

*Parish Council
Committee Guide*

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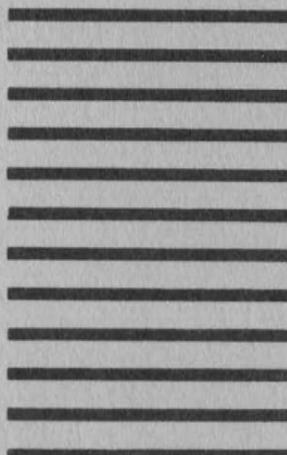
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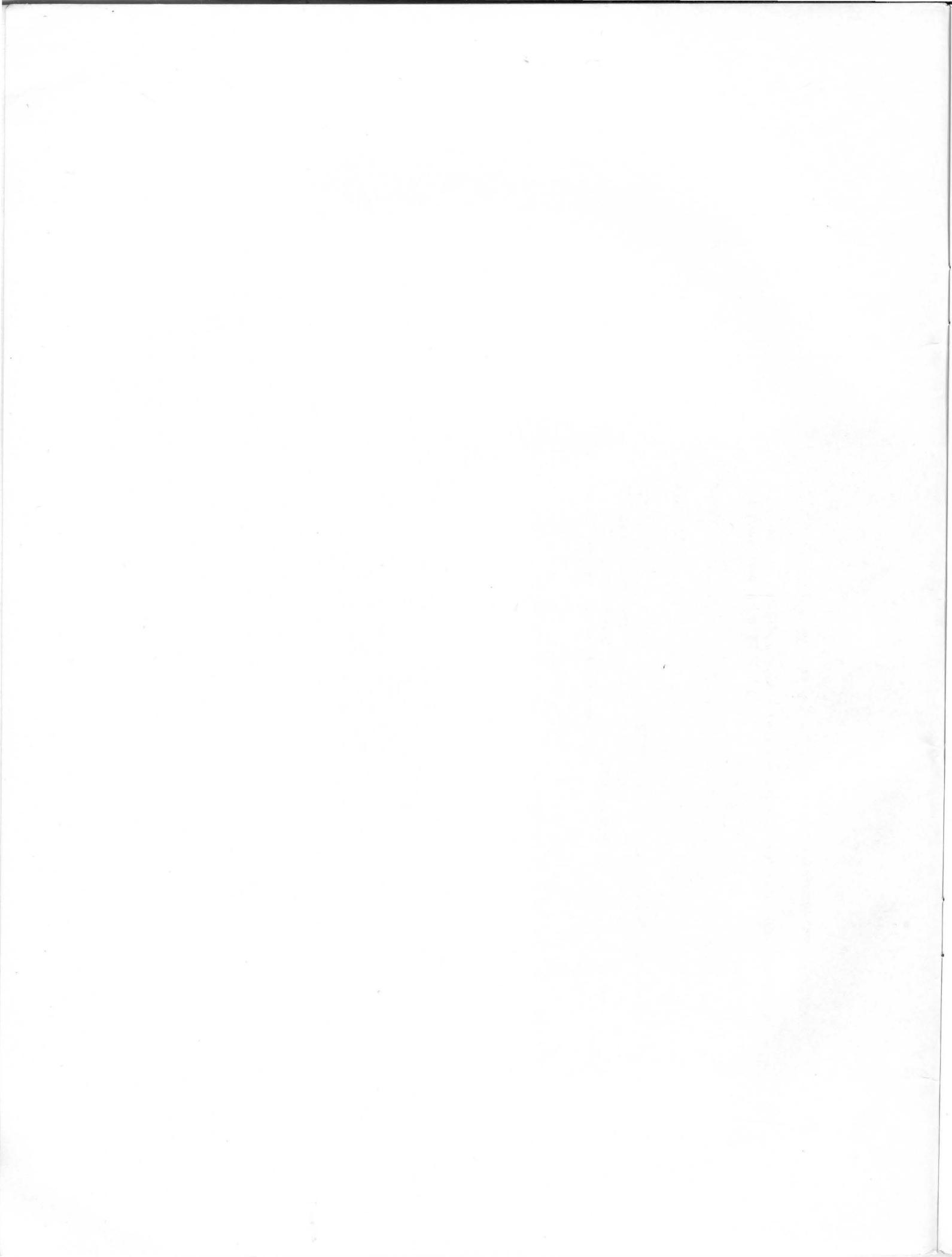
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year.

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describes the situation in
the country at the end of the
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Very truly yours,
[Signature]



Modern pastoral activity requires teamwork, that is, a collaboration with others who are entrusted with real responsibility.

This activity, which must constantly adapt itself to new situations and meet a world in the process of change, requires that all engaged in it, especially its directors, have the opportunity for study and renewal in some form or another.

We must consult modern techniques: the laws of organization and structure, and efficiency.

Our modern pastoral situation poses with particular insistence the problem of regular replacement of personnel.

Cardinal Suenens
Coresponsibility in the Church



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Charles A. Fecher

**Parish Council
Committee Guide**

National Council of Catholic Men

Charles A. Fecher

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Committee Guide

National Council of Catholic Men

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Read This First

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This book is a sequel to *Parish Councils: A Report on Principles, Purposes, Structures, and Goals*, published by the National Council of Catholic Men in 1968. At that time the concept of Parish Councils was still quite new, and probably only a very small number existed in any really organized and effective state. Interest, however, was already high, and there seemed a genuine need for some kind of theoretical and practical guidebook on the subject. *Parish Councils* was an attempt to meet that need. It set forth what might be called the theology underlying the idea, drew upon the experiences of councils that had already been formed, and correlated their experiences in concrete suggestions for the first steps of organization.

This book picks up where that one left off. It presupposes that a Parish Council exists and that it is a viable, effective, "action" body. As such it will show at least two distinguishing characteristics: clearly defined responsibilities and the authority needed to meet them.

We are aware, of course, that not all Parish Councils meet this description. Some (a minority perhaps, but a still too substantial minority) function in a purely advisory capacity. They study situations or problems and then make recommendations to the pastor, who is free to accept or reject them. The Council itself decides nothing—or

only very little. While this is certainly somewhat less than the ideal, it is hoped that the practical suggestions contained in these pages will be of help even in such circumstances.

Generally speaking, both the responsibility and the authority of the Council are set forth explicitly in a written constitution and/or bylaws, along with such other matters as methods of election, appointment, tenure, duties of the various officers and chairmen, and frequency of meetings. Here again, not all Councils function in just this way. Some, after the manner of the British Government, apparently manage to get along quite satisfactorily without any written charter and deal with new situations in an ad hoc way as they arise. If this works, well and good; but it scarcely needs be said that some kind of formal bylaws, however minimal and flexible, are of inestimable aid for smooth operations.

Perhaps the first thing to remember when treating of Parish Councils is that there is no kind of juridical or canonical provision for them in Church law. The Code of Canon Law, promulgated in 1918, is naturally silent on the subject. In 1963 Pope John XXIII created a Commission for the Revision of Canon Law which was subsequently confirmed and expanded by Pope Paul VI. This commission is still engaged upon its task.

