

Workshop Presenter Discusses Lay Administration of Schools

By Beatrice Ganley, S.S.J.

Lourdes Sheehan, RSM, of the Sisters of Mercy's Baltimore province, is an optimistic woman. She believes wholeheartedly in the future of Catholic education in the United States. In Rochester recently, she shared her positive thinking with a group of 37 principals attending the Catholic Administrator Leadership Project, a workshop "specifically designed to prepare lay administrators for Catholic schools."

Sister Lourdes is convinced that the trend toward lay administration of Catholic schools is a positive thing. She maintains that it is a good in and of itself; it is not just something that we are forced to accept because of there being fewer religious available to serve as principals of Catholic schools.

At lunch our conversation circled around this topic and the implications it has for the Church in the United States.

Q: I can see that you believe strongly in the benefits of having lay administrators in Catholic schools. Even so, isn't this out of sight financially? How can the Church afford to pay lay teachers and principals a just salary, let alone one that would be competitive enough to keep them in our system?

A: One of the myths we have been laboring under is the myth of the poverty of Catholics. If you look at statistics, you can see that Catholics in the U.S. have money. We can support these schools — if we want them, if we believe in them as important vehicles of church ministry.

Q: Would you accuse us, in a sense, of "pour mouthing?"

A: (A quick reply) Yes. Now this does not necessarily mean that our schools will become the province of an elite. Those who have the resources can be convinced that their Chris-

tian consciousness their conscience, prompts them to pay proportionately more so that our schools can accommodate those who cannot pay.

Q: It is also true that the poor will make whatever sacrifices they can in order to ensure an excellent education for their children.

A: I agree. And this approach of all paying whatever they can should be woven into the philosophy of any Catholic school. It should be a fact of its operational procedure.

Q: Back to what you have called the "valuable trend" of having lay administrators in Catholic schools — is it something that we ought to have invented if it did not already exist?

A: (Without hesitation) Yes. This is a gift to the Church. It opens up opportunities for adult Christians to minister within the Church. As few as 10 years ago, it was a field closed to them. But this is a wonderful thing because more Church members can claim their full baptismal rights as Christians.

Q: What about the religious who experience this as a loss?

A: This is a good chance for religious to experience the deeper meaning of generativity. We can see, admittedly with a mixture of joy and sorrow, that which we have labored to bring forth be taken over by others. It is similar to the experience of parents whose children grow up and leave home.

Q: So then, you give yourself to this work of training the replacements with a sense of joy and enthusiasm?

A: Of course. We can pass through this transition and surmount the difficulties. I want to see what I have worked for not only survive, but thrive. We designed this training project to ensure that we would have the best

possible administrators for our schools.

Q: In your dissertation you wrote that Catholic schools will "continue to play an important role in education in this country and in the mission of the Catholic Church." Can you expand on this?

A: Well, there is the fact of the Catholic school system being the largest viable alternative to public education.

Q: And you see this as contributing to the excellence and accountability of both systems?

A: Yes. Also remember that the Catholic school system, as it evolved in our country, is absolutely unique. Because of the parish-based set-up of our schools, they have always been available to students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. In Europe and South America, for example, the Catholic schools ordinarily served an elite group. Also, if you believe that society needs to be changed, education is the way to do it.

Q: "Using" children to solve adult problems? You have said that you don't approve of that.

A: No, I don't. But education, in the broadest sense of the word, expands the minds and consciousness of the teachers and of the parents involved with the teachers, in the education of the children. It sows the seeds of hope for the future.

Q: You are speaking, then, of a sort of ripple effect in which goodness disperses of itself?

A: You might say that. You know, recent research indicates that Catholic school grads are more hopeful than other people. If there ever has been a time for hope, it is now.

Q: This workshop is designed in particular for the layperson, yet one-half of its participants are members of religious communities.

A: It is important for religious who are

still in administration to go through this workshop. It is time for them to begin looking for likely candidates to fill their positions. This can help them clarify and articulate the qualities they want in a good administrator for their schools. If in a few years, we religious look at Catholic educational institutions totally in control of lay boards and lay administrators, we can be proud. We can say that we have done our jobs well if we are no longer necessary.

Q: The good teacher works herself out of a job?

A: Yes.

Sister Lourdes' enthusiasm was shared by the workshop participants. "I feel energized and renewed," said one. "For a change, we have been talking about the life of Catholic schools rather than the death of the system."

The CSLP workshop was piloted during the 1981-82 academic year by two Sisters of Mercy, Providence of Baltimore: Lourdes Sheehan, and Fidelis Barragan, RSM. Sister Lourdes is currently director of the project.

The workshop offers graduate credit through the University of Dayton. Local sessions, sponsored jointly by the Rochester Sisters of St. Joseph and Sisters of Mercy, were held at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse from July 5 to 10. It included coverage of such topics as history of Catholic schools; boards, councils, and authority in the Church; law as it applies to Catholic schools; financial management; and religious and professional development of staff.

