

Synod adviser predicts consultation will alter U.S. Church

By Teresa A. Parsons

For Dolores Leckey, this fall's World Synod of Bishops presents both a remarkable opportunity and a tremendous responsibility.

She is one of two lay people and the only lay woman chosen to accompany the United States delegation of Bishops to Rome in October for the month-long gathering, which will focus on the role and mission of the laity.

Leckey is not sure how actively she will participate in the synod as an official adviser to the four U.S. delegates. In the meantime, she is gathering and preparing to represent the views and hopes of more than 100,000 Catholic lay men and women participating in a consultative process on a scale unprecedented in the United States.

"My role is going to be to remember what they have said and to present it to the delegates," she said.

Leckey visited Rochester Thursday, April 2, to deliver the 13th Annual Otto A. Shults Lecture on Spirituality at St. Bernard's Institute. A staff associate with the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington, D.C., and a featured columnist for National Catholic News Service, she has earned a master's degree in adult education from George Washington University and has written three books.

As executive director of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) Committee on the Laity, Leckey has spent the past two years planning, organizing and implementing the U.S. bishops' response to the Vatican's call for widespread consultation of the laity. By September, she expects to have collected reactions from 150,000 to 175,000 Catholics.

She expressed hope for the potential outcome of a synod on the laity in which no lay person will directly participate. "I am optimistic," she said. "I expect lots of good things to come out of it."

Leckey has served as a synod adviser

before. In 1980, she traveled with the delegation of U.S. bishops to the world synod on the Christian family. At that assembly, she had the dubious distinction of being "kicked out" of one session. She expects her second experience to be quite different.

"In 1980, I was chosen because I was a lay woman on staff doing 'lay things,'" she recalled. "Now, I am going as somebody who's been deeply involved in laity questions for 10 years. I feel much more secure about it."

Leckey may be confident, but not because her task has been easy. Catholics around the world had barely begun to respond to Pope John Paul II's announcement in 1984, calling for a synod on the laity in 1986, when the pope called an extraordinary synod for December, 1985.

Even though the synod on the laity was rescheduled for 1987, Leckey said, the two synods "just sort of slowed things up" in Rome. Most bishops in the United States, for example, were allotted less than two weeks from the time they received the first draft of the Lineamenta, or preliminary synod document, until the deadline for submitting the results of diocesan consultations.

Delegates from around the world are now awaiting Rome's release of the Instrumentum Laboris, or working document for the synod. Although it was originally expected this month, Leckey said she hopes to have it by June.

"Frankly, I haven't got the vaguest notion of what it will say or when it will be out," she said.

Despite the synod's logistical problems, Leckey guesses that 120 to 150 of the nation's 180 dioceses are engaging in some kind of consultative effort. She has already begun to read and summarize the diocesan responses, which are due this week, for a briefing of the U.S. delegation in June.

Leckey and her NCCB colleagues concentrated on supporting the national consultative effort through four major avenues:



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Dolores Leckey

a sample survey distributed to all dioceses; a cable television series distributed through the Catholic Telecommunications Network of America and Mother Angelica's Eternal Word Network; face-to-face regional meetings with more than 400 people across the country; and a newspaper column in the National Catholic News Service supplement, *Faith Today*, through which Leckey invited individual responses to the question "What gives you hope?"

Three of four planned regional meetings have already taken place. Two delegates from the Diocese of Rochester, Deacon Claude Lester and Joan Limpert, a parishioner at St. Mary's Church in downtown Rochester, have been invited to attend the remaining meeting, which will convene May 1-3 in Mt. Holyoke, Mass.

At the regional meetings, Leckey has been impressed by the level of diocesan-appointed

delegates' skills and by their willingness to work together.

"I am amazed to see the mature, Catholic laity that exists in dioceses," she said. "I never imagined that it was so widespread."

The nearly 500 responses she has received thus far to her *Faith Today* column have come from a remarkable variety of sources, including park rangers, farmers, housewives, jail inmates and children.

Most responses, she said, centered on some common themes — nature, family, work, friendship, sacraments, parish community, friendship, ministry and service. Most were also characterized by "a very deep emotional intensity," she added.

A 10-year-old boy described how he watched a robin let a worm go. "That's like God," he wrote.

A young man who cleans furnaces wrote that God was revealed to him in "the intricate designs of spiderwebs, the comfort of a warm fire, or a friendly cat."

A woman wrote about overcoming the revulsion she felt for the stumps of her husband's amputated legs after she watched him wheeling through the house, trying not to spill a cup of coffee he was bringing her.

"I feel privileged to have heard that kind of testimony," Leckey said. "I think their message is being heard."

But many people are wondering whether anyone besides Leckey will listen, and what results will be achieved.

"We have to remember that the synod will look for worldwide themes," she cautioned. "The United States is only one country, and the synod is only one piece, one step in the process."

Regardless of what results are produced in Rome, Leckey predicted that the voices of American Catholics will affect the Church in the United States.

"The bishops have already said that we need to find ways of continuing to consult people," she said. "The incarnation writ large in all of this is that the Word is being made flesh over and over again, right in our midst!"

Give an Easter "Basket of Rochester"

We bring together fine food and gift items with a uniquely Rochester flair — all in lovely hand-fashioned baskets!

We'll deliver locally or mail anywhere

Easter baskets start at \$15 for children, \$18 for adults

Ask us about baskets for other special occasions

Call 271-9886 between 2 and 6 p.m.

THE SCARF CAPE
(Hand Woven in Ireland)



A must for your all-season wardrobe. Stop in and browse through our new fashions.

Eire Connection
BOUTIQUE

672 Pittsford-Victor Rd.
Bushnell's Basin - 716-385-7700
Hours: Tues. thru Sat., 10:30-5:30
Next to Richardson's Canal House - Above Canal Florist

POSTAL JOBS
 Did you apply at the Fairport, Henrietta Post Office last week?
 Test will be in June. Still time to attend the \$45 workshop and receive a guaranteed score of 96-100%
 Call: 315-331-5941

FIRST COMMUNION SPECIAL
\$10.00 DISCOUNT TOWARDS ANY PACKAGE WITH THIS COUPON

- No Sitting Fee
- Selection of poses, including full length
- Choice of communion backgrounds
- By Appointment.

Offer Expires May 16, 1987
 925 Fairport Rd.
 (corner of Marsh & Fairport Rd.)
 Next to Hoselton
385-6640



20 YEARS AGO SHE COULDN'T SAY "HAPPY EASTER!"



Sometime ago villagers, like this woman from North East India, heard the Easter message for the first time. The Good News that Jesus died and rose to save us. A missionary brought this message. The villagers were so overjoyed they

couldn't keep the news of God's love to themselves and began to spread it from one to another. With Easter joy and gratitude for your gift of faith, won't you help spread the message of salvation in the Missions! Give today to the Propagation of the Faith.

The Propagation of the Faith

Father Robert C. Bradler
 1150 Buffalo Road, Dept. C.
 Rochester, NY 14624

Yes! I want to help spread the Easter message. Enclosed is my gift:

\$5 \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 Other \$

Special Gifts are needed too! \$250 \$500 \$1000

I would like to be a monthly donor!

Name
 Address
 City State Zip

Please ask missionaries to remember my intentions at Mass

Your Gift is Tax Deductible!

344-4/9/87