Parish Councils owe their existence to a recommendation put forth by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Ch. 5, No. 26):

"In dioceses, as far as possible, there should be councils which assist the apostolic work of the Church either in the field of making the gospel known and men holy, or in charitable, social or other spheres. To this end, clergy and religious should appropriately cooperate with the laity. While preserving the proper character and autonomy of each organization, these councils will be able to promote the mutual coordination of various lay associations and enterprises." This refers to the establishment of diocesan councils of the laity. However, in the very next paragraph the Fathers continue: "Councils of this type should be established as far as possible also on the parochial, interparochial, and interdiocesan level as well as in the national or international sphere." Plainly enough, this sentence constitutes a mandate for the formation of Parish Councils.

The absence of any detailed legislation on the subject at present is both a strength and a weakness, but fortunately it is much more the former than the latter. If some kind of abstract, a priori structure had been created and imposed from above, into which every Parish Council had to fit willy-nilly, there is no doubt that the growth of many would have been severely impeded. Provisions which might have been helpful, and perhaps even ideal, in one diocese or parish could fail utterly to meet the needs of another. As it was, each one was free to develop along the lines that seemed most suited to his own concrete situation and problems. To be sure, it might experience some rather severe growing pains while it did so, but in the long run this was all to the good.

The weakness was twofold. In the first place, the fact that there was no law calling for Parish Councils, or making them mandatory, meant that each local Church authority—bishops first, then pastors—was free to implement the "recommendations" of Vatican II to whatever degree he wished, or to ignore them altogether. Indolence, the eternal human desire to hold on to the status quo, fear for the loss of power, and (in the United States, at least) the haunting specter of trusteeism caused delay and inaction in the forming of Parish Councils. There is no question that in large numbers of parishes the laity have been quite anxious to form a Parish Council but have been prevented from doing so by a pastor who stubbornly refuses to have anything to do with the idea. Less frequent, perhaps, but real enough is the case of the pastor who longs for and would genuinely welcome the assistance that a Parish Council could bring to him, but who simply cannot get his people to assume the rights and responsibilities of the apostolate.

The second weakness arising from an absence of directives is perhaps only apparent rather than real. But it does pose problems. At a reasonably educated guess there are about 10,000 Parish Councils in existence in this country; and, while it would be an exaggeration to say that like snowflakes no two of them are identical, they do run the whole gamut of sizes, structures, and operations. Some are so small and carefully hand-picked that they in no sense represent an authentic voice of the parish; others are so big and unwieldy that they do little more than get in their own way. Some, once organized, galloped off wildly in all directions and as a result accomplished nothing; others just sat around waiting for instructions from above, and these accomplished nothing either.

What this amounts to, briefly and bluntly, is that many Councils came into existence suffering from what the jargon of the day calls an "identity crisis." They came into being without any very clear idea of what they were, and this meant that they lacked in turn an adequate concept of what they were supposed to do and how they were supposed to do it. Unhappily nobody else knew either; the bishops and pastors who formed them were not a bit better off in this regard.

Obviously, then, there is still need for help. But the nature of the need has shifted. When the first *Parish Councils Report* was written, the need was for something more or less along the lines of a blueprint, something, in other words, that would detail the essential first steps to be taken in organizing and getting started. Now the need is for a presentation of the main areas of concern and activity for a Council and suggested means for dealing with them.

It is to meet this subsequent need that this guide is offered. Unlike much of the first, it falls entirely within the realm of what the vocabulary of scholastic theology used to call the "practical order." At the risk, sometimes, of seeming to labor the obvious, we have endeavored to treat the very down-to-earth problems that any Parish Council will run into as it goes about its work. Some of these problems are big, some small; some may be broad and general in nature, others are rather specialized; some would doubtless arise in any kind of formal or organized group, others are more or less peculiar to a Catholic congregation. But whatever their nature, they all enter into the life of a community of the "People of God" in the twentieth century, and this means that they are matters of concern to a Parish Council.

To set forth these problems we have

supposed the existence of five committees: *Administration*, including finance, budget, and maintenance; *Parish Life*, including liturgy and ecumenism; *Education*, including the parochial school, CCD, and adult education; *Family Life*, including, among other things, the special problems of youth and the aged; *Social Action*, including liaison with government and chancery, research, information services, and the relationship of the parish with the larger community of which it is a part.

Before going any further, a number of observations are in order. *First*, we are aware that not all Parish Councils use the committee system. But our research would seem to indicate that the vast majority do, and certainly it is the most logical means of assuring a proper division of labor and of seeing that needed work gets done.

Second, those Councils that do use them may not have these particular five. But regardless of how many there are, and what their names may be, all the areas in which a Council would normally be called upon to function would seem to fall under one or another of these headings.

Third, and most important, it is rare for a committee to exist purely qua committee. As a general rule a committee is a subunit of some larger body—in this case, of the Parish Council. There may be times when we seem to be giving the impression that each of these five is operating in a vacuum, making its own decisions without reference to anybody or anything else. Nothing could be more erroneous, or—in practice—more frustrating. Because there are no imposed and uniform structures, procedures here will doubtless vary from one council to another; but it seems safe to say that in most cases authority will be vested in the council as a whole, and that the final responsibility for making

decisions will rest with whomever it has chosen to be its head. That is why we have spoken of the desirability of some form of constitution or bylaws in which these matters are carefully spelled out, and that is why, too, after treating each of the five committees, we have added a brief closing chapter that offers some comments on their interrelationships and mutual collaboration.

In each section we have tried to indicate what the duties of that particular committee should be and put forth some concrete and practical suggestions for going about them. Although we may occasionally say things that anybody could reasonably be expected to know, we have done our best to avoid writing the kind of "how-to" manual which condescendingly assumes that its audience knows nothing about anything. At the end of each chapter there has been included a brief list of books, sections of books, articles, and other publications that pursue the subject in further depth and might possibly be helpful.

Like its predecessor, *Parish Council Committee Guide* is essentially the work of many hands in many places. Our own role in writing and producing it has been hardly more than bringing together in a common fund the experiences of councils, at both parish and diocesan levels, in every part of the country. We are more grateful than we can say for their generous interest and cooperation, and our greatest regret is that it is quite impractical to attempt anything like a detailed listing of acknowledgments. If it is true that there is no school like experience, it is also true that the sharing of experiences with others is the next best form of instruction; and for this reason we invite all Parish Councils everywhere to continue to tell us what they have done, what knowledge they have gained, what mistakes they have made, and what they would do differently if they had it to do

over again. It is only in this way that all of us will make progress in what is, after all, still a very new field of endeavor.

Administration

Christ founded a Church and not a company, but for better or worse that Church has become a big business in our time. This is as true of an individual parish as it is of a diocese or the reputed "wealth of the Vatican."

To argue, as so many well-intentioned people have done, that huge physical plants, property holdings, and complex investments have nothing to do with the original simplicity of the Gospel message is true enough, but it is one of those truths that does not really prove anything. A good case can doubtless be made for store-front churches and against the giant urban and suburban parishes many of us have known. But even if the latter were to disappear tomorrow and store-front churches took their place everywhere, some kind of business transactions would still be needed. Money would come in, and some of it would have to be paid out. The building would have to be kept lighted and warm. If it began to deteriorate, somebody would have to be hired to repair it.

