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Report Says Families Need Support

By Martin Toombs
 Southern Tier Editor

Elmira — Support programs to help people deal with change and with family situations was a major theme of the report from the Diocesan Family Ministry Task Force which was presented at a meeting April 5 at St. Peter and Paul.

The task force conducted hearings last September at five locations in the diocese to begin its survey. To that testimony, the task force added results from a questionnaire sent to those who attended the hearings, discussions with several pastors, and the research and personal experience of the task force members.

Forty persons attended the workshop, the first of five being given to describe the survey results. The remaining sessions, at 7:30 p.m. on each occasion, will be Wednesday, April 29, at Holy Trinity, Webster; Thursday, April 30, at the Pastoral Center, Rochester; Wednesday, May 6, at St. Patrick's, Seneca Falls; and Wednesday, May 13, at St. Mary's, Dansville.

Presented by Susan and Frank Staropoli, Family Life Office directors, the report consisted of 10 statements which express problems facing families. Staropoli explained that the task force will be preparing specific proposals to address the problems raised.

Those attending also saw a filmstrip titled "Sounds of the Family," which is available for use in parishes, and heard descriptions of many proven family ministry programs.



Susan and Frank Staropoli, diocesan Family Life Office directors, presenting the results of the task force surveying family life needs in the diocese at the session April 5 at St. Peter and Paul's, Elmira.

The 10 statements, given in no particular order, represent recurrent themes in the survey results, Staropoli said.

Mrs. Staropoli noted the need for support groups within parishes to provide support in such instances as the death of a child, or in times of extended illness. She suggested that a volunteer in a parish could match persons in need with those willing to assist in such circumstances.

Conflicts over values within families are reflected in more than one statement; Staropoli noted that society's values can cause problems in a family. The most common pressures cited in the survey were financial and job related, he said, pointing out the difficulty caused by job duties which hamper opportunities for families to be together.

The statements pertaining to priests have caused them to consider proposing a three-day clergy conference on family life, Mrs. Staropoli said. They have copies of such a program which was successfully

conducted in another diocese, she noted.

One person commented upon the difficulty caused by the priests' different lifestyle, and added that it is not a criticism of priests, but an acknowledgement of the situation.

Staropoli commented that some priests themselves confessed ignorance of family life to the task force.

Father Richard O'Connell, St. Peter and Paul pastor, noted his frustration with the comments that the teachings of Vatican II have not been fully explained. He suggested that such comments come from those who have not listened to the explanations.

The call for a broadening of the term "family," comes from the fact that many people exclude themselves when they hear family mentioned. Not only single people but also one-parent families and families without children often don't consider them-

selves a "family," Staropoli said.

The concern that parishes harm family life by calling individuals to meetings was addressed when they scheduled their current sessions, Staropoli commented. Noting the difficulty of spending time talking about family life that could be spent with a person's family, Staropoli said that parishes should try to avoid calling a different family member to a meeting each night of the week.

The Staropolis also gave brief descriptions of more than 20 existing programs for family enrichment, healing or marriage preparation. Persons involved in several of them then staffed tables to answer questions and distribute information.

The Statements

- Because the support and encouragement of the extended family has dwindled for many reasons, we need to develop support groups (parish or regional) based on common need for support and encouragement and help in crises and special circumstances.

- Changing values in society and the complexity of modern life are causing confusion, anger and conflict within the family with these pressures and changes.

- Church leadership (lay, clerical and religious) is either ignorant of or unwilling to work toward the reforms of Vatican II and the realities of family life.

- Changes in the Church as a result of Vatican II have not been clearly explained. This has created confusion and anxiety among family members.

- A broader understanding of the term "family" is needed to be more inclusive of real-life situations of people in households.

- Families need more professional resources, consciously rooted in gospel values, for a variety of services: counseling, health care, spirituality, the skills of family living, and how to cope with changes in the family life cycle.

- Parishes now tend to disrupt family life. Parishes need to develop a greater sensitivity to family units (as distinguished from individuals) in planning activities and developing ministries — in relation to those served and those serving.

