

Survey Shows Crisis Facing Religious Orders Over Retirement Funds

Washington (RNS) — A new survey of Catholic religious communities reveals stark evidence that they face increasingly grave financial problems in trying to care for aged and infirm members.

The study, sponsored by the American Catholic bishops and the men's and women's associations of religious institutes, showed that 81.7 percent of those responding are using current operating funds to care for those no longer working.

Women's institutes reported that 27 percent of their revenue goes for care of older members and represents 68 percent of the care's cost. Men's orders reported comparable care-cost percentages of 13 and 58.

The study also showed that the median age of active religious is rapidly rising — half of all women religious are over 59 years of age and half

of all men are over 52. In contrast, only five percent of the members are under 30 (8.48 percent of the men but only 3.1 percent of the women).

"As more and more religious move into the retired category there will be fewer and fewer in the active income-producing category," the study points out. "The costs of retirement will rise but the operating revenues will decline."

Against this background it is not surprising that 58.8 percent of the communities see a financial crisis looming — 3.8 percent think it will come within three years; 12.2 within five years; 23.6 within

10 years and 19.2 after 10 years.

Five percent of the institutes said they are already in crisis. In contrast, 34.9 said they do not expect a crisis now or in the future.

As long ago as 1976 the U.S. bishops discovered, as a result of a study dealing with quite another question, that a number of institutes, especially women's institutes, were selling property to raise funds for operating expenses and allocating a sizeable percentage of the proceeds to current retirement costs.

This new study began last October.

Pope's British Visit May Be Jeopardized

London (RNS) — Pope John Paul II will call off his

scheduled visit to Britain if the crisis over the Falkland Islands "escalates." Cardinal George Basil Hume said here on his return from talks with the pope at the Vatican.

The British Roman Catholic leader and Scottish Cardinal Gordon J. Gray had made a one-day flying visit to Rome to discuss with the pope and other Vatican officials the advisability of postponing the papal pilgrimage to England, Scotland and Wales, May 28 to June 2.

Speaking to reporters at a London airport, Cardinal Hume said that the pope would make no final decision about his British trip until after his visit to Portugal, May 12 to 15.

The cardinal said the pope would then make an assessment of the Falkland Islands "situation," and if he deemed that it had "escalated," he would call off his British visit.

A conflict over sovereignty of the British-held Falkland Islands, seized by Argentina April 2, has escalated into a shooting war, with threats of increased hostilities vying with U.N. directed mediation efforts.

Board Members

Diocesan Catholic Charities last week elected several new members to its board of directors. They are Ellis P. Cosey, Gladys Santiago, Bernard Adams, Ron Good, Mary Ferguson and Sister Elizabeth Snyder. Also at that time new officers were elected: Robert J. Burke, president; John Oberlies, vice president; Sister Barbara Moore, vice president; Eugene Lilly, treasurer; Charles M. Bayer, secretary.

Vocation Event

The Sisters of Mercy Vocation Team has invited women interested in exploring the vowed life to a Mass, 7:30 p.m., June 3, at Our Lady Queen of Peace Convent, 605 Edgewood Ave. The event is part of the sisters' monthly Faith Sharing Program. Interested persons are asked to contact Sister Sheila Stevenson at Our Lady Queen of Peace, (716) 244-2175.



Commencement Speaker

Father Donald Schwab, chaplain at Rochester General Hospital, delivered the commencement address last Sunday, May 23, at St. John Fisher College's closing ceremony. The title of the address was "Things Come Together."

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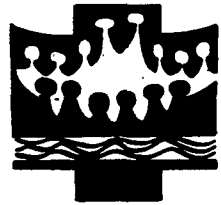
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Insights In Liturgy

By Pamela Schaeffer



We Are The Answers!

Each of us has felt the power of the Holy Spirit renewing our lives, uplifting our strength in times of weakness and stress, healing our wounds in times of illness and defeat. In troubled times, we, like the Apostles in the upper room in next Sunday's Gospel, sense the very human feelings of fear, doubt and distrust, and we have discovered that a power beyond human capability can dissolve these same feelings so that once again we can stand renewed, inspired to go out with increased vigor to face the world refreshed.

"Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth" (Ps. 104). As post-Resurrection people we can boast that this plea has been answered, for we are the answer!

Jesus entrusted to his Apostles the work of carrying his message and sharing his gifts with the world. He did this on that day when the Holy Spirit was given to them by the breath of his love, and appeared in the magnificent power of wind and fire. It was for the sake of the people in the world he loved so much, all generations, that this mystery of Pentecost was given to the Church, and it is the mission of the baptized to carry this "Good News" to the far reaches of our earthly planet. As descendants of these first followers, we have inherited Jesus' words of instruction as they appear in John's Gospel, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

With these words, and in a spirit of love and peace, with full knowledge of the suffering that lie ahead, Jesus delivered his Church into the Apostle's hands, and thus into ours. The

establishment of the Church was not entrusted to a solitary leader, but to all, with Christ as our head, our leader. The Church became one Body, the Body of Christ, and we, members of that Body. The gifts brought by the Holy Spirit are shared by all as equal members of the Body to use in building up the kingdom; each member contributing in his/her own way. The progress is tedious, slow and at times the goal seems out of reach. But, it is exactly such times as these that Jesus understood and prepared us for. "Peace be with you," he said to quiet the fear. "Peace be with you," he pronounced again after showing them the wounds he suffered.

And His peace is with us, it cradles us in periods of despair when we feel we can no longer go on, and flows from us to one another when we celebrate and become Christ's Body gathering to his Head.

During our celebrations we recognize Christ's presence and peace among us and we exchange that same peace in a greeting to one another. Finally, we emerge from our celebration with the pronouncement, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

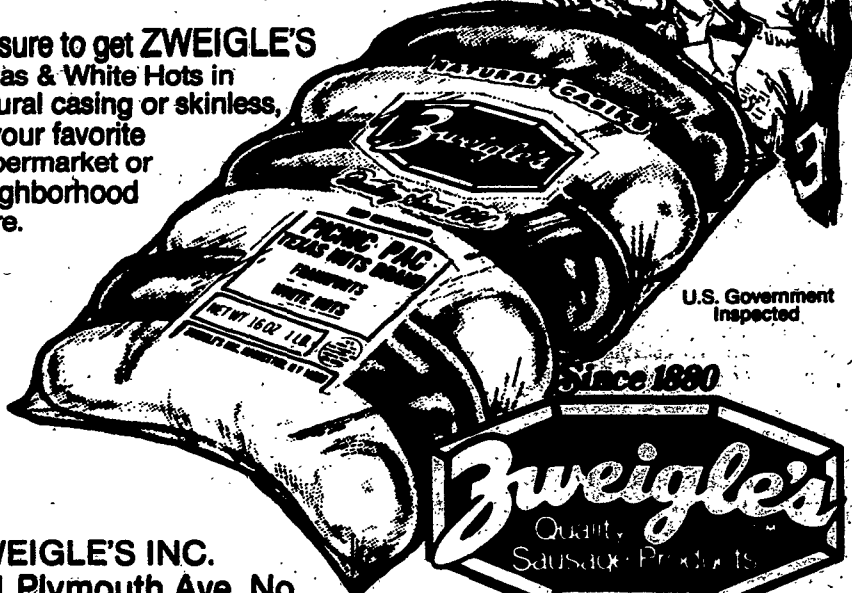
And we respond, "Thanks be to God!"

Yes, that is what we will, and must, do — go out from here to love and serve the Lord! Yes, we will take up the Church's mission, our mission, to spread Christ's message to the far reaches of our world. Yes, we will love and serve each other and bring His peace! Yes, it is going to be difficult, Jesus prepared us for the hard times and He will remain with us! Yes, we are members of the Body of Christ working to build His kingdom! We are the answer! We are the Church! Thanks be to God!

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