For these reasons, there is simply no getting away from the need for what we have called here the "Administration Committee." Its size and the complexity of its responsibilities will naturally depend upon the size, resources, obligations, and needs of the parish itself. But not even the poorest inner-city parish nor the remotest rural one can operate

without this committee in some form.

In what follows, simply to cover as many aspects of the subject as possible, we have envisaged the committee at work in quite a large parish—a typical suburban one of two thousand, or more families, having a big church, a school with religious and lay teachers, a rectory, a convent, a hall or other facility for parish and community meetings, and the extensive grounds needed to hold such a "plant." What is said can be applied, making the necessary allowances, for other parishes in different circumstances.

Before beginning the discussion of the tasks of this committee, two points must be made clear. *First*, the Administration Committee in such a parish calls for a high degree of expertise, in a number of distinct and varied specialties. At the very least, the committee should include an accountant or bookkeeper, an attorney, an insurance man, and someone with a professional knowledge of plant engineering and/or maintenance. The experience of a purchasing agent and someone versed in city, county, and state ordinances and requirements may also be quite helpful. Naturally, not every parish is going to have such human resources. Where they are available, fine; where they are not, a combination of interest, willingness to work, and intelligent grasp of problems may often make up for any lack of skills.

Second, and even more important, the Administration Committee can only do its job if it is in possession of the total picture of affairs. This committee in particular, exists to relieve the pastor of an enormous burden of detail work for which he has probably had no real training and in which he presumably has little interest and less aptitude. The more the Council can assume this kind of responsibility, the freer he will be to devote himself to the ministry of Christ's Word for which he entered the priesthood and was ordained.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that there are still many pastors about, who have been used to running their parishes as a "one-man operation," and who shrink in horror from the thought of revealing any of its secrets to someone else—particularly their own lay people! The Administration Committee need not have, and probably will not have, full authority, but it must have full knowledge, or else there is no point in its trying to do a job at all. Here again we are going to assume that we are dealing with a pastor who welcomes the assistance a Parish Council can bring him, and who works with his committees in a frank, open, and uninhibited manner. To assume anything less or to expect such men to weigh problems and make intelligent judgments on the basis of incomplete or possibly even distorted information would be to make a mockery of their talents.

Income and Expense

The first matter to which the Administration Committee will want to address itself is the hard one of dollars-and-cents—that is, how much does the parish take in, how much must it pay out, and how can it make provision from its income to meet its many varied obligations.

In any parish, but more especially in large ones, both income and expense fall within certain broad categories. Sound accounting principles suggest that each of these be studied and treated on an individual basis. The first and most obvious of these breakdowns is, of course, that between the parish itself and the school, but there are others. For example, the cost of operating the CCD program should certainly be considered separately. In the case of the parish, it might even be well to distinguish between "public" expense (chargeable to the church, the hall, and any other facility where the congregation meets as a body) and those that for lack of a better word could be called "private" (chargeable to maintenance of the rectory and its personnel).

Here the matter of expertise is important. The Administration Committee will normally be responsible for all parish finances. It should be familiar with the cost of every parish operation; it should review and approve all budgets and pass upon *all* expenditures (or at least those above a certain clearly specified amount). But the Education Committee will presumably have the same degree of professional competence in its field that the Administration Committee has in the realm of finance. Its membership will be composed, at least in part, of educators who know something about the cost of operating schools, who are familiar with the salary scales that must be paid to qualified teachers on the basis of their academic degrees, experience, and tenure, and who know, too, what audio-visual aids and other physical equipment are needed in a good school and what it costs to have them. The same is true, in a slightly different area, of the CCD program.

Accordingly, both financial responsibility for the school and the annual

budget for its operation should be duties of the Education Committee. Those in charge of the CCD program (which in any event will certainly be represented on the Education Committee) should similarly oversee the monetary details of this program. These groups may want assistance from the Administration Committee in certain matters, and they are entitled to have it. But in accordance with what has come to be known as the "principle of subsidiarity," the Administration Committee should not try to do what the Education Committee is competent to do better. All the former need do is review these budgets, pass upon them with or without modifications, and integrate them into the total picture of parish finances. For these reasons, we are going to defer consideration of school and CCD budgets until we discuss the Education Committee.

Listed below are the most common items of income and expense which the Committee must study and on which it, or some responsible person, must maintain records. To most of these we have added some brief supplementary comments. It is no part of the function of this manual to tell the Committee how to keep a set of books; but some of these remarks may possibly be helpful in indicating how to estimate revenue and expenditures, and to provide for them in budgets.

Income

Plate Collections. These are, of course, the regular Offertory collections taken up at all Masses on Sundays and holy days. Week in and week out during the year they should be fairly constant. Needless to say, they are the main source of parish revenue. Later on in this chapter we will discuss possible ways of seeking to augment them.

Special Collections. Any of the extra

collections taken from time to time for the explicit purpose of supplementing the regular collections should be considered and dealt with separately. Certain collections, for certain purposes, do better than others; past experience will indicate what can be expected in each case.

N.B. Collections taken up at the direction of the Ordinary for special purpose or occasions—for example, Catholic Charities Appeals, Foreign Missions—are, of course, income at the time, but they will normally be transmitted shortly thereafter to the Chancery Office or to some other designated agency. They should be recorded in a separate account which will usually show a zero balance.

Parish Events. These are any social affairs sponsored by the parish for the express purpose of raising funds; for example, fairs, carnivals, dances, and dinners. Past experience will certainly be some guide in estimating what they will yield, but it should be borne in mind that many of these things no longer have the attraction for people that they once had. The old-time parish carnival, for example, has in many places all but disappeared from the scene.

Bequests. Bequests made by present or former parishioners, or by any philanthropic source, can be a significant item in parish income. It is usually unwise, however, to count upon them in advance. On the other hand, the income derived from past bequests can generally be considered a stable item of revenue.

Income derived from purchase or sale of stocks, bonds, and government or other types of securities.

Interest on savings accounts in banks and building-and-loan institutions.

Interest on funds advanced to diocese. In many places it has become customary for parishes to place any

excess funds they may have on deposit with the Chancery Office, for use by the Ordinary in his care of the over-all needs of the diocese. The Chancery Office covers this loan with an interest-bearing demand note, and the rate of interest is at least equal to what could be realized from commercial institutions. Such advances can, therefore, be a source of revenue.

N.B. Purely for bookkeeping purposes, interest derived from the three foregoing items will probably all be entered in a single account, "Interest Income." However, in the preparation of an annual budget it might be well to estimate and itemize them individually.

Sales of papers, books, pamphlets, votive lights, religious articles, the poor box and so on.

