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Up to their elbows...

Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Sixth grader Mike Harrington checks out the progress of classmates Matt Andreano and Tim Becker who are digging out around a support pole in the new playground at St. Salome School. During their gym periods, the schoolchildren assisted in the construction of the playground, which was completed last week.

Church leaders prepare to assess Vatican II

By Agostino Bono
Vatican City (NC) — Church officials worldwide are preparing to assess the impact of the Second Vatican Council at a time when Catholic authorities disagree over whether applications of its teachings have been generally good or bad.

The disagreements reflect two different approaches to assessing the church 20 years after Vatican II.

One view is that the impact has been mostly bad because of misunderstanding and misapplication of council reforms. According to this assessment, an effort should be made to eliminate the negative aspects and consolidate the few positive ones.

The other view sees the overall impact as good, despite problems, with the primary need being to build upon the reforms to strengthen the church.

Both sides agree that the council teachings are not at fault.

An extraordinary Synod of Bishops, scheduled by Pope John Paul II for Nov. 24-Dec. 8, is to be the forum for a study of how the council teachings have been applied in the past two decades.

Church officials interviewed by National Catholic News Service prior to the synod said that two weeks is not enough to seriously examine the impact of all the reforms and issues contained in the 16 documents approved at Vatican II.

They said the key issue will be the degree of support the synod gives to continued implementation of Vatican II reforms. A consensus exists that the synod was not called to roll back the reforms.

Pope John Paul was an active participant in the council as Polish Bishop Karol Wojtyla and repeatedly has called for applying council teachings.

But so far he has remained aloof from the debate over application of Vatican II re-

forms. He also has distanced himself from the pessimistic view of one of his top officials, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Cardinal Ratzinger has said that the church has deteriorated since Vatican II.

The 1962-65 council approved numerous reforms which changed the face of Catholicism:

- Liturgical reforms led to Mass in the vernacular for Latin-Rite Catholics and turned the priest to face the congregation.

- Collegiality was defined as meaning that the church's infallibility in faith and morals is exercised by the pope in unison with the entire body (college) of the world's bishops. This led to decentralizing church administration and authority, and to more

Witness for Peace delegates embark on Nicaragua visit

By Teresa A. Parsons

Although she left the country last week, Sister Beatrice Ganley's journey to Nicaragua really began more than two years ago. That's when she read an article about U.S. foreign policy in Central and Latin America in Sojourners magazine.

The effect of the article was cumulative — the more she read and heard about Central America, the more she wanted to act.

But she didn't know in what way until she heard about Witness for Peace. With its Christian, biblical and prayerful nonviolent approach, the group echoed her interest and concern.

"Everything along the way just seemed to be opening doors," she said. "It's not that I really pursued this. It's more like an invitation I just seemed to be able to accept."

She and the delegation's 17 other members gathered last Monday and Tuesday for all-day sessions on non-violent training and orientation. Meanwhile, local attention was focusing on 20 members of the Nicaraguan Invasion Contingency Action (NICA) appearing in Rochester City Court. Eleven NICA members arrested for trespassing in Congressman Fred Eckert's office May 7 went to trial October 8. Nine others, arrested June 12 after demonstrating in the lobby of the Federal Building, argued further motions in court October 7. In both cases, defendants contend that their actions were justified in response to what they consider the illegality of U.S. intervention in Nicaragua.

About one-third of the Rochester Witness for Peace delegation members also belong to NICA and so are strongly predisposed against U.S. support for the contras. Tom Harris and Julie Everitt, NICA members, delegates and also husband and wife, admit that there's "a strong general tendency to view us as partisan."

"I admit to being a partisan of democracy, but not of any political party," Harris declared.

Other delegates, including Sister Beatrice, describe their impressions as honestly confused.

"I admit that when I started out I was pro-Sandinista," she said. "But I've read so many things lately that now I'm thoroughly confused. I certainly am pro-self determination for the people of Nicaragua, and I'm certainly against what's happening to them because of what our government is doing."

"We aren't a bunch of youthful idealists even though there are young persons in the group," she added. "We realize we'll see a limited view."

But in selecting delegates from as many different backgrounds as possible, Witness for Peace tries to ensure as broad a perspective as possible. In addition to Sister Beatrice, who coordinates public relations for the Sisters of St. Joseph, the group includes a construction worker, a retired research biologist, a home economics agent, a nurse, two ministers — even a pizzeria owner. Ages range from 19-71, and church affiliations vary from none to Zen Buddhist. The majority are Presbyterians.

In conjunction with all Witness for Peace groups, the delegation has three goals: to demonstrate opposition to the undeclared war against Nicaragua by creating a continual, nonviolent presence in areas of conflict; to aid victims of the fighting through reconstruction projects and other means; and to provide a well-informed contribution to public debate on our country's role in Central America by sharing delegates' experiences of life in Nicaragua.

When they arrived in Managua last Wednesday, the Rochester group was met by Witness for Peace staff members and long-term volunteers, who commit themselves to six months or more in Nicaragua. During the ensuing two weeks, the Rochesterians will interview government representatives as well as government-recognized opposition leaders. Delegates will also stay with families in villages which have been attacked by contras. The contras, however, are not on the agenda.

"I want to see schools, health facilities, talk to teachers," said Relton Roland, a bilingual service representative for the Monroe County Department of Social Services and one of the group's four translators. He hopes that he can sharpen his own and other people's awareness of the distinction between "a world power and the powerless."

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Renewal series

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