

Study

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priorities was cited as a long- or short-range goal for less than 30 percent of responding parishes.

The report stressed that the survey was not "subject to scientific conclusions," but should be used to examine trends, needs and values, and to assist in the planning efforts of the diocese, regions or groups, such as neighboring parishes' ministries, that work together.

One hundred twenty-two parishes responded to the summary section, which detailed what parish reflection teams

thought of the Commitment to Ministry process. Of the 122 respondents, 117 were "clear in stating that Commitment to Ministry had a significant impact on the PRT and the parish."

Most parishes sponsored a variety of programs throughout the process, touching upon such issues as staffing in light of the priest shortage, the meaning and place of church and the "discernment of gifts."

Additionally, most parishes conducted needs assessment/evaluation surveys focusing on needed or existing ministries. The majority of the parish reflection teams — 101 — said they were "disappointed" by attendance at their local programs, though most teams felt supported by their parish staff.

Among several other effects on parishes, the teams found that the Commitment to Ministry process increased individuals' awareness of their role in the church; helped parish pastoral councils see the "total picture" of their parishes; created a sense that staffing changes and/or parish clustering may be inevitable; and offered the "feeling that (a) parish is not alone ... but indeed part of the Church of Rochester."

Commitment to Ministry also encouraged parishes to explore developing lay ministry and increased communication between staff members and council members and between parishes, the report indicated.

Approximately one-third (39 parishes) plans to maintain their parish reflection teams, generally because they want the teams to keep alive the concerns raised by the process. Some parishes plan to sponsor new programs and re-evaluate the role of their parish councils in the wake of the process.

Only two responding parishes said they disliked the Commitment to Ministry process. Both felt the process should have focused on "training and developing laity for future ministry positions." The two parishes also said the process was too long and that they were "already ahead" of it.

Two other parishes indicated that other priorities, such as the parish school, eclipsed the Commitment to Ministry process in attention given. In one parish, the parishioners explained their lack of interest in the program by telling their reflection team that they "only wanted a Sunday Mass and the sacraments."

Father Tomasso said he hoped the report would not be "shelved," and that parishes would use the data to form collaborative ministries with neighboring parishes. He noted that the diocese is attempting to

compile the information on a computer data base that parishes might eventually access by calling the Pastoral Center.

The DPC meeting also gave Father Joseph Hart a chance to further outline tentative plans for the diocesan synod. Planning for the synod, which will culminate in September of 1993, began this past June. Father Hart, who directs the synod and chairs its commission, said that at the commission members' first meeting last week, a tentative synod time table was created.

A diocesan-wide survey on issues might be sent in February of 1991 either directly to Catholics' homes, or distributed through the *Catholic Courier*. After the information is gathered, parishes would then schedule their individual synods for September of 1992, at which time they would cover a number of local and diocesan issues brought out in the survey.

After coming up with a few recommendations from each of the synodal meetings, a parish's representatives would take its recommendations to one of 11 regional synods to be held in December of 1992. The same process would be repeated with parish synods in January or February of 1993 and regional synods in April of that year.

Parish synods will likely be open to all interested people, Father Hart said, but the regional synods would consist of five or six representatives from each parish.

Although no themes have been chosen for exploration in the synod, Bishop Clark told the DPC and synod commission members present that he hopes one topic will be how the church can reach alienated Catholics.

"It seems like everywhere we've gone, that's been a prime interest," Bishop Clark said.

Politician

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a life in a womb ... What right do any of us have to take life in any set of circumstances?" he asked.

Likewise, LaFalce said he supported "reproductive rights" — a common euphemism for legal abortion — but said that "abortion has nothing to do with reproduction. Abortion has to deal with the taking of life, and we need to constantly focus on that."

Yet while maintaining that focus, he said, pro-lifers must learn not to bang their activist heads against a political wall by advocating such measures as pro-life constitutional amendment, LaFalce said. Since no national consensus has been formed on the morality of abortion, it would be impossible to secure the adoption of such an amendment, he stated.

Pro-lifers would be more effective if they spent their time pursuing legislative action that has a good chance of passing, such as bills requiring parental consent for minors seeking abortions, or outlawing abortions for sex selection.

"This issue (of abortion) has around since the creation of man," LaFalce said. "This issue will be around till man is extinct. There will be no victory and no defeat. There will be many victories and many defeats ... Accept your defeats and pursue some victories," he advised the audience.

One hoped-for victory is the reversal of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *Roe vs. Wade*, which legalized abortion across the nation, the congressman said, noting that he has filed several briefs advocating overturning the decision. *Roe* took the abortion debate out of the state legislatures where it belonged, LaFalce said, noting that even if *Roe* is ultimately reversed, pro-lifers will still have work to do.

"I'm hopeful with the new Supreme Court to get a reversal of *Roe vs. Wade*, but do not expect to change the mores of society overnight," he said.

To affect those mores, he said, pro-lifers need to keep telling people that scientific data points to the humanity of the aborted fetus. He noted that it is ironic that one fetus' life can be ended within days or weeks of the point at which doctors will go to extreme lengths to preserve the life of another premature child.

Such arguments will make listeners uncomfortable, but speaking out is the lot of the pro-lifer, LaFalce noted. "Do be willing to give discomfort," he added, "and do be willing to take a certain amount of discomfort."

After the speech, Common Ground presented its Susan B. Anthony award to Rochester resident Helen Thomas, who has opened her home during the past decade to care for numerous inner-city women and their children. She also provides day care for infants and toddlers so that their mothers can complete their educations.

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