In many places, sale of the diocesan newspaper is handled on what is usually referred to as the "Parish Distribution Plan," that is, it is sent to all families on the parish membership rolls, and the newspaper bills the parish for the total quantity at a discount, usually about 20 percent, from the regular subscription price. Assuming that the parish in turn collects the full price from each home receiving the paper, the difference will be a source of income. So far as vigil lights and many kinds of religious articles are concerned, it should be plain that the popularity of these has dropped sharply in the years since the Second Vatican Council. In old and long-established city parishes use of them may still be fairly consistent; in newer and suburban parishes it is likely to be negligible or even nonexistent.

Rental of facilities. Many inner city parishes are in the paradoxical position of having large and even commodious facilities which were built in a more affluent era and which are now standing largely idle for the simple reason that the parish is only a fragment of its former

self. At the same time city and community agencies are often in desperate need of space for children's and young adults' recreation or meetings, and other kinds of neighborhood activities. Making these otherwise unused facilities available for such purposes not only has the very desirable effect of involving the parish more deeply in neighborhood and community life (a responsibility of the Social Action Committee), but it may possibly provide the parish with some additional income. Rental of facilities, however, need by no means apply only to inner city parishes. Those in urban and suburban locations may also find it advantageous to make their facilities available to outside organizations for various uses and functions.

These, then are the usual and regular sources of parish income, although there may be others. The parish may, for example, own property which, for one reason or another, it has decided to dispose of. But such a thing would be a nonrecurring type of income—undertaken to meet a special pressing need or because it seems more profitable to get rid of the property than to hold on to it—and it would have to be taken into consideration at the time of the transaction. In some cases the nature of the property and its value might mean that sale would require the prior approval of the Ordinary or the Chancery Office.

Expenses

Salaries of regular clergy. These are usually fixed by the Ordinary or the Chancery Office, but they naturally come out of parish funds.

Travel allowance of regular clergy. For the most part, of course, this would cover priests' car allowances, but it might also cover plane or train fare, hotel bills, meals, and any other expenses incurred for travel on legitimate

business. In the case of a priest traveling for the diocese, rather than for the parish itself, his expenses would in all probability be borne by the Chancery Office or by the diocesan agency on whose behalf he was making the trip.

Clergy Education. In many places the Ordinary has urged—even if he has not actually required—members of his clergy to take seminary and college courses in theology, liturgy, and related subjects, in order to keep abreast of the tremendous changes that have occurred in these areas since Vatican II. Priests' Senates and Associations have collaborated with local educational authorities in working out curricula for this purpose. The tuition for these courses, as well as any other expenses incurred in taking them, should be considered a legitimate parish expense.

Stipends for visiting clergy. Visiting priests who help out on weekends by hearing confessions on Saturday and celebrating some of the Sunday Masses must be reimbursed for their services. In some places the amount is fixed by diocesan synodal legislation.

Parish debt. Sound accounting principles suggest that payments on the parish debt be broken down into principal and interest.

Cathedraticum. This is a tax paid to the Chancery Office by each parish to support the administration and charitable and educational works of the diocese. Generally it is a percentage, fixed by the Ordinary in consultation with his financial advisors, of the annual gross income of the parish.

Rectory household expenses. It would be well to break this down into two categories: (1) supplies and equipment designed for long-term use (furniture, rugs, desks, filing cabinets, and so on); and (2) the items needed for ordinary day-to-day living (food, paper goods, laundry and toilet articles, and so on).

Salaries of parish personnel. This would include housekeepers, parish secretaries, lay coordinators, janitors, sextons, and all other parish personnel *except for the priests themselves*. The popes from Leo XIII to Paul VI have repeatedly emphasized the necessity of a just wage, but all too often the Church has been the last to hearken to its own admonition. There is no reason whatever to assume that people who work for the Church do so out of a sense of devotion or charity; they are entitled to the same salary or wage that they could earn for substantially the same services elsewhere. Also, paying them a salary involves certain other benefits, at least one of which, Social Security, is required by law. Both employer and employee must pay FICA tax on the employee's earnings (at the present time it is 4.8 percent for each of them on the first \$7,800), and the employer's share must be included in the budget as a salary-related item. Many dioceses now also require the parish to pay for group hospitalization insurance and to contribute to some form of pension fund for lay employees; in such case these, too, must be taken into consideration in computing what the annual payroll cost will be.

Utilities: heat, light, power, telephone and so on.

Ordinary maintenance and repairs. Under this heading would come the routine and relatively minor expenses incurred in the day-to-day physical upkeep of the parish plant—such things as paint jobs, repairs to a faulty heating system, and replacing a broken window. Some of them can be foreseen and provided for in a budget; for example, the Administration Committee would be able to estimate when the rectory woodwork is going to have to be repainted, or that the lawn about the church or school will have to be re-sodded in the

spring. On the other hand, there is no way of knowing in advance that the heating system will break down in the middle of January and require purchase and installation of a new part, or that a broken window will have to be replaced. (Major alterations or additions—re-decoration of the church, the installation of an entirely new heating plant, or the addition of several new classrooms to the school—obviously belong in an altogether different category, and will be discussed later.)

Insurance. More and more it is becoming the practice for all diocesan insurance to be centralized in the Chancery Office or one of its departmental agencies, since such an arrangement naturally permits great savings in premiums to all concerned. In that case the diocesan insurance office would handle such matters as claims and adjustments. Where this arrangement exists, it will not be necessary for the Administration Committee to concern itself with the details of insurance coverage; but since the central office will bill the parish for its share of the premiums, the Committee must at least be familiar with this billing so that it can make proper provision in the budget. It will also be its responsibility to notify this office of anything that could conceivably affect its coverage or premiums in any way.

Charity. Few parishes are so well off or located in such universally prosperous communities that they have no need whatever to practice charity. In some parishes these demands may be heavy and unceasing, and meeting them may be an agonizing burden; but they must be met nonetheless. In more affluent and differently situated parishes, it may amount to nothing more than an occasional itinerant person knocking on the rectory door in hunger or want—but he cannot be turned away either.

There is some danger that businessmen, who make up the Administration Committee in a large, well-to-do parish, may have a tendency to dismiss this sort of thing as unreal or pointless, but nothing could be more wrong. It is one of the reasons—it may, indeed, be the chief reason—why the parish exists: to manifest the charity of Christ to those who are in need of it. Some provision for it should be made in any budget.

"Adopted" parishes. Related to the foregoing, but in a somewhat more specialized vein, is the increasingly frequent custom of an affluent parish adopting a less fortunate one and providing, to whatever extent may be possible, for its needs. It may mean taking up an occasional Special Collection, the receipts of which are sent to the adopted parish; it may involve setting aside for it a certain percentage of the parent parish's own plate collections, over and above actual budgetary requirement; or again it may call for sending supplies of canned foods and other nonperishable goods on some kind of regular basis so that the poorer parish may be better assured of being able to meet the charitable demands made upon it. The parish thus adopted may be in one's own diocese, or it may be much more remote—say in an undeveloped and cruelly impoverished section of Latin America. In either case, there can be no better way for some of the members of the People of God to manifest their concern and love for their brothers in Christ. The Administration Committee should at least give very serious thought to whether such a thing can be undertaken; and if it can, the knowledge and advice of the pastor or of the diocesan Charities Office or Office of Urban Affairs will be most helpful in determining just where such assistance can best be directed.

