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.ocal News

Corpus Christi launches effort to replace bingo

By Lee Strong

Throughout the 11 years Father James B. Callan has been administrator of Corpus Christi Parish, he has considered the bingo sign in front of Corpus Christi School a source of constant embarrassment.

"The sign represents a compromise of our values, a sign of the commercialism in our Church," Father Callan said, echoing sentiments he expressed last November in Corpus Christi's bulletin. "When you support a wor-thy project like a Catholic school, why compromise? ... I cringe for the scandal we continue to cause in the Rochester community?" Come June 5, however, Father Callan may cringe no longer.

At an April 23 meeting of a joint parishschool bingo committee, the priest set forth a plan to eliminate bingo on June 5 by finding 1,000 people willing to donate \$100 to the school each year. The \$100,000 raised through this drive would replace bingo proceeds in the school's \$250,000 annual budget.

Although the plan has not yet been publicized, 20 people have already contributed to the fund, Father Callan reported.

"We've been talking about something like this for years," he pointed out. "We chose June 5 because we wanted to clear house for the parish's 100th birthday and start the next century with a pure atmosphere?"

School representatives have expressed reservations about the proposal to end bingo June 5, according to Sister Eileen Daly, SSJ, Corpus Christi School principal. Despite those

reservations, school officials decided to give Father Callan's plan a try.

"You can't say no to something that may work," Sister Daly said. "If it's able to be done, it would eliminate a lot of headaches.

"If it doesn't fly by June 5 then we just go back to the drawing boards," she concluded.

Father Callan's proposal follows more than a year of discussion between the school and the parish on the bingo issue. In November, parishioners voted 202 to 113 to allow the school to continue running bingo in the church basement. Yet a significant number of those who voted in favor of keeping bingo also indicated that they would prefer an alternative means of financing the school.

Parish debate over bingo actually dates back to 1977. At that time, the parish declared that it could no longer support the school. Rather than allowing the school to close, the parents incorporated the school independently, and became responsible for financing school operations. The parish discontinued using bingo for income the following year, while the school parents continue to operate two bingo nights each week in the church basement.

Dick Augsbury, a member of the bingo committee and parent of seven Corpus Christi alumni, acknowledged that many parents would welcome an alternative way to support the school.

"I don't think there's anyone in the school who wants bingo - it's a means to an end," Augsbury said, "I think it's a disgrace the Catholic Church has to rely on bingo to sup-

300 locations across the country are expected

to tune in for Pentecost '88, the second na-

tional satellite celebration of Catholic evangeli-

zation, on Saturday, May 21, from 11:30 a.m.

to 5:30 p.m. The Catholic Telecommunications

Network of America (CTNA), plans to broad-

cast the Pentecost Sunday teleconferences an-

Continued on Page 17

nually until the year 2000.



C-J file photo

If a fund-raising drive succeeds, scenes like this will disappear from Corpus Christi Parish on June 5.

port its schools?"

That sentiment is shared by many Catholics across the nation. Several bishops --- including Bishop Warren Boudreaux of the Diocese of Houma-Thibadoux, La. - have called for the phasing out of bingo in their dioceses. Locally, Rochester's Diocesan Pastoral Council has begun to study the issue.

"Across the nation, bingo is going to be eliminated in the 1990s;" Father Callan predicted. Thus, he reasoned, the school eventually would have to replace bingo as a revenue source. Eliminating it now prevents the decision being forced upon the school at a later date, he said.

If the plan is successful, Father Callan believes it will enable the school and the parish to find viable alternative means to finance the school, while at the same time anticipating a trend. "We have a chance to be a pioneer rather than a caboose," he said.

But in choosing to accept the proposal, the school is taking a chance. Even if the drive succeeds in raising \$100,000 this year, school officials note that they have no guarantee of success in subsequent years.

Meanwhile, Augsbury pointed out that when

word spreads that bingo might be ending, some of the regular players may stop coming. If Father Callan's plan fails and the school is forced to continue bingo, it might not be able to recapture these players, thus suffering a loss of income, he noted.

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School representatives nevertheless accepted the proposal because its chances for success seemed good, and because it provided a positive way for the school and the parish to work together. "We've looked at this, and a lot of factors went into making the decision," Augsbury said.

Father Callan has committed the parish to keeping the plan alive in years to come, according to Sister Daly. Yet this commitment will not take the form of an actual parish subsidy for the school, the principal added. Instead, the parish will coordinate the effort. "The parish is not giving — people are committing," she said.

Father Callan has acknowledged that the proposal is risky. "There's no guarantee," the priest said. "This is an adventure in risk and faith?

Corpus Christi has taken such risks before and has benefited from them. When the parish eliminated its bingo games in 1978, it simultaneously sold its stocks and began donating 10 percent of the weekly collection to other causes - even though Corpus Christi itself is a poor parish. The decision was "stupid in the eyes of the world," Father Callan remarked, but the parish has flourished as a result.

'When you make a move like this, it paves the ground for God to work on," he explained. "It creates a space for God to provide surprises?

In Father Callan's view, taking such risks is essential to the Church as a whole. "The way institutions of faith stay fresh is through the support of the people," he said. If the Catholic schools — or any programs or institutions - are having financial problems, he remarked, it's time to "ask what we are doing wrong or what we could be doing better, rather than bringing in an extraneous source of income to prop it up?

Thus the priest hopes other parishes will follow Corpus Christi's lead and explore alternative means of financing themselves and their schools

"My hope is that every parish and school will get rid of bingo and rely on God and the people," he concluded.

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Pentecost '88 may presage new era for evangelization

By Teresa A. Parsons

A woman who stopped attending church nearly half a century ago came home to St. Mary's in Elmira this spring.

During a week of renewal sponsored in March by the parish's Spirituality Committee, the woman told fellow participants she had been longing to return to church but didn't know how to "get back in?"

"You are in. You have returned," one of the event's facilitators reportedly told her. "Now how can we help you?"

Others among the several hundred people who attended the parish renewal are now ar

Diocesan **Appointments**