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DPC Grapples with Lay Ministries

In an unusual break from its ordinary format, the Diocesan Pastoral Council devoted virtually all of its meeting last Saturday to a discussion of the call to ministry of the laity.

Sara McLaughlin who chaired a morning panel on the subject, told the council that the "central question" of the day is how does one respond to God's call and accept responsibility for ministries in the Church?

The DPC was presented with several personal stories of people working with that question.

Those addressing the council were Tom Beiswenger, newspaper food editor and director of the folk choir at St. Mary's, Corning; Joan M. Hensler, city councilwoman and chair of the Community Development Committee; Frank Staropoli, co-director of the diocesan Office of Family Life; John C. Menihan, artist and designer; Patricia Markovitz, housewife, mother, volunteer with the Penfield Ambulance service and medical lab technician at Highland Hospital; and Roger D'Aprix, writer and international manager of Human Resources Communications for Tower, Perrin, Forster and Crosby.

"The Church is something we're still growing together with," Beiswenger concluded his talk. His presentation outlined his upbringing, a gradual and then rapid disenchantment with the Church, its teachings and its practices, and his subsequent "return" to the Church and assumption of duties with the parish folk choir.

He likened the Church to "a pair of shoes," pinching when new, comfortable in maturity.

He did not hesitate, however, to register his dissatisfaction with many elements of Catholicism and its practice. "I'm

deeply concerned about the Church's attitude toward women," he said.

Nevertheless he said he was "particularly heartened," by many developments including the U.S. bishop's pastoral "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response."

Joan Hensler used a text from Corinthians in which the different gifts of the Spirit are described to frame her talk, which covered her life story and its turning points.

Cancer is one element in her story. A bout with it ten years ago, she said, "was a real turning point. Then I really realized the healing of the Christian community. I felt 'held in the arms of the Lord.'"

Following surgery, she said, her doctor told her, "You're a different person," to which assessment she agreed. The occasion "pointed out to me my own need to be of greater service to my community."

Her rise in city politics dates from that time; and she said she considers her invitation from city leaders to run for the council a vocation.

Two years ago, cancer again developed; and at that point she said, she discovered the ministry of prayer from Hattie Harris.

Ms. Harris was later described by Sister Barbara Moore, RSM, sister to Mrs. Hensler, as "a long-time figure in the Jewish community of Rochester... a supporter of Joan," and a major figure in Rochester real estate circles.

She and Mrs. Hensler prayed that the Lord would guide the surgeon's hand.

An unusual thing happened, Mrs. Hensler said. The surgeon removed some tissue later found to be benign.

However, almost by fluke, he also discovered cancerous tissue in an area at some distance from the initial surgery site, which he was able to take out.

Mrs. Hensler credits the lay ministry of Ms. Harris for the event. And, she said, the doctor does too.

"I find enormous guidance, support and counsel from members of the Christian community," she said.

But, she asked, "are we over-structured so that there is not time for ministries?"

"It's hard for me and for many Catholic Christians to find the support we need from the 'institutional' Church.

"My political life is a ministry as surely as the priest standing at the altar on Sundays," she said.

Menihan described his role in the Church and his life as "doing exactly what I always wanted to do."

The internationally acclaimed artist described his upbringing, his training, friends he has made along the way and, particularly, his wife as contributing to his fulfillment.

He also described a number of odd occurrences in his life, events which evidently delight and puzzle him. An example of one would be finding an expandable plaster statue of the Sacred Heart in a New Hampshire church as a youth, and finding the same statue in the old St. Louis Church on State Street in Pittsford when he moved to the village many years later.

The statue, he said, represented a degraded form of church decoration. Menihan was to become a major influence on the esthetic ambience of the present St. Louis Church.

Staropoli, who is leaving his "paid Church ministry," and looking to a future for which he has yet to select a job, told the

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Annual Overseas Appeal Scheduled This Weekend

At Masses this weekend, parishes across the diocese, as well as the country, will collect for the American Bishops' Annual Overseas Appeal -- its primary beneficiary being Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

Other agencies benefiting from this collection include Migration and Refugee Services, the Holy Father's Relief Program, the Office of International Justice and Peace, the National Catholic Apostleship of the Sea Conference, and the Military Vicariate.

Catholic Relief Services promotes social justice and economic development in Third World countries by supporting community initiatives to increase food production, improve nutrition,

obtain clean water, form co-operatives and train community leaders.

In Sub-Sahara Africa, for example, CRS sponsors an internationally acclaimed network of nutrition centers which reach an estimated 900,000 children and 700,000 mothers in 21 countries.

In addition to its ongoing programs, CRS is prepared to respond to emergencies, natural disasters and refugee crises at any time.

The agency is currently channeling resources to victims of fighting in Lebanon and to some of the 1.4 million refugees fleeing drought and famine in East Africa.

CRS also runs programs for Salvadoran refugees in Honduras which include

vocational training and agricultural assistance, in addition to meeting their basic needs for food and shelter.

According to Lawrence Pezzullo, executive director of CRS, the American Bishops' Annual Overseas Appeal supplies "most of our day-to-day operational expenses." CRS operates programs in 75 countries worldwide and staffs offices in more than 50 of these.

Appeal contributions are allocated as follows: CRS receives 76.2 percent of the total collection; Migration and Refugee Services, 8.5 percent; Holy Father's Relief Program, 4.1 percent; International Justice and Peace, 1.7 percent; other agencies receive the remaining 9.5 percent.



Bishop's Office

My Dear Friends

Next Sunday you will be asked to contribute to the Bishop's Annual Overseas Appeal. The principal beneficiary of this collection is Catholic Relief Services, the overseas relief and development agency of the American Catholic Church. With offices in over 50 countries around the world, C.R.S. sponsors assistance programs and responds to emergencies, natural disasters and refugee crises when and where they arise. The agency is currently channeling resources to victims of fighting in Lebanon and to some 1.4 million refugees fleeing drought and famine in East Africa. C.R.S. also runs programs for Salvadoran refugees in Honduras which include vocational training and agricultural assistance, in addition to meeting their basic needs for food and shelter.

C.R.S. promotes social justice and economic development in Third World Countries and supports community initiatives to increase food production, obtain clean water, and train community leaders.

Sometimes the problems of our world seem so large and distant that we feel powerless to do anything about them. But this appeal provides us with an opportunity to make a positive contribution to the lives of the poor. May I encourage you to contribute generously to this appeal so that we can little by little enable our brothers and sisters in need to enjoy a life in accordance with their dignity as children of God.

May the Lord always reward your generosity.

Your brother in Christ

Matthew H. Clark
+ Matthew H. Clark
Bishop of Rochester



The Journey Continues

Bishop Matthew H. Clark, with permanent Deacon Carlos Vargas at his side, distributes communion to parishioners during a Crossroads visit last Sunday to St. Francis of Assisi Church in the city. The liturgy also included a consecration of the Blessed Mother on this Feast of the Annunciation entitled by the pope as "An Act of Entrusting to Our Lady." This week on Page 6, the Crossroads II journey continues with Father Robert F. McNamara's reflections on the Holy Year, Insights in Liturgy and the Crossroads calendar.