As with receipts, so with expenditures

—the foregoing list is doubtless incomplete, and a particular parish may have obligations of an unusual nature which could not possibly have been foreseen and dealt with in a work of this sort. But as we indicated, these are the ordinary ones, the ones that would be pretty much common to all parishes everywhere. The Administration Committee will want to have full knowledge and give careful study to each of them, both for its own sake and for its place in the preparation of a parish budget.

Budget

A budget can be defined as “a plan for the coordination of resources, the amount of money available, required, or assigned to a particular purpose.”

Well in advance of the first of the year, at least three months before, but possibly even four or five, the Committee should set up a budget calendar. Written notice should go out to all the other committees of the Parish Council, as well as to every organization and office which will need or want parish funds to operate, informing them that a preliminary budget request must be submitted by a given date. Naturally, sufficient time should be allowed between the date of the notice and the deadline for submission so that the task can be done properly for, as anybody knows who has ever worked on one, the preparation of a budget can be difficult, tedious, and time-consuming. Members of the Administration Committee should be available to give help where it is needed or asked for.

When all individual budgets have been received, the Committee should hold a meeting to review them (or several meetings, if the review cannot conveniently be done in one session). The date for the meeting would, of course, have been fixed ahead of time as part of the calendar. Here each

budget can be carefully scrutinized and requests weighed both on their own merits and in relation to the total picture of parish finances. Members of the committees or groups submitting them need not be—and in all probability should not be—present at this meeting. If the information given is complete, if the requests seem reasonable, and if the Administration Committee has no questions or reservations, the budget can be approved forthwith.

If there are questions, or if the amount asked for seems out of line or simply impossible, then one or more members of that particular body can be invited to join the Administration Committee at a subsequent meeting to consider the matter further. It should not be assumed that the sole purpose of such a meeting is to inform the group concerned that it will have to slash its budget. It may, of course, turn out to be necessary to do this; but before coming to that decision the group should at least have a fair chance to set forth the reasons for its requests and whatever arguments seem to justify them, and the two bodies together may be able to weigh possible alternatives.

Once the individual budgets have all been approved, either as originally submitted or in a subsequently modified form, the Administration Committee can proceed to integrate them into a single budget reflecting the total anticipated revenues and expenditures of the parish for the year. This will be the Parish Budget. Although prepared by the Administration Committee, it will presumably require formal approval by the full Parish Council, by the pastor, and possibly by the parish as a whole.

Even if approval by the entire parish is not necessary, or just not practical, parishioners should at least know about the budget and have an opportunity to see it. This can be done by presenting it

at a well-publicized general meeting, or by sending it in the mail to everyone on the parish rolls with a remark that comments and suggestions will be welcome. The important thing here is that no parishioner should be able to make the statement that a clique prepared the budget and that the parish as a whole had no voice in it.

How rigid should it be? Well, setting aside the word "rigid" as being perhaps not the happiest one to use here, it goes without saying that it should be just as realistic and exact as possible. Every effort should be made by everyone concerned to operate within its framework, or else there seems little point in having a budget at all. At the same time this can certainly be balanced by at least a moderate degree of flexibility. After all, each committee or department is going to be responsible for the administration of its own budget, and responsibility normally implies judgment, some initiative, and the authority to make some decisions. Circumstances change, and demands no one could have foreseen when the original requests were submitted sometimes arise. No budget should be calculated so tightly or be so unalterable in its application that anyone has to fear making minor adjustments in it or even asking for supplementary funds if there is real necessity for them.

Naturally, having once prepared the total budget, the Administration Committee cannot assume that from that point on it will simply travel on its own momentum with no further supervision. On the contrary it should be reviewed on a regular basis, certainly not less than quarterly. The advantages of this are obvious. If, for example, it should develop that a particular committee or group has used up three-quarters of its budget in one-half the time, the responsible people can be alerted and the

situation examined. Perhaps there is a need for more money, but perhaps just a little belt-tightening is all that is necessary to bring things into line.

Remember, too, that it cannot always be assumed that if the figures in the budget are divided by twelve, this will give the amount of income and expense to be anticipated for each month of the year. If the school, say, consumed three-quarters of its budget in the first six months of the calendar year, this is not necessarily critical because it is going to be closed for the three months of summer and may very well get by on its remaining funds in the period between September and the Christmas vacation period. Similarly in the matter of estimating income: a parish with a large population of seasonal migratory workers, or one located in a popular resort area where there are literally thousands of summer visitors but only a few hundred year-round residents, must estimate income and its relationship to expenditures in a manner significantly different from that of a parish where membership and attendance are more or less constant.

Realism and flexibility, these are undoubtedly the hallmarks of a successful and workable budget. In the kind of Administration Committee that we have envisaged here—a committee made up, that is, of experienced, level-headed businessmen—there is probably not much danger of error, poor judgment, or blinding oneself to plain facts in anything so extremely practical as planning ahead for the parish's financial life. But precisely because they are businessmen, there may be some danger of budgetary needs taking precedence over spiritual and pastoral ones. The Church may be a business because there is no way it can avoid being one, but the Committee should never forget that it is the People of God before all else. Neither should it

forget that the budget exists for the parish, not the parish for the budget.

Increasing Parish Income

Suppose that when every possible source of revenue has been realistically appraised, and every expenditure or need that can be anticipated has been provided for, the budget just does not balance. Suppose, in other words, that income is less than expenses, or so close to them that there is real fiscal danger.

The first reaction of the Administration Committee may well be, "Let's cut down on expenses!" And certainly this may be quite possible. Perhaps the lawns do not have to be watered every day during the summer, or so many hours of every day. Perhaps somebody could go around at night turning out the lights if electric power is being used wastefully. Perhaps the closed-circuit TV system that the school had hoped for will just have to wait for a while at least.

Another look at the income column might be helpful too. Is the parish earning as much as it could on its savings? Obviously, a bank or a building and loan association that pays 5.25 percent interest is a better place for one's money to be than a similar institution that pays only 5 percent.

But chipping away at expenses and building up earnings can at best be no more than merely marginal. The voluntary offerings of its members in the plate collections are, as we said earlier, the main source of income for the parish, and it is here that the problem must be met head-on.

It has been pretty well established that in most parishes one-third of the people give 70 to 80 percent of all income, another one-third give 20 to 30 percent, and the remaining third give nothing. A simple appeal for greater generosity will probably have the following results: the

upper third will respond (but since they are already bearing such a disproportionate share of the burden it seems unfair to ask them to assume more); the middle third may or may not increase their contributions; and the lower third will give precisely what they gave before — namely, nothing.

The Administration Committee will have to tackle this problem with the same careful judgment and circumspection that it used in working out the budget. It does no good to set impractical goals and hope that somehow they will be realized. Some very down-to-earth questions will have to be asked, and it may take considerable study and probing to come up with the answers to them.

How many families are on the parish rolls? Are some of them wealthy, do the majority fall in the middle-income bracket, and are there others which, by the most modest standards, must be considered poor? Or does the parish present a rather uniform picture in this respect? How much is normally collected on a Sunday, and if this is divided by the number of families what does it average out to for each? *Who* actually gives *what* (on the basis of the envelope records)? What should each family be contributing if the parish is to maintain a healthy financial condition, and can this figure reasonably be asked and expected?

