

DPC to Vote on Constitution Change

Penn Yan — Delegates to the Diocesan Pastoral Council gathered at Keuka College two days last week for the installation of new regional coordinators, the seating of new members of the council, and for the first meeting under the gavel of new chairman, Mrs. Patricia Defendorf.

The program began with a Mass Friday evening in which the recently appointed regional coordinators were officially invested in their duties.

The new coordinators and their regions are: Father John Zimmerman, North Region; Father William Gordinier, Livingston Region; Father Elmer Schmidt, Steuben Region; Father David Simon, Tompkins-Tioga Region; and Father Thomas Nellis, Yates-Ontario-Wayne Region.

According to diocesan guidelines, the regional coordinator, "is seen as one primarily responsible for promoting, moderating and coordinating pastoral activity in a region," and is responsible for developing in the parish Church "a sense of belonging in the diocesan Church by bringing parishes and institutions into closer contact with the bishop."

The Saturday session featured a wide variety of topics and included the reception of a proposal that the council's constitution be changed to allow married couples to be elected as a single representative.

The proposal was brought to the floor by Ron and Martha Jodoin.

In the brief, preliminary discussion of the matter last Saturday, it became evident the proposal will generate wide controversy and debate among council members and constituents. A vote will be taken on the matter in November.

The Jodoin's move marks at least the second time the DPC has taken up the matter.

The current constitution, approved by the assembly March 26, 1983, states "A married couple may NOT be elected as one representative."

It is the only clause in the entire document to use capital letters in spelling a word.

The Jodoins are in an unusual position on the council. They were elected prior to the adoption of the 1983 constitution and were allowed to be seated under the old rules, which had no provision for such a situation.

The Jodoins are seeking to have either the word "NOT" removed from the clause, or to have the entire clause stricken from the text.

The chief arguments the Jodoins presented in favor of the move stem from the increasing sensitivity of the Church to incorporating family units in its ministry and to protecting family units from the forces which divide them.

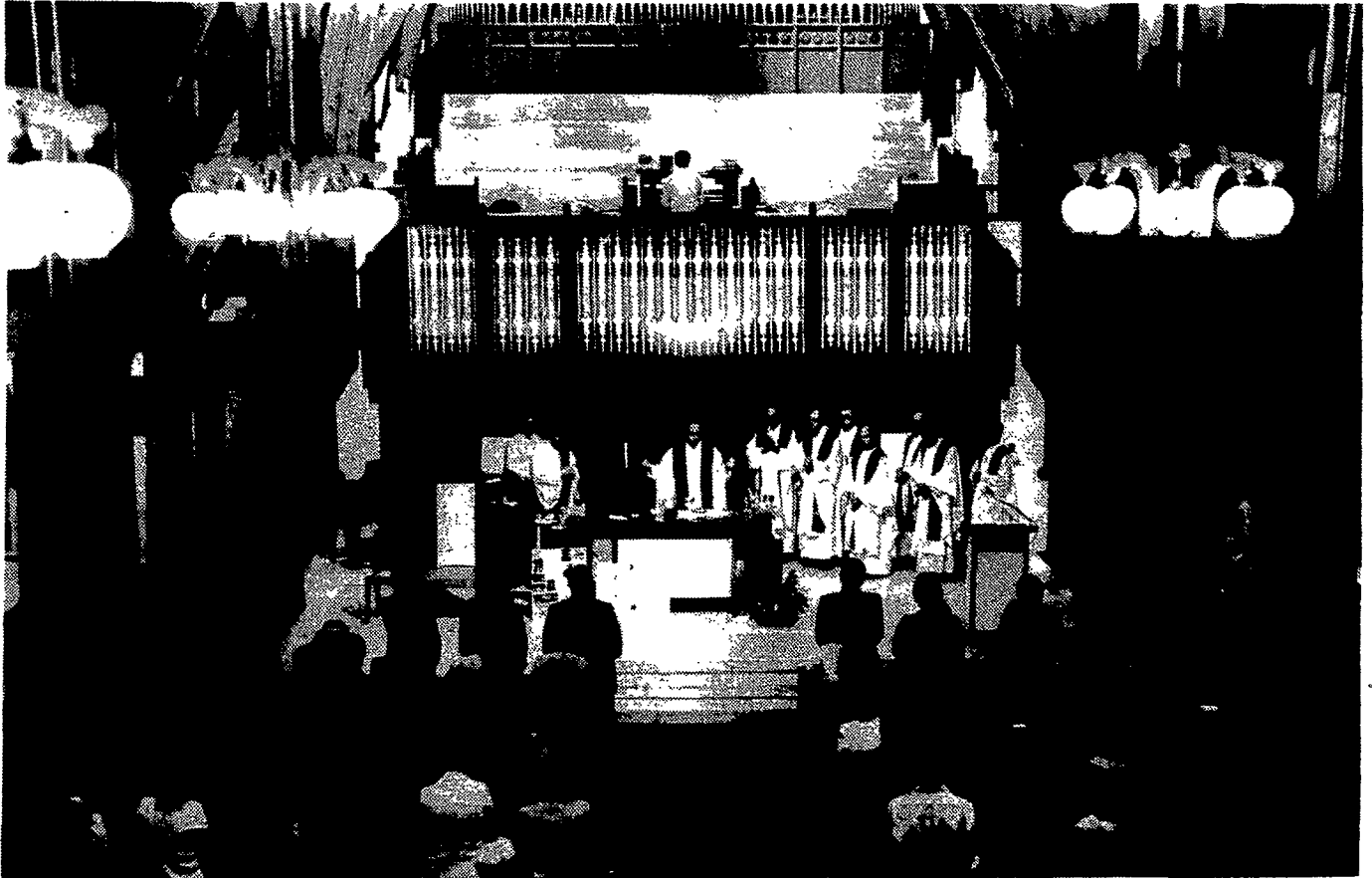
The proposal has already been aired in some constituencies, and at least one has indicated its unwillingness to change the constitution.

