



'The Society That Nobody Knows' But Which Your Parish May Need

The St. Vincent de Paul Society was founded some 147 years ago in France and has been active in the United States since 1845 when the first American branch was organized in St. Louis.

Today, the society is working in 80 percent of the dioceses in this country with more than 4,000 parish conferences actively engaged in its work.

Yet, it has been recently called "the society that nobody knows."

Part of the reason for this is that the society deliberately keeps a low profile, still following the advice of its 19th century founder, Frederic Ozanam: "It is more important to act than to speak; it is more important to be than to act."

As a Sorbonne student, Ozanam was a member of a circle of Catholic students who took part in discussion. Looking for a way to bring Christianity to the cynical world of the time, Ozanam said, "Let's go to the poor."

Thus was born the St. Vincent de Paul Society and though its founders had no original intention of expanding the organization, its basic appeal has caused its worldwide growth.

Though the low profile it tries to maintain may be the principal reason for its relative obscurity, there is even more reason for its comparative anonymity in our own diocese — there is only one conference here.

Apparently, the society was a bit more active earlier in the century, but at present the only conference is at Christ the King parish and its president, William Schmitz, feels it is a worthwhile enough project for other parishes to consider.

The Christ the King conference was established

four years ago at the behest of Father Thomas, CSB, pastor. "It has worked so well at Christ the King," Schmitz said, "that I think other parishes should try it."

The Christ the King conference has eight members and Schmitz says the average membership is from 8 to 12. The conference maintains liaison with the diocese through Maurice Tierney, director of Catholic Charities, and it works with such agencies as the Spanish Apostolate, the Catholic Worker, houses, Human Development, and the Come-Unity Center in Wayne County.

Where does it get its funds? According to Schmitz, finances come mainly from boxes set up in the church at Christ the King. The conference also collects food and clothing formally at

Thanksgiving and Christmas and when needed throughout the year. "We do more than supply good," he said. "We also try to

render services. For instance, some of our members refurbished a room at Bethany House (a shelter for battered women). "We do most of our work outside of the confines of the parish," Schmitz said, adding, "for example, we recently put on a breakfast at St. Joseph House of Hospitality; we have cooperated in finding clothes and furniture for a Vietnamese family and we have worked with alcoholics. A good deal of our effort is in helping migrant workers in Wayne County, through the good offices of the Rev. D.L. Baize at the Come-Unity Center. We also cooperate with the diocesan rural ministry, with Fathers Wiant and Spilly.

"In fact," Schmitz added, "we have never had a situation we couldn't handle."

The conference also has a spiritual dimension. The group meets every Sunday for a half-hour to discuss business but also to join in prayer and spiritual discussion. Schmitz hopes the society spreads to other parishes. In addition to those he already has been in contact with, he invites any others interested to write or call Father Mailloux at Christ the King parish, Kings Highway, Rochester, N.Y. 14617, telephone (716) 286-1288.

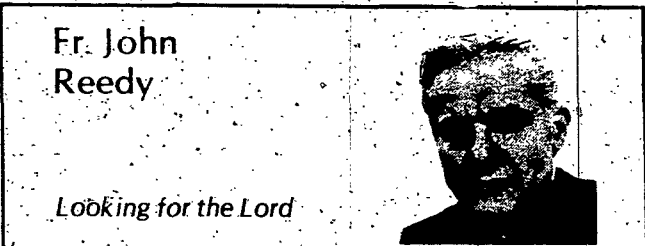


George Galen, on ladder, and Dick Veitch helped refurbish Bethany House as part of a St. Vincent de Paul Society project.



Fiesta!

The congregation at Corpus Christi Church last Friday celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Golden Jubilee of the Misioneras Guadalupeanas del Espiritu Santo. The occasion was highlighted by a Mass presided over by Bishop Matthew B. Clark and concelebrated by several priests associated with Rochester's Hispanic community. Father James Callan (center picture), pastor of the parish, describes some of the rites to the bishop prior to the Mass.



Fr. John Reedy

Looking for the Lord

The Hidden Renewal Of Faith

There is a promising development, relatively unnoticed, taking place in the Catholic life of the United States.

I'm referring to the various ways in which many people are managing to renew their faith commitment.

It's not a single technique or movement. For a lot of people the more personal, intense experience of prayer in the charismatic movement has given a new vitality to their religious lives.

For some, especially young volunteers, their direct contact with raw poverty, with people struggling for the basic needs of life, gives a new and lasting meaning to the Lord's commandment, "Love one another."

Priests, religious — even bishops — disappear from their regular assignments for a period of three or six months, possibly a year. It's time given to updating their theological understanding. But, for many, it also involves a time of deeper prayer and communication which revitalizes their faith.

All of this is important for the church because, personal witness is the most powerful way of sharing our knowledge of our commitment to God.

When I come in contact with a man or woman who manifests the deep peace, the sense of trust, the generosity of service which arise from a profound faith, that is a challenge to me. I find myself wondering how I can bring those qualities into my own life.

Monotony and routine drain the vitality from the life of faith. All spiritual writers have recognized this.

Looking back, I suspect that those peaceful com-

fortable years before Vatican II had a widespread contagion of religious monotony and routine.

We had a lot of busy institutions, a great deal of activity, but a concentration on institutions and activities can be an insidious excuse for failure to deal with the source of all religion, our personal relationship with God.

The fact that we were busy about religious things did not necessarily mean that we were truly religious.

The turmoil and hurts which accompanied the changes in our society and in our church made many of us aware of the need for a vital, personal experience of faith.

It is taking place under different names — religious renewal programs, continuing education programs for priests and bishops, efforts at revitalizing parish life and worship.

You can't see the results in one large organization or movement. For this reason, I suspect that most Catholics in the United States are unaware of what is happening.

But from what I hear and what I see, I'm sure that the quality of genuine religious life is changing for a great

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