If finding the answers to these questions is not easy, the job of presenting the end result to the parish is harder yet.

One way that it might be done is by an appeal from the pulpit. Only, instead of the parish priests, let it be done by members of the Administration Committee, perhaps taking turns at each of the Sunday Masses. The experience of hearing a lay member of the parish set forth the parish's plight in clear, realistic terms is certain to make a much deeper

impression than the same words would coming from a priest. Without taking too much time from what is, after all, a liturgical celebration, and without going into boring detail, the Committee members can explain what the needs are, how far the parish is falling short of meeting them, and what is required from each to enable it to serve all its members well.

These facts can also be presented succinctly in the weekly bulletin, and the problem can be made the occasion for a general parish meeting—except that at such a meeting the people for whom it is most specifically called will probably not be present.

Whatever way it is done—and the Administration Committee may even want to go to the length of making house-to-house calls on all the parishioners—the most important element here is communication. The facts must be made known to all—or substantially all—the members of the parish. They must be followed by blunt appeal, an appeal that stresses the new role of the laity in the Church, emphasizes that this role involves not only rights but responsibilities, and brings out the fact that the People of God have a very real obligation to their parish. Obviously this need not be done in the ecclesiastical jargon of Vatican II documents, but the theology of the laity embodied in these documents will provide a very solid foundation.

The envelope system is one of the few things in the American Church that has not changed. But there is need for a great change in the amount of money that is being put into them. It would seem to be a mystery as profound as any in our faith how people can know perfectly well that they must pay more today for a new car or a steak dinner than they paid ten or even five years ago, and yet at the same time blandly

assume the cost of living for a parish has not gone up. A vigorous program of education is called for in this area and there is good reason to believe that such a program can be successful, that if people are really awakened to the need they will respond.

The envelope system itself, some form of pledge, tithing (if not 10 percent, then perhaps 5 percent)—the Administration Committee will want to weigh all these in its consideration of augmenting parish income. Whatever is decided upon, there is no substitute for the direct approach: "Mr. Jones, how much will *you* pledge to give to your parish each week during the coming year?"

As a last resort, the Committee might want to give some thought to the advisability of employing professional fund-raisers. These people have a very specialized expertise, and their campaigns are usually quite effective. They can bring to the job not only their knowledge but full-time concentration, something that the members of the Committee, giving of both the time and the energy left over from their daily occupations, cannot do. It should be borne in mind, however, that in general such services come high—which is why we said "as a last resort." There may also be a feeling in many places that the parish can solve its own problems without calling in outside help. Certainly the relative merits and disadvantages of such a thing should be very carefully weighed before the Committee makes its decision.

The Annual Report

One of the most important duties of the Administration Committee will be to give an account of its stewardship. Since the people are contributing their money for the upkeep of the parish, they have a right to know what is being done with it; and this is accomplished

by means of the annual financial report.

Most older Catholics can remember that Sunday, usually toward the end of January, when the pastor at the Masses delivered the report for the year just ended. While the congregation fidgeted, he read in a more or less intelligible voice a long list of accounts and figures, bearing down heavily on that final item of what was left over. (In those days there was usually something left over.) Then he concluded by thanking the parishioners for their generosity in the past and by expressing the hope that they would do as well or even better in the future.

If the current renewal in the Church had accomplished nothing else, it could at least be justified on the ground that it has eliminated this. There is not the slightest reason in the world why the celebration of Mass should be interrupted for such a thing, and no real reason, either, why a priest should have to do it. With the advent of Parish Councils, it becomes the responsibility of those who have been entrusted with the management of funds by their fellow parishioners and who have actually been administering them throughout the year.

The annual report for a parish does not have to look like the profit-and-loss statement for General Motors. It can be complete and honest without going into burdensome and meaningless detail. The majority of the people who read it are not going to be professional accountants, and their interest will be chiefly in totals and balances rather than in how those totals were arrived at. Nothing should be concealed, of course, and nothing should be misleading; but the two chief marks of a parish report will be brevity and simplicity—and also, perhaps, timeliness, since the longer it is delayed after the end of the year, the less interest and meaning it will have. If

it can be done without causing confusion, perhaps the budget for the year should be set beside the actual receipts and expenditures so that a comparison can be made between the two.

Where and how to present it, if it is no longer going to be a substitute for a homily? Certainly it should be a supplement to the weekly bulletin, and again it might be well to make it the occasion for a general parish meeting. Here those who do have questions can ask them, and here, too, the Administration Committee can go into details and offer explanations that could not very well be included in the written report itself. Finally, here if anywhere is a splendid opportunity—especially if the figures do not look good—to emphasize that the parish has no other real means of support except the contributions of its members, and to point to the report itself in appealing for greater generosity on the part of all.

One other thought in this connection. We have spoken in terms of a *financial* report, but there are obviously aspects of parish life that cannot be set down in terms of dollars and cents. How many persons, children or adults, became members of the People of God through Baptism? How many of the parishioners died during the past year? How many were joined in Matrimony? How many persons became members of this particular community by moving into the parish, and how many moved out of it? These figures may not be the responsibility of the Administration Committee, but they are certainly part of any complete report of the life of a parish for a given year.

Maintenance

If we devote less time and space to the duties of the Administration Committee in the area of maintenance, this should not be taken to imply that it is secondary

or less important. On the contrary, it is in every way as important as the management of a parish's financial affairs, and whereas such things as budgets and reports may come up only at infrequent intervals, maintenance of the physical plant calls for constant supervision and care, and for the making of a great many decisions.

Two rather distinct things are involved here—distinct even if quite closely related. The first is what is usually called preventive maintenance: the ordinary, day-to-day check of all facilities to make sure that they are in good condition and working with maximum possible efficiency. The other, for which there is really no convenient term, is concerned with the decisions that have to be made, and the implementation that they require, in the case of major renovations and additions to property. Obviously this latter is not something that is going to happen very often, but when it does it will demand the most careful consideration and judgment.

With regard to the first, or preventive maintenance, it seems fairly safe to say that few parishes have any real idea of the extent of their facilities, appliances, and ordinary operating materials—of all the parts, in other words, that make up the whole plant. Such things are usually taken for granted until they break down or the supply runs out. For this reason, one of the first tasks of the Committee as it embarks upon its work in this area might well be to take an inventory of the parish, to set up some kind of file that would permit instant check of all properties and facilities and that could be referred to whenever the need arose. (This would be invaluable when this portion of the annual budget was under review.)

Such a record would go beyond counting the number of folding chairs and

spare light bulbs. It could even cover each individual room in the church, school, rectory, and convent. When, for example, was the rectory living room last painted? Who did it, what grade and color of paint was used, and how much did it cost? When should one plan on having it painted again? In the case of operating appliances, the church heating plant offers perhaps the most obvious example. How old is it? What did it cost when it was put in, and what is it worth today on the basis of accepted accounting methods of depreciation? How efficient is it, and how would it compare with one that would be installed now? Does the type of fuel that it burns provide maximum efficiency at the most reasonable cost? What kind of service contract covers it, and if the plant is giving a great deal of trouble would it actually be more economical in the long run to consider replacing it with a new one?