- Parishes and the diocese are still too focused on "saving the saved" (the regulars, the nearby, the convenient) versus outreach (to the poor, the rural, those isolated from the mainstream).

- The Church should be a more vocal advocate in the secular milieu for family values and needs.

- Parents want to convey their faith and values to their children but are unsure about how to do that. Often, they don't understand their own faith and values.

Notre Dame Names Winners

Elmira — Notre Dame High School has announced the 10 winners of its academic scholarships for the 1981-82 school year.

Sister Mary Walter Hickey, principal, reports that the winners, currently eighth grade students, were selected by the scholarship committee from more than 60 candidates, with the identities unknown to the committee. The decisions were based on present school records, recommendations, a standardized test and a written essay.

The winners are:

Paul Bednarek, son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Bednarek of Sayre, Pa., a student at Epiphany School, Sayre.

Rita Cicciariello, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Anthony Cicciariello of Elmira, a student at Ernie Davis Junior High.

Amy Cloke, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Cloke of Elmira, a student at St. Patrick's Junior High.

Sean Daugherty, son of Mr. and Mrs. Barney Daugherty of Elmira Heights, a student at Cohen Middle School.

Timothy Frisk, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alan Frisk of Sayre, a student at Rowe Middle School, Athens, Pa.

Raymond Graboski, son of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Graboski of Elmira, a student at St. Patrick's Junior High.

Anthony Guinta, son of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Guinta of Elmira, a student at St. Patrick's Junior High.

Julianne Herbst, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Herbst of Horseheads, a student at St. Mary Our Mother School, Horseheads.

Vincent Kapral, son of Mr. and Mrs. Luigi Rossi of Corning, a student at Corning Catholic School South.

And Margaret Kozlowski, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Kozlowski of Horseheads, a student at St. Mary Our Mother School.

And Mrs. Green Kozlowski, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Kozlowski of Horseheads, a student at St. Mary Our Mother School.

Diaconate Candidates Discuss Their Call

By Martin Toombs
 Southern Tier Editor

Elmira — Three candidates for the permanent diaconate met with the Sisters of St. Joseph living at St. Joseph's Hospital April 1 for an informal program designed to acquaint the Sisters with the candidates and their impending ordination.

Father Timothy McGough, hospital chaplain, explained that he convened the session in response to questions he has heard from many, including the Sisters, on the future roles of the deacons. He noted that he has requested a deacon candidate to work with him next year.

The candidates' wives also attended the session, and told of their perspectives on their husbands' new role. The three candidates were William Dougherty of St. Charles Borromeo, Elmira Heights; George Welch of Our Lady of Lourdes, and Stanley Douglas, of St. Mary's Parish.

The three told of their application to the diaconate program, noting an interest in

service which existed before the program was announced. Dougherty, crediting forces over which he has no control, told how following the interview, he and his wife were certain he would not be selected, but was. Douglas also described fortuitous events which made it possible for him to be in the first class.

The candidates also talked of their training at St. Bernard's Seminary, where they have spent a weekend a month for the past three years.

The three are in the first class of permanent deacons; next year they will work in pastoral positions in preparation for their ordination in the spring of 1982.

They also talked of concerns as they begin active pastoral work. Douglas reported his fear that he might be drafted into administrative work, while he hopes to concentrate on service.

Welch, who has young children, pointed out the need for the deacons' priest-supervisors to understand the demands of a family, and the resulting restrictions upon the

time a permanent deacon can spend on parish activities.

Several of the 20 Sisters present asked questions; support was expressed for the deacons' family responsibilities. They also asked whether or not obedience is involved in the diaconate, and Douglas responded that it was, and that while they have been assured that they would not be required to do a lot of traveling, their positions are at the bishop's discretion.

All three expressed an interest in working in their own parish next year, which has highlighted a problem caused by the diocese's priest shortage. Some pastors haven't requested a permanent deacon, the candidates said, fearing that having a deacon would damage their chances of getting or keeping an associate pastor.

When the Sisters asked what should be done to inform more people about the program, the candidates responded that meetings such as they were having were helpful. They indicated their willingness to meet with other groups for similar discussions.

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