

Celibacy

Continued from page 1

"Obviously having participated personally in (family) experiences that you share with many or most of your parishioners helps your ministering to them," observed the Rev. Jim Pritchard, canon (assistant) to Bishop William Burrill, head of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester.

The Rev. Pritchard, himself the father of six children, said that in his experience, a celibate priest can be just as effective as a married one. But, he said, priesthood and celibacy are separate callings in his mind.

"It should be an option," the Rev. Pritchard asserted. "If a person has a gift or a calling (to celibacy), that's fine."

The Rev. Pritchard pointed to the case of Father Bartolotta. "It seems tragic that the only way he could enter the priesthood was after his wife died, when he presumably could have done a good job as a married man," the Rev. Pritchard observed. "It denies the vocation of priesthood to a lot of people who have a calling in that direction."

Those sentiments were echoed by Monsignor William H. Shannon.

"There are people who are not called to celibacy, (but) they are called to be priests," Monsignor Shannon said, suggesting that the church will not resolve some of its current problems with declining vocations to the priesthood and priests breaking their vows of celibacy until the two callings are separated.

"Until the church does separate these two callings — celibacy and priesthood — there will continue to be these problems," the priest predicted.

Monsignor Shannon pointed out that celibacy was not strictly enforced for diocesan priests until the Middle Ages, when monasticism began to have greater influence on the church. Celibacy made

sense in a monastic community, he said, but does not necessarily make sense for diocesan priests.

The consequences of that decision particularly affect the church today as vocations to the priesthood decrease, Monsignor Shannon noted. And, he said, the decline could have dire consequences in the future.

"The heart of the Christian faith is that we are a eucharistic community, and we are faced with a choice of either compulsory celibacy or the Eucharist," Monsignor Shannon observed.

Change in the church's celibacy rules in the near future does not seem likely, however. Pope John Paul II has repeatedly stated his support for continuing the discipline in the Western Church, and recently said that changing the celibacy rules will not be a topic during the upcoming bishops' synod dealing with the formation of priests.

The pope has said in the past that what the church needs is a better explanation of its celibacy requirements. In his apostolic exhortation on the laity, issued in February of 1989, he observed: "The value of celibacy has been seriously eroded in our culture. There is need to develop a rationale for celibacy which will be more credible and appealing in our time for both priests and laity, given the realities which confront us."

Sipe concurred with the pope's statement, pointing out that one of the problems facing the church today is that its priests were inadequately prepared to deal with sexuality.

"We don't know how to teach it (celibacy) because we don't know how to talk about (sexuality) openly yet," Sipe observed. Thus, he continued, bishops dealing with the sexual scandals of recent months have tended to "think about sex as an act. They handle it as an act, and don't deal with the fact that the priest is not celi-

bate."

Other observers note, however, that the church has already begun the process of improving the education of those who will live consecrated celibate lives.

Sister Fran Wegman, vocations director for Rochester's Religious Sisters of Mercy, noted that her congregation's formation program emphasizes all aspects of the candidates' lives. "I think it's important to have healthy discussions of sexuality," she said, adding that today, "there is a lot more open discussion about sexuality."

Father Valenti said that within discernment programs for priest candidates, sexuality is also discussed far more openly than it would have been 20 years ago. "I think this type of education is vitally important for all Christian men and women," he observed, "and especially important for those who are thinking about consecrated life."

For priests already ordained, the Ministry to Priests program also offers opportunities for counseling, support and help for those who run into problems related to celibacy, Father Tormey said. All people — no matter what their chosen path in life — must deal with the issue of celibacy, he said, and most people, including most priests, manage to deal with the issue without seeking help.

Father Valenti pointed out that in maintaining celibacy, priests must observe a healthy lifestyle. Elements of such a lifestyle are proper diet and rest, community with a supportive group of people — especially fellow priests — and most important of all, prayer.

"I emphasize that if they're not committed to a daily prayer life, the difficulty of celibate lifestyle becomes unbearable," Father Valenti said.

Despite such improvement in education and support for celibates, it seems obvious that the call for a re-evaluation of obligatory celibacy will continue. Father Bleichner, however, expressed doubt that making celibacy optional would then save the priesthood from the fates predicted for it. "I think that marriage is in as shaky, if not more shaky, a state than the priesthood," he said.

Father Groeschel pointed out a new set of problems would be created if the Catholic Church were to adopt optional celibacy for priests. He noted, for example, that Protestant churches must contend with the problem of divorce among their ministers.