So with every other appliance—the air-conditioning system if there is one, the cooking ranges in the rectory kitchen and the school cafeteria, electrical fixtures and wiring, plumbing, and so on. Such things as floors, walls, ceilings, roofs, and weatherstripping, ought to be checked on a regular basis, and on the file card covering them a notation should be made when the inspection was made, what kind of condition they were found to be in, and when they ought to be looked at again.

How is this checking to be done? In many cases—the heating and air-conditioning systems being the most obvious ones—it is possible to call in outside contractors or consultants to do it. But though possible, it may not be necessary. Here again expertise is important. Plumbing is as specialized a profession as accounting, a master electrician has as much technical knowledge as an attorney. It's not unreasonable to

suppose that in a large and diversified parish many of these skills and trades would be found among the members.

One of the first tasks the Parish Life Committee should undertake when it is set up—and we will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter—is to conduct a parish census to determine, among many other things, its human resources. What special skills and branches of knowledge are represented in the community? What can each member do for the whole parish of which he is a part? In every kind of group, remember, there are always people who seldom volunteer for anything, but who will readily say Yes if somebody asks them. The parish will, of course, normally have paid employees who take care of the routine upkeep of the property and make minor repairs; but the general overseeing of this work is clearly the responsibility of the Administration Committee.

Major renovations and building should be undertaken only after exhaustive deliberation and study. Not only the priests and the Parish Council but perhaps the parish as a whole ought to have a voice in the decision-making. (Often such projects will require the prior approval of the Ordinary, or the Chancery Office, or the diocesan Building Commission.) Once it has been decided to go ahead, the Administration Committee will have numerous details, some big and some small, to keep watch on; not the least of these is seeing that the whole thing is adequately financed. Common business sense dictates that for each phase of the job competitive bids be obtained, and awards made to the lowest bidder compatible with the kind and quality of work desired.

Both areas of maintenance involve the expenditure of money, and the second will call for the expenditure of

large sums. Obviously that is why, in setting up the committees, we have thought it best to group finance and maintenance under the general aegis of the Administration Committee. In some parishes there are separate Finance and Maintenance Committees; when the latter wishes to undertake repairs or improvements it must presumably go to the Finance Committee to obtain the necessary funds. If this arrangement works satisfactorily, there seems no compelling reason to change it, but it does appear to add an unnecessary amount of red tape to the operations of both committees. In our opinion, placing both responsibilities in the hands of the same group facilitates both the making of decisions and the necessary authority to carry them out.

Books and Articles

Material on the financial administration and physical maintenance of parishes is scant, and what little there is can hardly be called helpful. Since this is really a new area of lay activity, in which much trial and error is currently going on, it will doubtless take some time for an adequate literature to build up.

Programs for Parish Councils: An Action Manual by Bernard Lyons (Techny, Ill.: Divine Word Publications, 124 pp., \$1.50) and *Your Parish Comes Alive* by Robert C. Broderick (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 72 pp., \$1.95) will both provide some assistance. Lyons treats finance and administration in his Chapter 11, pp. 113-124; as in his handling of all the other committees he simply asks questions, but the questions do suggest directions and operational methods. Broderick separates his "Finance Commission" from his "Building and Maintenance Commission;" the former is treated in Chapter 3, pp. 30-36, and the latter in Chapter 4, pp. 37-41.

An excellent *Parish Budget Manual* has been published by the Diocese of Tucson, Arizona, the result of a seminar on parish finance conducted by the Priests' Senate there in September of 1968; though brief and very general, it is filled with many good ideas and suggestions. Far more complete and detailed is *An Accounting Manual for Catholic Parishes* put out by the same diocese a bit later; the system of accounts, method of entries, and so on, were of course developed for use in the Tucson diocese, but with whatever modifications might be necessary or desirable, they could easily be adapted elsewhere. While these manuals are not available for public sale, interested persons might at least direct their inquiries to the Chancery Office, 192 South Stone Avenue, Tucson, Arizona 85702.

The Layman's Guide to Preparing Financial Statements for Churches, written by Malvern J. Gross, Jr., CPA, and published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10019, contains very helpful material on budgets as well as on annual reports, and includes sample financial statements of varying degrees of complexity.

Most of the fund-raising firms publish brochures, in some cases quite elaborate, which list and explain their services and offer general information on what may be expected from their use. In a bibliography of this nature there would obviously be little point in trying to include any of this material, but it can be obtained very easily from any such firm listed in the phone directory.

At the present time there seems to be nothing devoted to the specific area of parish plant maintenance. There is a real need here, and it is to be hoped that something along these lines may appear for inclusion in subsequent editions of this manual.

Parish Life

The preceding chapter treated of things as solidly material as bricks and mortar, and as symbolically so as dollars and cents. The Parish Life Committee is concerned with the realm we usually think of when we hear the term "Church" used: the People of God as a worshipping community.

In a sense the name we have given to this committee is misleading, because such things as administration, education, and social action are vital aspects of parish life too. But these aspects flow from and are inspired by the community's central act of worship. This is the first and chief reason why the parish exists at all, for where there is no worship there is no parish. Worship creates the community: around this concept together with all the activities that normally follow from it, we have structured the Parish Life Committee.

The Liturgy

The task of planning, perfecting, and playing an active role in liturgical celebration, and of educating the total congregation in it, is the Parish Life Committee's primary responsibility.

To say that such a thing is more important today than it has ever been before is really inaccurate. It is quite literally a brand new task, one that up until a few years ago did not exist. In the past, liturgical worship had been rigidly fixed: the Mass for the Tenth Sunday

after Pentecost had not varied, year in and year out, since the sixteenth century. Inflexible rubrics provided for the celebrant's position at any given moment, even for the movements of his hands and fingers. Except for a choir and an organist at High Mass—and, of course, the altar boys—there was no role for the laity and no need for them to take part.

This is being written at a time when, following already extensive liturgical reform in recent years, a new Order of Mass has been introduced, the chief marks of which are flexibility and provision for options. It provides for much greater freedom in prayers, music, and available Scripture readings. The selection of these depends not just on the particular Sunday or feast but also, and to a large extent, on the needs and wishes of the congregation, its members, and even the whole secular community of which the parish is a part. It is necessary to plan the liturgy as it never had to be planned before. And in this the role of the laity has become more than important—it is now integral and indispensable.

Thus the Parish Life Committee bears new and heavy responsibilities. These break down into two main areas, which we may call respectively *implementation* and *education*.

Implementation has to do with the actual performance of the liturgical

celebration itself. Since this involves many different persons and roles, the committee should be as representative of the community as possible. Since the leader of worship is usually a priest, either the pastor or an associate priest designated by him must be a member. To it he can bring the professional knowledge of his scriptural and theological studies and his personal expertise in the liturgy, as well as the benefit of all communications which the parish regularly receives from the diocesan Liturgical Commission. But there must also be room and a voice for representatives of the lectors, cantors, ushers, organists, the choir (if there still is one), the parish school and CCD, and any other group specifically concerned with religious education.

