

Book offers ways to foster parish spirituality

Parish Alive! Making Every Parish a Spiritual Life Center, by Felicia B. McKnight; Crossroad (New York, N.Y., 1992); 143 pages; \$10.95.

By Father John J. Philipps
Guest contributor

For one week in late September, 1992, hundreds of Catholics throughout the Rochester diocese sat around tables in their parish halls and talked about ways in which they could make their parishes "faith-filled, celebrating communities."

Felicia B. McKnight has part of that answer. Her short book, *Parish Alive!*, not only pleads for retreat experiences and education in spirituality at the parish level, but delineates methods of effective growth for both parishioners and parish pastoral ministers.

If at first her book seems to be a self-

congratulatory report on an apparently very successful retreat movement in her diocese of Providence, R.I., a closer reading reveals good insight into the dynamics and rationale of spiritual renewal in the post-Vatican II Church.

"Come to St. Someone's ... now there's a real Vatican II parish!" McKnight hears one person exclaim. "Does that mean merely that this parish as institution has moved from the monolithic to the something-in-it-for-everybody model of parish entertainment, from the divine right of kings to the model-town-meeting mode of institutional government (read parish council). Can it be that this first postconciliar generation has been merely a dress rehearsal for the twenty-first century? (Emphasis mine)

The originator of the Providence

"Parish Alive! process" then proceeds, chapter by chapter, to detail the various models of spiritual renewal, polishing her treatise with various anecdotes from her experiences, both in Catholic and non-Catholic communities.

A generous bibliography and listings of video- and audio-cassette resources give the book added credibility as a sound contribution to contemporary spirituality.

"What are your own local spirituality resources?" McKnight asks in conclusion. "Do you as a parishioner, a parish, or a diocese have the possibility of interfacing with a retreat house where qualified spiritual directors are at work?"

The answer in our diocese, of course, is a resounding "yes" with the Cenacle Center for Spiritual Renewal;

Notre Dame Retreat House; the variety of programs and spiritual direction offered by the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy, and many other groups and individuals.

As the sparks from the synodal discussions and recommendations begin to ignite our parishes to a more intense effort toward becoming those "faith-filled, celebrating communities," *Parish Alive!* caused this reviewer to wonder if the book's subtitle might not be the synod's ultimate goal as well as the means by which all its other dreams will come to fruition: Making Every Parish a Spiritual Life Center.

Parish Alive! can help us take a significant step in that direction.

Father Philipps is pastor of St. Bridget/St. Joseph Church in East Bloomfield.

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