

Fr. Joseph M. Champlin



Our Church Family

Prayerful Pope

Nearly 200 young men from our country presently are preparing for the priesthood in Rome, Italy. They come from many dioceses, reside at the North American College in that eternal city and study at one of several Roman universities.

A new Holy Father early in his pontificate customarily visits this institution located but a 10 minute walk from St. Peter's basilica.

Pope John Paul II has been faithful to that tradition and graced the college with an exceptionally long (from 4 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.) stay several months ago.

The main corridor contains a series of framed color photos which recall the most recent papal visitation: It was a typical John Paul II performance, a dramatic event which touched faculty, students and workers as well. But it also highlighted a side of the Holy Father not always stressed.

The warmth, openness and engaging smile we have come to expect in that man. Thus, a picture of the pope planting a memorial redwood tree, signing the guest book, posing with his arm around one seminarian or looking up and patting a 6'6" future priest on the head hardly surprises us.

Even so, his exceptionally tender concern for individuals amazed on-lookers. Pope John Paul II shook hands and spoke briefly with every faculty member (anticipated), with each seminarian (unusual), but for him rather ordinary), and with all the employees remarkable).

The radiant smiles on those men and women who day after day serve food, wash dishes, clean floors and mow lawns revealed just how much this gesture lifted their spirits and made them feel recognized or important.

I was most struck, however, by one photo. It caught Pope John Paul II in the chapel's sacristy, just prior to vesting before Mass. He was alone, kneeling on the floor, bent forward, head down, praying before a crucifix. This period of private preparatory prayer had not been planned by the college hosts; it developed spontaneously from his own heart.

That picture of the Holy Father seemed to unlock for me the secret of his powerful personality. We grant, he possesses a keen mind, an extraordinary talent as a linguist, an abundance of energy, a kind face and a captivating style, natural in part, yet trained to perfection.

Nevertheless, his straight forward statements, and ready willingness to speak

God's unpopular word could only emanate from a person with a unique sense of self-possession or a habit of deep prayerfulness or both. Still, even people with supreme self-confidence, waver at times in the face of opposition; unless they also walk closely in the Lord's presence those convictions tend to soften when consistently attacked.

Pope John Paul's hunger for prayer not only appears to be the source of his courage; it likewise reflects a growing, positive movement in the Church today.

An article this spring on the Church in France painted a dim portrait except for evidences of a resurgence in the people's prayer life. As French Catholicism enters the present decade, the one great sign of renewal is the extraordinary revival of contemplative life. While the number of Catholics entering religious life has diminished, one out of every three novices now enters a contemplative rather than an active order. Ten years ago, the proportion was one out of ten.

Another scholar, speaking of the United States, maintains "this is an age, certainly unparalleled in many centuries, of a new and profound and widespread interest in prayer."

We see this realized in the Holy Father's lifestyle; in turn, his example further stimulates that growth in prayerfulness among Catholics.

Teachers Get Sober Lesson In Fun-Filled Conference

By Martin Toombs

Waterloo — More than 200 Catholic school teachers from the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier areas listened to "EL-I-NOR" at their annual teacher's conference at St. Mary's, Sept. 19.

"EL-I-NOR," as she referred to herself during her laughter-punctuated presentation, was Dr. Elinor Ford, the widely known educator who now serves as vice president and publisher of Sadlier Inc., and a professor of education at Fordham University.

She was the featured speaker at the Monroe Area conference earlier the same day.

Using a British accent to state the opinions of academics, and a Bronx accent for misguided educational theoreticians, including herself, she began her talk by assuring those present that they were the "best teachers in the world."

Laughter of self-recognition often interrupted her remarks; especially her comments that she was sure the teachers were happy to be "here looking at me," rather than "you-know-where looking at you-know-who."

Catholic schools, she said, have "gotten through our dark days," and the public schools are now entering them as their enrollment drops while Catholic school enrollment gradually increases.

One reason, she said, is that while public school educators acquire BA, MA and PhD degrees, Catholic School teachers have a much more important degree: A "CS" or "common sense" degree.

A CS degree means that "you didn't cast out what was successful in the past," but



Sister Roberta Tierney, director of General Education, Elinor Ford, and Father Richard Kinsky, superintendent of Catholic schools, prepare to greet some 900 teachers who were on hand for last Friday's conference at Bishop Kearney High School.

