

• November 14, 1984 •

A supplement to Catholic newspapers, published by the National Catholic News Service, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005. All contents copyright © 1984 by NC News Service.

Faith Today

Getting the job done

By Dolores Leckey
NC News Service

Rita McGovern is a wife and mother of five children, ages 7 to 21. Since her marriage, this Catholic woman has acquired a master's degree in counseling and has been actively involved in several lay movements.

Most recently Mrs. McGovern took a full-time job. Her office is in two places — at home and in the company's main office building. The dual arrangement allows her maximum flexibility with an 11-year-old and a 7-year-old.

In addition to home and work responsibilities, Mrs. McGovern serves on her parish's religious education committee.

With her husband, Mrs. McGovern is facilitator for the parish's marriage preparation course.

From time to time she serves as a rector for the women's Cursillo, a program involving weekend retreats.

And, of course, there are still evening meals to prepare, laundry to organize, grocery shopping to do, friends to entertain, relatives to comfort. This is called "the busy life!"

□ □ □

While it's true that Mrs. McGovern's teen-age children help with the logistics of home life, and a supportive husband is learning to shop and clean, the major responsibilities for a smoothly run home fall to her.

Oversees a long list of responsibilities. She is a woman of the church who brings the values and the ideals of her Catholic Christianity not only to religious education meetings but to her office, her clients, her Pre-Cana ministry and her family.

There are hundreds of thousands of women just like her today. They live demanding, complex and rewarding Christian lives.

Just look around your own parish at the people who serve



Take a look around you, suggests Dolores Leckey, and you will discover, if you don't already know, that women are the driving force behind a vast number of neighborhood and church ventures. Today's Christian woman leads a productive, complex and giving life.

the church community. Who is teaching religious education classes? Who leads the pro-life prayer vigils?

Look at the faces of the Sunday morning lectors. Watch to see who's bringing Communion and comfort to the homebound. Who prepares the Sunday morning hospitality hour or the monthly peace and justice programs?

Chances are you're seeing a lot of women.

Now look at your neighborhood. Who knocks on your door each year to collect for the heart fund or for cancer

research? Who hosts political teas and distributes campaign literature? Who's the backbone of the PTA?

And if you look around on a weekday evening, you'll see many, many women on the move from their responsibilities on the job to yet another set of responsibilities at home.

A recent study by the U.S. Dept. of Labor showed that women who work a seven-hour day in a middle-management or executive-level job also average four hours of additional labor at home. Men working at the same level of pro-

fessional responsibility average one hour of home labor.

Not all women work outside the home. Some mothers are able to be at home full time. But in addition to the challenging tasks of the home, these women often undertake the many volunteer duties that all communities require for their well-being. They too find themselves stretched for time.

The contemporary Christian woman, married or single, employed or not, leads a complex life — and often a generous one as well.

□ □ □

Women need support as they balance so many different responsibilities. What do they want?

Women I talk to around the country tell me they would welcome pastoral care and counsel. They feel this might help them tap into the spiritual core of their many activities. What motivates their activities and what is the value in them? How do these activities contribute to their Christian life?

Some actions women might welcome include:

—Parish-sponsored "quiet days": a day of solitude, prayer, guided meditation, in short, a day of genuine, deep rest. These quiet days could be scheduled flexibly, several times a year, to accommodate women working at home or away from home.

—Forums and learning days where women's concerns, interests and needs can be voiced and heard, along with discussions of developments that influence the roles of women and men.

Recent research into women's hopes and spiritual development emphasizes that women are clearly different from men. These researchers conclude that the presence of women and their gifts in every institution of society are important, precisely for this reason.

(Mrs. Leckey is director of the U.S. bishops' Committee on the Laity.)