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Quiet Reflection

Anita Mercada prays after receiving the Eucharist, while Celia Ona and Sister Mary Hilaire Gaolens, RSM, diocesan director of the Division of Special Pastoral Ministries,

quietly reflect on the evening's gathering of the Catholic Physicians Guild Saturday, Sept. 7. For story and more photos see Page 4.

Forum on women in the Church evokes despair, hope

By Emily Morrison

The parish hall at Holy Cross Church was charged with an almost tangible energy as women of the Diocese of Rochester took the open microphone one after another to speak their minds about alienation and oppression, divisiveness, satisfaction or frustration, despair and hope.

The occasion was the second diocesan reflection forum on women in the Church, held the afternoon of Sunday, Sept. 15.

Some 250 to 300 area women and more than a handful of men answered the call of Bishop Matthew H. Clark's Diocesan Commission on Women in the Church, an 18-member body formed to assist the bishop in his work on the upcoming 1988 national pastoral on women.

Participants in Sunday's forum joined in individual written reflection as well as small and large group reflection on such issues as appreciation of women in the Church and

society, oppression and discrimination, alienation and reconciliation. Individual responses were collected and will later be collated for presentation to the bishop. Small groups of eight to 10 met in the church cafeteria and other areas for discussions monitored by commission facilitators who tabulated individual opinions for eventual use by the commission.

The responses of participants in Small Group 1 were fairly representative of the

spirit of the entire forum. The group, composed of several women religious, a number of lay women, and a single man, was facilitated by Sister Shirley Pilot, campus minister at Rochester Institute of Technology. An older woman, disgruntled with the lot of women in the work force, disclaimed any sense of oppression at the hands of the Church, while two younger women on the same side of the table

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Deacon Claude Lester

Needs assessment organizers overwhelmed by parish response

By Teresa A. Parsons

When is a great response not necessarily great news? In the case of needs assessment, that happens when the number of parishes willing to participate exceeds all expectations.

While it's hardly bad news that 74 parishes and church communities said "yes" to the aims of "Dare to Dream, Free to Serve," the process was designed to accommodate only about 40. "Nobody ever expected this to take off this way," said Deacon Claude Lester, diocesan director of parish services and staff person for the project. "Concern was expressed by a variety of sources about the magnitude of the response with only one staff person."

To ensure the quality of the process, Lester and the members of the needs assessment steering committee decided to reorganize. As a result, the leadership conference scheduled on Saturday, Sept. 21, will no longer be considered the kickoff for needs assessment. Rather it will be a separate educational opportunity sponsored by the Office of

Parish Services. Likewise, the series of workshops planned in October and November will still be offered, but as a separate service to parish council members.

Needs assessment has been regrouped into four sessions that will cover writing a mission statement, developing a survey or fact-gathering instrument, identifying options for pastoral planning, and evaluating the process. The whole four-part cycle will be offered three times to accommodate parishes and communities in smaller, more manageable groups of 15 to 20.

Although needs assessment's reorganization has created some confusion, in many ways the new structure is an improvement. "We could anticipate adding another cycle," Lester said. "That adds an open-ended dimension to long-term planning."

Developing a survey adapted to the individual makeup of each community should also help parish leaders go beyond their active constituency to what Lester calls "the bottom line of pastoral planning — reaching

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Inside:

Renewal retrospective

This week, we embark on a series of articles on the causes and effects of renewal on the lives of women religious. Read Part I on Pages 6 and 7.

Out of steam

St. Peter's Kitchen, which serves lunch six days a week to needy people, has no heat for the winter and needs dedicated volunteers — Page 5.

Gospel concert

Gospel choirs warm up for this weekend's benefit concert for scholarships for black students attending Catholic high schools — Page 8.

Calendar

Our semimonthly calendar lists diocesan events from September 18 through October 4 — Page 9.