

Archbishop stresses practical parish issues in book

By Bishop Dennis W. Hickey

The Parish: Where God's People Live, by Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk; Paulist Press, New York (1992); 79 pages; \$4.50.

Taking his cue from Hamlet's observation that brevity is the soul of wit, Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk addresses *The Parish: Where God's People Live* with clarity, precision and a touch of humor.

The Parish is a practical work in the classic sense. It is concerned with ordinary activities, designed for actual use. It cuts through a lot of fuzzy writing of recent years and focuses on basic issues involved in parish life.

In the introduction, the archbishop with no polemics states simply, "When theologians and canon lawyers speak of the 'local church,' they don't mean parish but diocese." He quickly follows up with the statement, "On the more pragmatic level, most parishes

are simply not able to provide for themselves the full range of resources they need."

He concludes, "For the vast majority of Catholics, however, the parish is the territorial parish in which they live." The reviewer is tempted to add that the vigor of the diocese depends almost exclusively on the vigor of the life of its parishes.

When Philip invited Nathaniel to meet Jesus, came the reply, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" The rejoinder was the simple statement "Come and see." Critics of diocesan headquarters who question if any good can come from such ivory towers are challenged to come and see — read *The Parish*. They will find the insights of the archbishop of Cincinnati more than perceptive.

Anyone remotely interested in practicing the faith at the ground level in 1992 will have difficulty laying the book aside until completed. One's curiosity is tweeked simply by finding

such chapters as "What is a Parish For?" "Difficult People," "Outsiders" and "Closing Parishes."

In this day when everyone is a minister, including the paper carrier, is refreshing to read the observation: "I am inclined to think that ministry is best reserved for some activity done in the name of the church with authorization of some church authority." The distinction between "official" ministry and the "unofficial" activity of Christian believers is important to the author and to the reviewer. If everything is ministry, then nothing is really ministry.

Priests who have begun to doubt if they have any role left in the modern church will find themselves affirmed. "The parish priest is called to represent Christ in a special way. He is to be the agent of Christ, the head of the church, a representative of Christ, the leader of his people." Archbishop Pilarczyk finds deep spiritual significance in the fact that the pastor is as-

signed to the parish by the bishop.

Difficult people are listed as those who criticize everything; those who aren't good at what they do, but cannot be removed to make room for others; single-issue persons; and sometimes the pastor.

The archbishop suggests such possible solutions as getting rid of them in some way or other, tolerating them (deploring the impossibility of doing anything about their idiosyncrasies), loving them as Christ loved the trouble makers who crossed His path. It is possible that we have been difficult people ourselves, whom the Lord still loves as he does all his children.

The archbishop has covered many facets of parish life in an informative and calm manner. It is regrettable that he did not pursue some other points, but limits of space prevented this possibility. For example, I wish he had devoted a chapter to reconciling the so-called liberals with the conservatives in a parish atmosphere.

Title befits thin characterization in wake-comedy *Passed Away*

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — When the family patriarch dies suddenly, his four grown-up children gather and carry on like kids in *Passed Away* (Hollywood).

Mom (Maureen Stapleton) insists on a traditional at-home Irish wake for her husband (Jack Warden), a union official whose dense son, Frank (William Petersen), hopes to inherit the job.

Oldest son and responsible family man Johnny (Bob Hoskins) is going through a mid-life crisis and starts thinking he'd like to run away with a mysterious woman (Nancy Travis), who shows up at the wake unwilling

to explain how she knew his dad.

Rebellious daughter Terry (Pamela Reed) arrives pretending she is still married and dreading a reunion with her "perfect" sister Nora (Frances McDormand), the missionary nun.

In the course of the few days leading up to the funeral the siblings will rediscover each other and try to stop acting like kids.

As written and directed by Charlie Peters, the movie is fitfully funny, relying on occasionally dry one-liners to keep the story from sagging too badly.

Yet it's a struggle as the family members are thinly written and drably developed. Hoskins' character is the exception, and the actor brings an engaging sparkle to the familiar plight of middle-aged boredom.

Otherwise, it's more like a predictable cartoon as the one-dimensional characters act out their real and imagined gripes with each other. Plot developments range from merely predictable to downright silly, making *Passed Away* a case of DOA — dead on arrival.

Due to frequent sexual innuendo and an instance of rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.



Prashant Gupta
Actors William Petersen (left) and Bob Hoskins are among the star-studded cast of the new comedy *Passed Away*.

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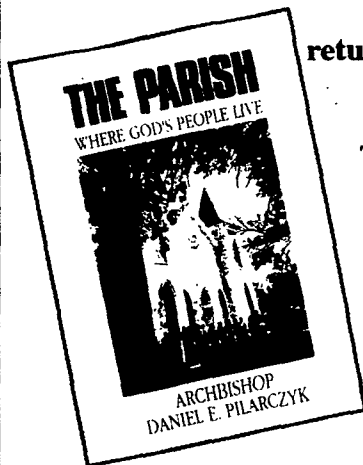
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THE PARISH - Where God's People Live, by Archbishop Daniel E. Pilarczyk
This book describes the life of a typical Catholic parish today. It outlines the relation of the parish to the greater church, how it is structured, how it reaches out to the people and beyond them to the community. It is an uplifting view of the American Catholic parish which, in the late 20th century, serves as a nurturing place for people sharing their experience of God.

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