Both Mrs. Defendorf and Mrs. Judith Kollar, executive secretary of the DPC, acknowledged that the discussion preceding the inclusion of the 1983 phrase was heated, and that the November discussion on the proposal to eliminate the phrase would likely be the same.

The council began its day by hearing a presentation from Deacon Claude Lester, head of the recently renamed Office of Parish Services. His office will aid parish councils, committees, staffs or faculties, either individually or regionally in a number of areas including basic orientation, goal-setting, evaluation, decision-making, agenda-planning, leadership-training, evenings of recollection, and as a center for audio and print resources.

Deacon Lester also established a project for regional DPC members whereby they will individually meet with parish leaders, and provide a mechanism for direct parish communication with his office.

A good part of the morning was given over to presentations by Mrs. Defendorf and by Bishop Matthew H. Clark under the title of "Going Forward Together."



The assembled delegates and regional coordinators join Bishop Clark at the celebration of the Eucharist.

Mrs. Defendorf encouraged the council to ask itself "How become a true Christian community?"

She offered a number of poetic and mystical reflections on the question, as the assembly remained unusually still.

She described the council as made up of "dreamers, doers and criticizers," and encouraged the delegates to "learn how to be number 2... to be a part of, not apart from the Church."

"I challenge you," she said, "to be giving and forgiving... stretching, extending and going beyond yourself."

She said if the council had a "hidden agenda item, it is 'How become a true Christian community?' By going forward together, serving one another."

Bishop Clark thanked the delegates for their willingness to serve on the DPC.

"I think a diocesan pastoral council is a sound and reasonable and helpful way to respond to what I know is the Church's will," he said.

He said that he hopes membership on the DPC will give members a "wider view" of the Church, and encouraged delegates to "ask questions" about any unclear aspect of diocesan life.

"We go by the principle, 'We don't have any secrets,'" he said.

He encouraged the members to read the Courier-Journal, the weekly diocesan newspaper, "thoroughly, each week." He said the paper will provide a way to "learn the complexity, the vitality of our local Church."

Bishop Clark also discussed his work on the national bishops' committee drafting a pastoral letter on women in the Church, and jokingly chided the DPC for

putting him on that committee.

It was through the encouragement of the DPC that Bishop Clark penned his pioneering "Fire in the Thornbush." The bishop said he thought that publication occasioned his placement on the national bishops' group.

Bishop Clark also carefully approached the topic of religion and politics, saying it is his impression that the national debate "is at a much higher level this year with the possible exception of when John F. Kennedy was elected."

He said that in that debate, he is encouraging, through the Priests Council, priests to devise ways to deal with issues that can be divisive, and to help train pastors to deal with such issues and at the same time allow for deeper education.

In addition, prior to the outbreak of the national controversy, parishes were provided with "Elections: Politics and the Parish," a booklet compiled by the diocesan Department of Justice and Peace. The booklet provides parishes with guidelines in conducting pre-election voter registration and education.

The bishop said he hoped the debate would go beyond the "10-15 seconds discussion" allotted on television, and that it would go deeper than the present level of "slogans."

The council also heard a presentation from Anthony Cappelletti who is coordinating diocesan peace efforts in Monroe County. Cappelletti presented a philosophical and theological approach to the question of peace nuclear disarmament rising principally from questions of justice.



Bishop Clark and the regional coordinators concelebrate at the Mass opening the Diocesan Pastoral Council convocation at Keuka College.



Delegates present gifts symbolic of their regions during the Offertory of the convocation Mass.

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