

Mercies Ready Final Chapter Session

The Sisters of Mercy will meet Aug. 21-26 at their motherhouse for the final week of their 1983 Chapter of Affairs. Bishop Matthew H. Clark will open the week's deliberations by celebrating the Eucharist on Sunday.

Three key areas the congregation will consider during that week will be their ministry, stewardship of resources and time, and congregational governance. These topics will be viewed in terms of the Chapter's focus: "to deepen and extend mercy."

The congregation has committed itself to holding a Chapter every four years. Sister Jean Marie Kearse,

major superior, said its purpose "is to deepen our own understanding of our call and extend our ability to be of service; in other words, to focus and interiorize our lives so that we may better witness to the merciful Christ."

She cited the words of Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, prefect of the curial office for religious in Rome, who defined a chapter as a "call to conversion... measured not by the depth or the beauty of its documents, but by its capacity to transform the intelligence and the heart of everyone."

The word "everyone" in that sentence, Sister Jean

Marie said, further quoting from Cardinal Pironio, means a Chapter is "essentially an ecclesial act, in a double sense: the whole ecclesial community has something to say in a Chapter, and the whole ecclesial community benefits from the fruits of a Chapter... (Therefore) the first question at a Chapter is always the following: What does God wish of us at this moment of the Church?"

Again citing the cardinal, Sister Jean emphasizes that a Chapter is neither a study meeting, a superficial gathering, nor a short-lived revision of life. Rather she said, in the cardinal's words, it is "a sincere attitude of conversion and a deep and painful search for the Lord's ways... for God's will in the present necessities of consecrated life... What can we do so that consecrated life may really be today a sign of the holiness of God and of the presence of His kingdom?"

That question will be put to the Chapter under three headings, Lifestyle and Spirituality, Leadership, and Ministry by the congregation's chief executives, a team of Sister Jean Marie and four other Sisters of Mercy.

"I think a unique factor in our Chapter proceedings," Sister Jean Marie said, "and one which should enable the desired 'conversion' is that the whole congregation is invited to be present and to respond to the various issues



Chapter steering committee members are (left to right) Sisters Jody Kearney, Janet Korn, Jean Marie Kearse, Rita Kaufman, Ann Miller, Mary Augustine Malley, Joan McAteer and Barbara Moore.

through a consensus process, thus arriving at the intellectual agreement of a group decision. Delegates later cast the formal vote on the statements of consensus.

Canon law requires that congregations elect Chapter delegates, she said. "Within recent times, since there's been a gradual movement towards broader participation in Chapter proceedings, we've responded to the inspiration of our times to work toward consensus understanding."

Among the specific issues the Chapter will discuss will be the Mercy Associate Program. It is hoped delegates will approve statements of

philosophy and policy for that venture. Since 1975, five women have become associate members of the congregation, sharing in all but the vows. Three other women are now deliberating on such membership.

Also relating to ministry, Sister Jean Marie said the Chapter may identify criteria by which certain ministries may be chosen by the Sisters. One of the criteria to be considered, she said, is the "support and development of lay collaboration and leadership to the end of expanding lay leadership in ministry and, when and if necessary or desirable, replacing ourselves in particular ministerial roles, in response to the signs of the times."

That point is also covered in an executive council report to be given to the Chapter. The report acknowledges that religious are a "diminishing labor force in the Church."

"We have to address the reality of letting go and not clinging to ministries where lay leadership can be enabled and so replace us," Sister Jean Marie said. "Our task is not necessarily to staff, but always to animate."

Under the heading of Stewardship, she said, is a concern for "meeting retirement and health care costs in a congregation the median age of which is 54)... (And) we need to address the whole fund development issue if we are to continue our ministry, because salaries do not meet our needs."

The Chapter will also examine the congregation's structure of government with an eye to improving the roles

of the Chapter and the central administration in better serving the needs of the congregation and the Church.

Of immediate concern for the Chapter will be a proposal that the members of the congregation and their co-workers participate in an evening prayer for peace at the Women's Encampment for Peace and Justice near the Seneca Army Depot on the Monday evening of Chapter week. Those who will attend are asking the Chapter's formal endorsement of their presence at the camp, in view of the congregation's stand on disarmament, wherein members corporately pledge to "bear public witness to the Gospel of peace in their lives and ministry until nuclear disarmament is achieved."

A full day will be given to considering the Core Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy, a document being developed and shared by Mercy Sisters in the Federation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

"What we anticipate that day," said Sister Jean Marie, "is that we will take a beginning step in terms of making the document our own, examining how we can incorporate it into our lives."

For the past several chapters, the congregation has been working toward a constitution which would ultimately be submitted to Cardinal Pironio's office. In the past three years, the Rochester congregation has been working jointly with the American federation on the Core Constitution which is moving toward finalization.

Viewpoint: Sisters Reflect



By Sister Margaret Comin, RSM

God's Peace Overcomes All Crises

So much has been written on the topic of peace that at first I wondered what I could possibly add that hasn't been said before.

Upon reflection, experiences in my own life began to surface. I realized my ideas were not the broad concept of peace but the idea of peace of mind and heart. I've thought of times when I was very aware of someone who had found peace of mind in a certain circumstance. I also thought of people who desperately sought peace of mind and heart.