In the fall, Sister Lourdes will assume a new position with the National Catholic Education Association as executive director of the National Association of Boards of Education. She will also continue to present these workshops.

'We've Come This Far By Faith:' Overview of St. Bridget's History

Father Robert F. McNamara, diocesan archivist, has compiled the following history of St. Bridget's early years.

"Dublin" it was called as early as the 1840's — the Upper Falls area on Rochester's east side. That was because of the cluster of Irish immigrants who settled around Gorham and Hand Streets. These Dublinites belonged to old St. Mary's parish (founded 1834, re-founded 1841). But by the mid-1850's, their neighborhood had grown large enough to require a church of its own.

Oddly, the organizer, and for the first two years, the pastor of the new parish was a Belgian or Frenchman, Father Auguste Saunier. As pastor of Rochester's French church, he gathered the leading Dublinites in his church basement on April 21, 1854. They formed a committee and launched a drive for funds. On May 8, they purchased the present church lot between Gorham and Hand streets. Bishop John Timon, C.M., of Buffalo, laid the cornerstone on June 11 before a crowd of more than 5,000. And on November 4, 1854, Father William O'Reilly, the bishop's vicar-general, dedicated the finished building. Its patroness was Ireland's greatest female saint, Bridget of Kildare, the "Mary of the Gaels."

This first St. Bridget's faced on Gorham Street. By 1872 it was already too small for practical use, so St. Bridget's number two was undertaken to face on Gorham Street. The architect of the present brick structure was Charles Coats, who was paid \$342.16 for his creation! Building costs amounted to \$33,000. A spire was planned, but never achieved. Instead, in 1903, a tower was added in preparation for the parish's golden jubilee. In the completed tower was hung a

"sweet-toned bell." Meanwhile, the former church building was used as a parochial school after 1875.

The church building of 1875 had its dramatic moments. Fire gutted it in 1937 and repairs cost almost as much as the original construction — \$30,000. Still more extensive renovation took place in 1961 and 1963.

St. Bridget's parish was never very large. In the 1870's, it counted some 1,400 parishioners. Indeed, as late as 1953, the population was still as high as 1,200. But the ethnic makeup of the parish had changed. Many of the Irish had departed prior to World War I and had been replaced by Polish, Austro-Hungarians and especially Italians.

From the beginning, St. Bridget's people were known for loyalty — to their parish, to the poor, and to their country. A St. Vincent DePaul Society was established as early as 1873. From the Civil War to World War II, hundreds of parishioners served and many gave their lives.

