

Council gave seniors path to ministerial life

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The linguistic slight failed to work on Locke. "I had studied Latin for five years," she quipped. Still, she observed, "The dichotomy between the clergy and the laity was an insurmountable wall."

The Vatican Council has opened many doors through that wall, Locke continued.

"Participation of the laity in the inner mystical life of the church is there for the asking," she said. "We are all made for this."

Deacon Owen Bowers likewise found doors closed to him in the pre-conciliar church.

A Buffalo native, Deacon Bowers observed that in the pre-Vatican II years, "You would never have thought of going to the pastoral center in Buffalo and saying, 'Tell me about your programs I can get involved in.'"

Now, however, "You can do that here in Rochester," said the 58-year-old deacon, who currently serves Avon's St. Agnes Parish, 108 Prospect St.

In the 1950s, Deacon Bowers recalled, "I was searching spiritually for things to do, but the only thing I could get involved in to be active was the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Unless you're into the mentality of going to card parties and such things, there wasn't much to do."

The council, however, offered chances to be involved in religious education, liturgical ministries, the parish council, and, in his case, the permanent diaconate, Deacon Bowers said.

In addition to opening new ministries to lay people, the council also changed the understanding of the Mass and the priest's role, noted Father Benedict Ehmman.

"Many people had no idea at all of the deep theology of Christ in the liturgy," recalled Father Ehmman, 87,

who was a leading advocate of liturgical reform long before the council.

Prior to the Vatican Council, Father Ehmman said — even in the seminary — the emphasis on the liturgy was on the ritual, not its underlying meaning. The people, he noted, were expected to "keep quiet, pay attention, say their prayer to themselves." At best, he said, lay people could be part of the celebration just "spiritually."

At the council, however, the emphasis shifted to Christ's presence in the liturgy and to the role of all people in that celebration, Father Ehmman continued.

That new emphasis, he said, also led priests to realize that their role in the liturgy and the church was shifting — just as their position on the altar shifted.

"The church to them was like a ship going through the water, and there was the priest as the pilot of the church," Father Ehmman explained. "Now, with the change in position, you were sort of a big brother up there."

Florence Bartels enjoyed this change in the relationship between the priest and the people.

"In the early days, you would see the priest on the altar, then he would finish and just disappear," noted Bartels, a parishioner at Rochester's Corpus Christi Parish, 864 Main St. E. As a result of the Vatican Council, she observed, "There was breaking down of the barriers between the priests and the people. I liked being able to be involved with the priests."

Mull, too, saw such changes as the vernacular Mass and the priest facing the congregation as helping to make the church a more welcoming place.

"The people were more involved," noted Mull, who sent nine children to St. Mary's School in Waterloo and Geneva DeSales High School. "You



File photo

Before Vatican II, only priests could distribute Communion.

could understand things better."

Despite her generally positive assessment of the changes, however, Mull acknowledged that she was not always so accepting of all the transformations in the church in the wake of Vatican II.

That's why she initially hesitated to become a eucharistic minister.

"One of the things that was difficult to accept was lay people giving Communion because the host was such a thing of reverence and (we used to think) it could only be touched by a priest," Mull said. "Now it seems like anybody can."

Yet she eventually chose to become one herself — spurred by the growing priest shortage in the Diocese of Rochester.

"It took me a long time to get myself to do it, but with the priest shortage, I thought I may be in a nursing home someday and I would want to receive the Blessed Sacrament," Mull said.

Nevertheless, there seems to be less reverence for the Blessed Sacrament now, and that reverence is something she misses from the pre-council days, Mull added.

Father Ehmman also cited a lack of reverence in the wake of the council.

"There seems to be much less reverence for the Eucharist, not so much during Communion, but for the real presence in the tabernacle," Father Ehmman observed. "When the Mass is finished, there are churches where you'd think the people were at a barbecue."

That lack of reverence extends to atti-

tudes toward the pope, Father Ehmman continued. In addition, the priest said he was unhappy that the changes led to an increasing informality among clergy and women religious. Many men and women religious, he noted, have abandoned such visible signs of their vocation as a collar or modified habits.

Deneen also expressed discomfort over the abandonment of habits by some women religious. She added that she and others are also upset over some of the efforts to push for changes beyond what has already been enacted as a result of the council.

"It does bother me to have people wanting things that the pope at present doesn't approve of," Deneen said. "I think the 'silent majority' in the church does not like much of the activity going on for women priests and girl altar boys."

And even though he applauds the changes, Deacon Bowers noted that the way the changes were introduced led to problems.

"(Church leaders) really didn't do their homework on the way the changes would affect people," Deacon Bowers said. "They went too fast, and the way they went about it alienated some people."

Bartels pointed out that her sister had been one of the people who had a hard time accepting the changes in the church. But she, for one, has been happy, enjoying especially the opportunity to be a eucharistic minister.

"Since Vatican II, I love the church so much more," Bartels declared. "It means so much more to me now."

A new monthly calendar will appear in the Catholic Courier on the last Thursday of each month.

THE MONTHLY PRAYER REQUEST FOR PRIESTS

WOULD YOU PRAY FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

O Jesus, our great High Priest, hear my humble prayers on behalf of your priests. Give them a deep faith, a bright and firm hope, and a burning love which will ever increase in the course of their priestly life. In their loneliness, comfort them, in their sorrows, strengthen them.

O Loving Mother Mary, Mother of Priests, take to your heart your sons who are close to you because of their priestly ordination, and because of the power which they have received to carry on the work of Christ in a world which needs them so much. Amen.

—John Joseph Cardinal Carberry
Archbishop of St. Louis
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DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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Look for next month's MPRP CALENDAR in the Catholic Courier's Feb. 27th issue.

DIOCESAN APPOINTMENTS

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following diocesan appointments:

Father John R. Burke, from administrator of St. Michael's Church in Rochester, returning to the Diocese of Erie, Pa., and its ministry at La Mission de Amstad in Merida, Yucatan in Mexico, effective Jan. 3, 1992.

Sister Kay Schwenzler, RSM, from pastoral associate to co-administrator of St. Michael's Church in Rochester, effective Jan.

1-June 30, 1992.

Father Laurence C. Tracy, pastoral assistant with the Office of the Spanish Apostolate, to concurrent appointment as part-time sacramental moderator at St. Michael's Church in Rochester, effective Jan. 1, 1992.

Father Robert T. Werth, pastor of St. Bridget's Church in Rochester, to concurrent appointment as co-administrator of St. Michael's Church in Rochester, effective Jan. 1, 1992.