Photo by Joan M. Smith

added what was necessary to the curriculum to prepare children for the 21st century.

And she explained, in the Bronx accent, how EL-I-NOR was a major author in the 1960s of New Math, "a program which gave students the ability to discuss the communicative property of addition of two and three," but not the ability to do the addition.

And then in the 1970s, teachers turned to reading and developed "72 reading groups for 35 kids."

The real difference between Catholic and public schools, Dr. Ford said, is that Catholic school teachers "also minister to the young people they serve."

"Your kids do better," she said, "because you have first helped them to love Jesus."

And teachers can't teach about Jesus, she stated, if the

children "haven't experienced love." For the average child, 30 minutes a week is spent in family activity, and 27 hours is spent watching television; and, Dr. Ford observed, "you wonder why they don't listen to you."

In a video tape she did for parents, she said, she told them to send their children to school with the knowledge that despite their failings or wrong doings, they are loved.

She asked the teachers: "Can you imagine what teaching would be like?" if all the students heard "I love you" on the way out the door.

And, she reminded the teachers, while New York State has begun minimum competency tests, thus making (Bronx accent) achievement of the minimum as the mark of success, Catholic school teachers have

always demanded the best of their students.

Jesus never said, "Be ye minimally competent," and the teachers should never say, "Be ye perfect," but rather, "Be the best you can be right now."

If a child can only produce a scrawl, she said, accept it; but, "If a child can produce a symphony — have mercy on our souls if we take less."

In conclusion, she told the teachers that as they continue the school year, "Forget about two days; the guilt of yesterday, and the worry of tomorrow."

And when Sister Roberta Tierney, diocesan director of the Division of Education, thanked Dr. Ford for her presentation, the teachers rose in a standing ovation.

Pastors and Politics

What They Can and Cannot Do In Regard to Tax-Exempt Status

By Brenda Jenkins Religion Today

Washington — Pastors across the country, faced with an election campaign in which there are many political issues that are in themselves issues about which people of religion are intensely concerned, often find themselves in a dilemma over what they can and cannot do and not jeopardize the tax-exempt status of their church.

Although some of the regulations, handed down largely through the Internal Revenue Service, which holds the power over tax-exemption, escape the bounds of ordinary logic, there is really little that pastors and their congregations must fear. The latitude of activity, particularly on the part of a pastor, is fairly broad.

The basic rule is that churches are exempt from federal taxes so long as they do not participate in political campaigns in the sense that the church as a whole does not give itself over to crusading for a particular candidate.

The picture is less clear, however, if a church launches a campaign on such an issue as abortion. While the church may consider such an issue one which is at the heart of its beliefs — a moral injustice

against which it must speak — it could get into trouble for publicly endorsing a candidate either for abortion or one against it.

The government generally takes the position that abortion is more a political issue than it is a moral issue, thus putting itself at odds with the Roman Catholic Church and the vast majority of fundamentalist and evangelical churches, the second largest bloc of religious people in the country.

The following are some political or electoral do's and don'ts applicable to churches and their pastors, according to Attorney Alan Dye in a paper made available to Religion Today:

A pastor may individually and personally endorse candidates for political office.

A church may not endorse candidates for political office; and a pastor may not endorse candidates on behalf of his church.

A pastor's personal endorsement may be made from the pulpit if it is clear that it is his personal view and not that of the church.

A pastor may allow his name to be used as a supporter of a candidate in the candidate's own political advertisements. In this connection, the pastor may be identified as pastor of a

particular church.

Churches may engage in nonpartisan voter registration and voter education activities so long as such activities are not intended to benefit any political candidate or party.

A church may allow political candidates to speak on church premises on the same basis that civic groups and other organizations are allowed to. If civic groups and other organizations are required to pay some rent for using the church property, the political candidate should be charged the same amount.

A candidate should not be allowed to appeal to a church congregation at a church service for support of funds to be used in his political campaign.

Lists of members of the church congregation may be provided to candidates for use in seeking support or raising funds only on the same basis that such lists are made available to other individuals and organizations. If a charge is normally made for such a list, the candidate should pay the same amount. No favoritism should be shown among candidates in providing a list of congregation members.

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