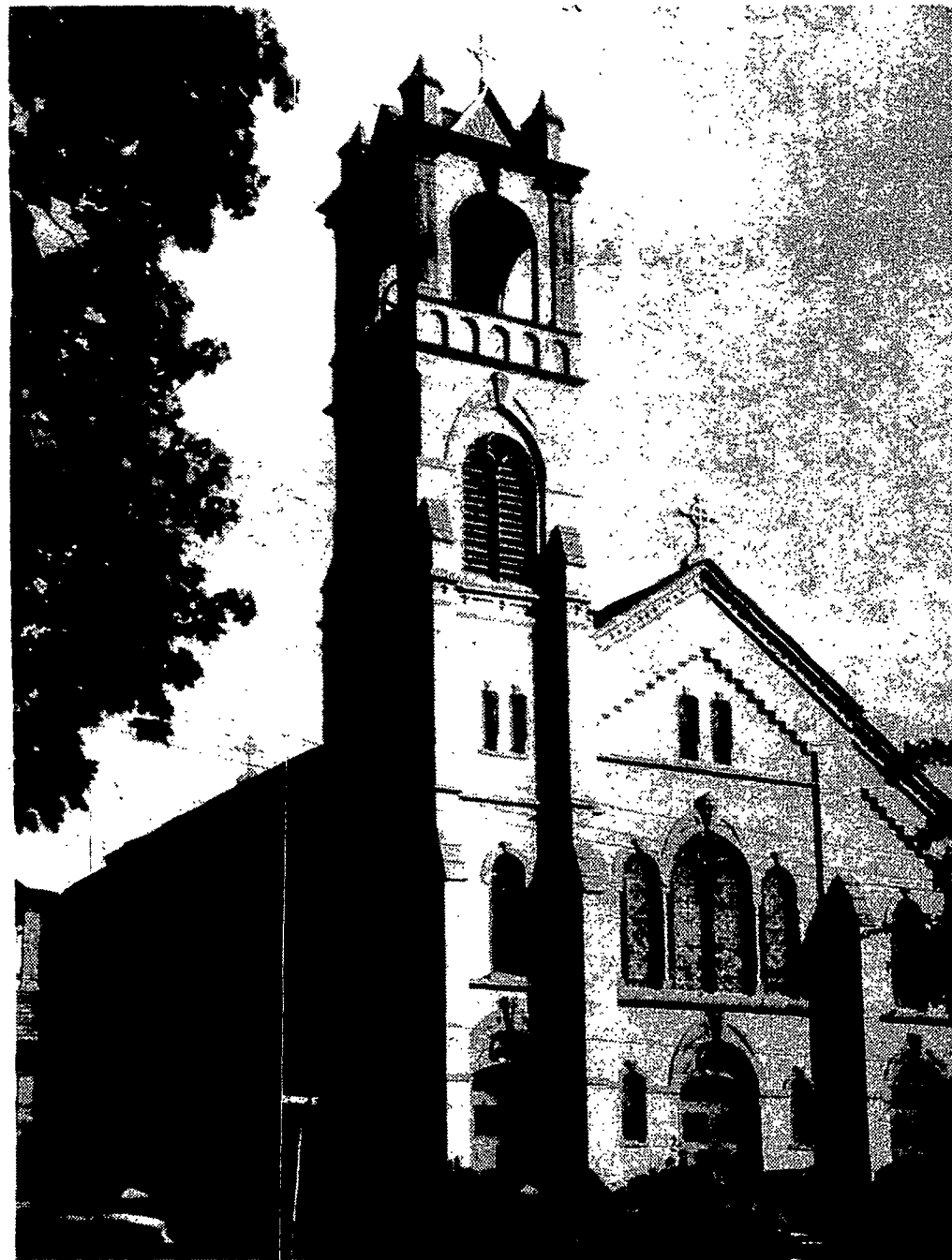
The parish has had many notables. Father Thomas A. Hendrick, pastor from 1891-1903, won international attention as Bishop of Cebu in the Philippine Islands (1903-1909). Father Gerald Brennan (pastor from 1937-1912) wrote 19 children's books published in Braille as well as four languages. Walter A. Foery, a parish boy, served as Bishop of Syracuse from 1937-70. Rochester's greatest Civil War hero, the dashing Col. Patrick J. O'Rourke, killed at Gettysburg in 1863, was buried from the first St. Bridget's. Writer Jerre Mangione, whose book "Mount Allegro" depicts Italian life in inter-war "Dublin" represents Italian parishioners as do his brother Frank's sons, Gap and Chuck Mangione, ranking musicians in present-day American jazz.

Mary Barry, a parishioner at St. Bridget's who is compiling a detailed parish history, contributed an account of more recent parish life.

From the mid-1950s, the neighborhood began to reflect change and the challenge that accompanies life in an urban setting. An influx of Hispanics was closely followed and accompanied by an influx of blacks. As families moved out, the congregation grew smaller. Father Francis Vogt, pastor during this period, saw urban renewal with high hopes and promises that came and went. At one point, a parish center was proposed to house a dental center and nursery school. At another point, Bishop Sheen announced that St. Bridget's would be donated to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for low income housing.

During this period, the Catholic Church was beginning to address the message of Vatican II. Racial justice, equality, the brotherhood of man, the social issues of our time came to the forefront. Day-to-day struggle for survival, suffering and injustice was evident in the neighborhood. In view of the changes and needs, a pastoral team was requested. A parish profile was prepared, a Spanish Mass added, and church services designed for the Hispanic community were introduced.

In 1977, Father John Forni and Sister Grace Miller were the team ministry appointed to what was now a virtually black parish. A great deal of social outreach occurred during this period. In an effort to address the parish's racial makeup, Father Dozia Wilson, a black priest was appointed by the diocese. Communication difficulties ensued and Father Wilson resigned. Father Douglas Hoffman served as interim pastor until Father Daniel O'Shea was appointed in May, 1980, for three years.



A file photo shows St. Bridget's Church in 1954 facing what was then Gorham Street. The street has since been renamed St. Bridget's Drive.

Father O'Shea brought with him a background of experience and learning that served the parish's desire for both a deep spirituality and active outreach in the community. His devotion, commitment, belief and faith were evidenced by an increase in attendance, the revival of the gospel choir, and the participation of parishioners in

services that reflect blacks' contributions to history and to the Church.

Father Robert Werth now serves St. Bridget's with a unique blend of humanness and holiness. St. Bridget's is a faith community that is rich in spirituality, eager to learn and grow and to share the gospel and our gifts.

Grants For Nazareth

Nazareth Academy's two-year-old sexuality program has received more than \$7,500 in grants, according to a school spokesman. The diocesan Office of Human Life will provide \$1,300 and the Maternity and Early Childhood Foundation, Inc., will give

\$6,225.

Now in its second year, the program helps teens make responsible decisions regarding sexuality, and provides counseling for pregnant students and student mothers to help them stay in school.