

Author invites reader to liven up parish's spiritual life

Parish Alive! Making Every Parish a Spiritual Life Center, by Felicia B. McKnight; Crossroad Publishing Co. (New York, N.Y., 1992); 133 pages; \$10.95.

By Julianne and David Palma
Guest contributors

This is the time of year when many of us are finalizing our plans for summer retreats and renewal. Lay people, parish staffs and other professional ministers seek faraway havens for spiritual refreshment. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our own parishes were so spiritually alive that this refreshment happened as a matter of course on a daily basis?

Parish Alive! invites us to transform our local churches into spiritual life centers. Here we might pray deeply, live fully and minister gracefully because we would be committed to *being* rather than *doing*.

The book records the beginning and evolution of a process offering an alternative to the traditional renewal

programs presented in the Providence diocese. *Parish Alive!* originated with ministry team members of the diocesan Spiritual Life Center who recognized the spiritual hunger among the hundreds of retreatants they saw annually.

McKnight chronicles how the initial year of *Parish Alive!* unfolded, detailing "the lived reality" among clergy and laity. Readers are invited to imagine what the process might look like where they live. (p.25)

The author claims that the renewal programs common across the United States since Vatican II's close are for the most part "aimed at renewing the institution." (p.19) In contrast "the premise of *Parish Alive!* is the possibility of dynamic spiritual growth for individuals across the spectrum of parish folks, from the pastor to last Easter-season's initiate." (p.22)

In six chapters, McKnight describes each of the process's offerings. Starting with the invitational section titled, "Come and See," through the chapter,

"Greater Things Than I Shall You Do ...," she packs her book with creative ideas that can help parishioners come to a deeper sense of what it means to live out their baptismal call.

Unfortunately, in many places McKnight's prose is so overwrought that the reader can get lost following a thought. At times her flowery vocabulary clouds the vision. One wishes that all of her ideas would be presented with the simple clarity she is obviously capable of attaining.

However, despite an occasional overly poetic passage, the story she tells is exciting and challenging. From the first hesitant meeting with a small group of pastors, through the offerings no one attends, to the excitement of six women who are so empowered by their experience that they become small group leaders, *Parish Alive!* blossoms into a dynamic approach to personal spiritual growth.

A large part of the book's success is due to the prayer experiences, presentations and meditations that McKnight

and others created for the different groups. The book concludes with an extensive bibliography of the material to which the author refers. This includes video, music and audiotapes as well as books.

"You have everything you need within you to begin to bring your own person and your own parish alive!" (p.119) Every once in a while someone needs to remind us of this fact and give us some encouragement. McKnight clearly demonstrates that a little empowerment goes a long way.

So when you pack for retreat this summer, give some thought to slipping this thin volume into your suitcase. You might just come back with some ideas on how to turn your parish into a spiritual life center.

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Hot Shots! provides plenty of goofy, political gags

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — *Hot Shots! Part Deux* (20th Century Fox) continues the mad-cap misadventures of Topper Harley (Charlie Sheen) as the loose-cannon president (Lloyd Bridges) has him heading up a covert hostage-rescue mission in the Middle East.

The love-scarred Topper, who has been living with Thai monks since being jilted by Ramada (Valeria Golino), is motivated when his former commander (Richard Crenna spoofing his *Rambo* roles) is captured.

Once on enemy territory, Topper discovers their inside operative is none other than Ramada. And when the

shooting starts, the president can't resist showing up to personally activate an assassination plot.

Director Jim Abrahams' scrappy sequel is a roller-coaster ride of rapid-fire sight gags, spills, shootouts and spoofs on earlier movies.

Sheen is pumped up to the max with a newly acquired physique to rival Sylvester Stallone's. He also has two women to contend with, as Brenda Bakke plays a wily CIA operative with seduction on her mind.

Bridges' comic timing is right on target, though his ditzzy duel with a Saddam Hussein look-alike barely hits its mark.

The whole scenario is best enjoyed for all the goofiness going on in the

background as it's a potluck grab bag of non sequiturs, political potshots and takeoffs on movies as wide-ranging as *Basic Instinct* and *Lady and the Tramp*.

The sequel mocks movie violence with enough ammunition to put any action movie to shame in its over-the-top approach that so speeds along there is little time to tire of the comic misfires.

Due to much comic violence, a racy bedroom scene, some toilet humor 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.



Twentieth Century Fox
Charlie Sheen plays Topper and Valeria Golino is Ramada in *Hot Shots! Part Deux*.

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