My major experiences or at least those which most readily come to mind have been those from my nursing career. These have involved people who are facing surgery, some of them serious surgery, or those who are facing imminent death.

At time I have felt very humbled by the faith and peaceful acceptance of these people. At other times I have seen fear and lack of that peace about the events that are converging in their lives.

One of these was a woman in her late 30s who was dying of cancer. She had a great faith and peace about her impending death. She was quite ready to die, having made her peace with her family, friends and God.

As I spent time with her, talking and praying, the words of Jesus from St. John's gospel returned to me often: "Peace I leave with you. My own peace I give to you, a peace the world cannot give."

At another time when I was working nights, I discovered on my rounds one of my patients who was unable to sleep. In a few hours she was going to surgery. This alone causes some people problems sleeping. In this case, this was her second major surgery for cancer in less than three years.

When we began to talk, I learned that she was terrified that she was going to die in surgery or, if the surgery showed further spread of her

cancer, that she would die soon after.

Her greatest fear, however, was not that she would die but that what she had done with her life wasn't enough to assure her a place with God. She'd been a Christian all her life and had regularly attended church.

As we continued to talk, I asked her if she'd ever loved anyone. She was puzzled and so I asked, "Do you love your family?" She, of course, answered yes. Then I asked if she'd loved others, too, and again she answered yes. Then I pointed out to her that that's all God asks of us and that she had been doing that.

After a pause, she smiled and relaxed. At that moment there was a look of peace that came into her eyes. She settled down to sleep and slept quietly until morning. On her way to surgery she told me that she was no longer afraid.

I have to admit that I was as surprised as she was by my question. It certainly wasn't a conscious thing that I should ask it when I did; it just came out. I fully believe that the Holy Spirit led me to say what I did.

The thing I know beyond a doubt is that, with the assurance that God loved her and that she was doing his will by loving others, she found the peace for what lay ahead.

There have been other times when I have seen this peace bring others through crises in their lives. Each time I realize anew that this is indeed God's gift.

Seeking the peace that Christ promised brings not only peace of mind but, in the true sense of the word, a holistic peace, a peace that permeates our whole being. As we grow in our awareness that Christ lives in us, that realization gives birth to a deep inner peace and joy, that peace that we are promised that the world can neither give nor understand.

Sister Margaret Comin, RSM, is a full time masters student at SUNY Brockport in the department of public administration with an emphasis in health care.

Aquinas Publishes Scholarship Lists

Aquinas institute recently published the list of its students who will receive the Stolze and the Academic scholarships from the institution.

Stolze Scholarships of \$250 go to Thomas Giordano and Thomas Kelly of the senior class; Sean McBride, William Schenck and Brian Waldmiller, juniors; James Marchese, Leon Sawyko and Carl Scarpulla, sophomores.

In addition Stolze Scholarships of \$300 go to freshmen Paula Landry, James Murrer, Edward Przybycin and Christian Trabold.

Academic Scholarships of \$200 go to Nancy Bradshaw, Katherine Burke, Jeffrey DeGroot, Jeannine DelVecchio, Thomas Kase, Joseph Menz, Tamara Morano, Elizabeth Murty, Kevin Palcic, Anne Marie

Religious Educators Get Posts

The following people have assumed religious education positions in the Diocese of Rochester;

Craig Bullock, DRE, St. Joseph, Penfield; Sister Marcia Kusse, RSM, REA and parish visitor, St. Mary, Elmira; Sister Patricia Flass, SSJ, REC, St. Mary, Corning; Karen Dietz, REC, Holy Family, Auburn; Diane Mechowski, REC, St. Alphonsus, Auburn.

Sister Margaret Kunder, SSJ, REC, St. Michael, Penn Yan; Liz Maurer, DRE, Blessed Sacrament, Rochester; Mary Perham, REC, St. Mary, Canandaigua; Ruth Hauser, DRE, Good Shepherd, Henrietta; Margaret Herstine, director of adult education, St. Mary, Auburn; Deacon Stephen Carroll, REC, St. Michael, Newark.

Shickler, Frank Tantalo and David Tomer, seniors;

James Callerame, Karen Fanale, Pasquale Iannoli, Brian Jakubowski, Walter Mykins, Susan Papproth, Sara Phillips, Alan Pecora, Wayne Romano, Joseph Sanguedolice, Theresa Scembrot, Joseph Toscano, Daniel Whelan, Stephen Whelan and Mary Wamser, juniors;

Anne Marie Anthony, John Englert, Matthew Enright, Jeffrey Ferruzza, Jeffrey Goldstone, Michael Hursh, Richard Leonardi, Paul Mancarella, Sheila McCarty, Michael McLaen, Christopher Montesano, Timothy O'Loughlin, David Phillipone, Andrew Scheil and Alan Toth, sophomores;

Tiffany Becks, Tina Brienza, Brian Campbell, Therese Daniel, Susan Delly, James Drottar, Margaret Henderson, Anthony Inzara, Karen Kidman, David Lambert, Jennifer Lewis, Mark Lewis, Christopher McElrath, Sean McNamara, John Nuccitelli, David Smith, Eric Setzer, Kristina Skelton and Corinna Zampi, freshmen.

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