rest of the weekend. He employed many techniques common today in such spiritual experiences for youth, but geared them to confirmation. Thus, for example, they learned ap-

propriate songs for the Mass and every "city" also fashioned a banner reflecting their letter's theme.

Parents were asked to write letters to the young people expressing their love and their hopes for them in terms of confirmation. In response to these received on the weekend, the candidates composed similar notes which were hand-delivered just prior to the Sunday ceremony and brought tears to many mothers and fathers.

The retreat concluded at noon, offering the confirmands just enough time to return home, change and reassemble for their Confirmation mass.

With that kind of preparation, the candidates displayed unusual excitement, joy and enthusiasm during the liturgy. They came forward into the sanctuary for the sacrament eight to ten strong, grouped as a "city" and carrying their banner which was hung near the altar. Each confirmand wore a special garment personally decorated with symbols of the Spirit and after communion received a candle recalling the link between Confirmation and Baptism.

On Pentecost Sunday, these young people, confirmed a few months ago, will be hosted by members of last year's class to a day-long renewal day. At that time they will have the opportunity to register for one of several group service programs or to indicate the type of individualized aid for others they intend to pursue.

Chef and Cleanup Man All in One

Some men marry girls for their cooking (or so it is commonly believed). At our house the situation was reversed, although the head of the house's prowess in the kitchen was only one of a dozen or more reasons I said yes.

On our first date, he invited me to the home of some friends, Sylvia and Roger Gorman, and once there proceeded to "create" dinner for all of us.

The dish which he originated and named is dubbed "Baked Rigoletto" due to the fact that it utilizes the pasta known as rigatoni and because the chef happens to be a Verdi fan.

Whenever he offers to cook on the weekends, Baked Rigoletto is the standard request. In our pre-diet days we used to consume it with a loaf of crusty

Sarah Child

All in the Family



Italian bread and a bottle of wine. Now in the interest of saving calories we skip the bread and drink a little extra wine. (It doesn't save any calories, but by the time we've had the second glass we don't care any more.)

Possibly the best feature about this dish (after the fact that it tastes so good) is that this particular chef washes, dries and puts away every pan, pot and utensil as he uses it. What more could any housewife ask?

BAKED RIGOLETTO

1 1/2 pounds rigatoni
1 large can tomato puree or
1 qt. spaghetti sauce

1/2 pound mozzarella
2 medium green peppers
1 pound Italian sausage

Cook sausage thoroughly in a little water. Prick, and drain fat. Slice and set aside. In separate pan cook sliced peppers in olive oil until soft. Drain. Shred mozzarella. Cook and drain rigatoni. In three quart oven proof bowl begin layering ingredients beginning with sauce and rigatoni, then cheese, meat and peppers. Continue until finished, topping with sauce.

Bake in moderate oven (350 degrees) for about 30 minutes or until cheese is thoroughly melted.

Serve green salad and chablis or whatever you've got in the house. Baked Rigoletto is not snobbish. Enjoy!