The Rev. Pritchard acknowledged, in fact, that the divorce rate among Episcopal priests is comparable to the rate among the general population — a figure of approximately 50 percent. But he said divorce should not be used as an argument against married clergy.

"Divorce is part of the human situation," the Rev. Pritchard observed. "Many times, there is compassion and understanding from the parishioners. In my experience, divorce is usually not a long-term obstacle to serving as a priest."

If marriage among priests ever became a widespread reality, the Catholic Church — with its much stricter attitude toward divorce — also would be faced with determining whether to accept divorced priests.

Moreover, Monsignor Shannon said, changing the celibacy rules might encourage further discussion of women priests and of the exact meaning of ministry in the church.

"What we really need is a whole overhaul of what ministry and, particularly, what priestly ministry really means," Monsignor Shannon concluded.

Sister Mary Margaret Hammerl, OP, at 61; former prioress of Dominican monastery

ELMIRA — Sister Mary Margaret (Colletta) Hammerl, OP, a member of the Dominican Monastery of Mary the Queen for 43 years, died of cancer Tuesday, Aug. 21, 1990, at St. Joseph's Hospital. She was 61 years old.

During her years at the West Church Street monastery, Sister Mary Margaret served at various times as prioress, subprioress, bursar, sacristan and member of the monastery council.

"Her term as prioress came at a time when the community was in the process of implementing a revised constitution, and through her delicate leadership she enabled the community to adjust to the many changes required," said Sister Miriam of the Cross, OP, current prioress.

Sister Miriam added that Sister Mary Margaret was a woman with many talents, "a loving and joyous person."

"She had a beautiful clear singing voice, which was the joy of the many people who attend our daily liturgy," said Sister Miriam. "She also was a fine organist and a skilled calligrapher."

A native of Buffalo, Sister Mary Margaret attended Sacred Heart Academy.

She entered the Elmira monastery on March 19, 1947, at the age of 18. Sister Mary Margaret made her final profession as a Dominican nun on Dec. 9, 1951.

Even though Sister Mary Margaret struggled with cancer of the mouth for five years, she never slowed her active pace. After learning last March that the cancer had spread to her lungs, she continued to serve the community until two weeks before her death, Sister Miriam said.

A Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Mary Margaret was celebrated at the monastery Friday, Aug. 24 by her brother, Monsignor Leo Hammerl, with the monastery chaplain, Father Joseph Payne, OP, chaplain, and nine other concelebrants. Interment was in the Dominican community plot in Ss. Peter and Paul's Cemetery.

In addition to Monsignor Hammerl, Sister Mary Margaret is survived by two other brothers, Paul and Louis Hammerl; two sisters, Genevieve Zubler and Anna Mazur; and many nieces and nephews.

Friends may send memorial donations to: Monastery of Mary the Queen, 1310 W. Church St., Elmira, N.Y., 14905.

Kennedy

Continued from page 3

shackles of European tradition and started anew, Kennedy concludes by saying:

"We don't inherit this planet from our parents, we borrow it from our children, and if we don't hand it back to them in roughly the same condition, we will have to answer some very rough questions."

Amid a reception in the Notre Dame cafeteria following the speech, sixth-grader Megan Schnipper holds a zucchini as she waits to meet Kennedy, now surrounded by reporters and audience members.

"I'm bringing this zucchini to him," Schnipper says. The Pine City School student proudly notes that she grew the

vegetable herself. "I thought it would be a nice gift, and that he would understand it because of the environment and all."

Members of the crowd say they enjoyed Kennedy's speech, and comment on the breadth and depth of his knowledge.

One listener, however, seems somewhat disappointed.

"I thought he talked too much about fish," says Mary Stricker, a parishioner from St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Binghamton. "I was hoping he would be telling more about what we should do."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Kennedy noted the availability of a book outlining ways individuals can help to stem the destruction of rain forests. To obtain a copy, write to the National Resources Defense Council, 40 West 20th St., New York, N.Y., 10011, or call 212/727-2700.



HIDDEN MEADOWS

COMMUNITY

Florida-Style Living for 55 years or older

A Friendly Atmosphere Providing

- Club House for Community Activities
- Golf League • Card Club
- Organized Trips • Much More

OPEN FOR INSPECTION SUNDAYS
1 PM-4PM (OR SHOWN BY APPT.)

CALL: 494-1424

7289 LAKE RD. BERGEN, NY 14416

1 Mile South of Rte. 33 & 19