Finally—and this point is more important—membership on the committee should by no means be restricted just to those who take an actual part in liturgical celebrations from within the sanctuary. The man and woman “in the pew” ought to be represented, as well as teenagers and young adults. And if there are in the parish any writers, poets, artists, or professional musicians, these may also be able to make significant contributions.

Such a group can constitute, in effect, a task force whose responsibility it will be to insure that the liturgy is carried out both with dignity and meaning: the dignity that befits it as the proclamation of God’s Word, and the meaning that it must have for the congregation and each of its members. The committee will have to determine not just the parish’s needs and desires (which after all are subject to change) but even its “personality,” so that this may be faithfully reflected in its worship and that worship may in turn deepen and enrich its personality.

Needless to say, this is not just a matter of trying to keep everybody

happy. It does not mean having “traditional” hymns on occasion for old and conservative people, or scheduling a “guitar Mass” or two each week for young and liberal ones. Even less does it simply consist in being sure that Masses are at those hours which provide maximum convenience for the greatest number, and that they are spaced sufficiently far apart for people to get on and off the parking lot without either fenders or tempers being scraped. These things are among the details which the committee will have to concern itself with, but the total responsibility goes deeper.

It calls for an intelligent planning and coordinating of the various elements of the liturgy—hymns, prayers, readings, homily, the Prayer of the Faithful—in such a way that the whole is spiritually enriching and satisfying for everyone, even though some individuals may not be happy with one or another of the parts. There are Catholics—and very good ones—who will simply never be able to reconcile themselves to singing “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” or who are downright shocked by some of the new hymns being used at folk Masses. There are others for whom the formal Latinized supplications of the Roman Missal, even in translation, are meaningless. It is not likely that these people can be changed. But there is surely no good reason why they cannot worship with each other in community, and in a liturgy that has meaning for all of them.

The many options which the new Order of Mass makes possible will go far, of course, toward providing this meaning, and the selection of these will be largely up to the judgment of the priest-celebrant. But the committee can do much to help him in making such judgments. So, too, with the homily. While the committee cannot do his preaching for him, it can at least suggest

subjects to be dealt with and points to be made. It is not going too far to say that one of its duties ought to be to report to him afterward how well he got his message across—how, in other words, he related to his hearers.

Because all these things are still so new, mistakes are going to be made. No matter how much knowledge and expertise the committee members may have, there will be errors in judgment. Nobody should feel too badly about this for the job of this committee is complex and sensitive. Some comfort at least may be derived from reflecting on the fact that similar committees, in other parishes, are going through precisely the same difficulties. But such a thing points up the need for a continuing process of self-evaluation, and this can be assisted by two things: hearkening honestly and humbly to the feedback from parishioners, and maintaining effective liaison with Liturgical Committees elsewhere for an interchange of ideas, experiences, and common problems. (In fact, two or three members of the committee might even be assigned to this specific task—keeping in regular touch with neighboring parishes for just such a sharing.)

The second area of committee responsibility is *education*. It seems obvious that the best place for the committee to begin is with itself. No one can do a really effective job on a Liturgical Committee unless he knows something about liturgy, and this means not only being familiar with the Church's seasons and feasts but having a solid background in the theology of Mass and the sacraments. Each of the members of the committee has an obligation to keep abreast of the literature on the subject, both in periodicals and in books, and to hold regular meetings at which these materials are studied and discussed. In the books and articles

section at the end of this chapter we have listed some of the materials which will be helpful along these lines, and the priest-member of the committee can undoubtedly suggest others.

There is more to it, however, than this. The liturgy is not a set of rubrics, and it is not even a collection of prayers, hymns, and Scripture readings. It is these things, of course, but it is also something over and above them—in this case the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It is, in essence, something spiritual, and this means that no person and no committee can contribute effectively to it without having some kind of spiritual depth. It is inconceivable that a group whose reason for being is liturgical celebration should never celebrate the liturgy; and on occasion at least its meetings should be for the purpose of praying together and having some form of liturgical or paraliturgical service.

The committee should arrange for a series of speakers, films, and discussion sessions to which all lectors, cantors, organists, and others intimately involved in the liturgical celebrations are especially invited. Those who have the responsibility to lead the community in its worship must prepare themselves not only by practicing their particular part so that the liturgy will proceed smoothly and in the proper spirit. Much more important is that they deepen their awareness of the Mystery of the celebration so that each of their contributed actions is filled with conviction and joy.

So far as the rest of the congregation is concerned, it should be remarked at the outset that all the liturgical changes of the past few years are not something decided upon arbitrarily by a commission in Rome, and they are not change for the sake of change. There are good reasons for all of them—reasons lying in the purpose and nature of the liturgy itself, in Scripture and tradition, and in

the whole teaching and sanctifying mission of the Church. They were long overdue; but when they did come it seemed to be with an almost terrifying suddenness and completeness. Much of the confusion and resentment that the changes evoked was caused by the fact that the laity were not adequately educated and prepared for them.

The committee must, therefore, undertake to provide as much enlightenment in this area as it possibly can. The congregation should be informed not only on the broad reasons for liturgical reform, but even on why the liturgy is being celebrated as it is in *this* parish on *this* Sunday. Workshops and discussion groups should be regularly scheduled, qualified speakers should be brought in, and all available printed and audio-visual material (of which there is an ever-growing amount) should be studied and used to provide this education. If time and resources permit, it could even be done on a "block" basis—that is, meetings could be scheduled in private homes with all parishioners in the neighborhood being invited, and their study or discussion of the liturgy could culminate in the celebration of a home Mass.

Here, too, is an excellent opportunity for members of the committee to get the feedback mentioned earlier. In addition to explaining the liturgy and what is happening to it, the committee can get a sense of what the people of the parish themselves want or would like, and can communicate this to the priests for possible further development and improvement.

The committee should remember that, while the Mass is the center of the liturgy and the time when most members of the parish come together in community, it is not the only liturgical celebration in parish life. The new Rites of Baptism, Confirmation, Matrimony,

and the Funeral Mass fall within the province of the committee too, and must be carefully studied, planned for and carried out.

The Parish Societies

The parish is a community, but at all times there have existed within it various subcommunities engaged in specialized forms of the apostolate. These are the parish societies and organizations. Among them are the Sodalties, the Holy Name Society, the Ladies of Charity, the Altar Guilds, and numerous others. Some of them have been in existence, in one form or another, for generations or even centuries.

In recent years, and especially since Vatican II, many of these groups have fallen on rather hard times. Often the specific need they were created to meet simply no longer exists. At the same time new needs have arisen in the parish and community, and the societies, geared to older and simpler forms of religious activity, are sometimes unable to adjust to them. Membership has dwindled as a result, and those who still belong have sought almost desperately for something that would bring into them new life and meaning.

Certainly there is no reason why these societies should go out of existence for lack of anything to do. Quite the contrary, the need for them may be greater than ever before. For many Catholics, indeed, they represent the only form of organized activity and commitment. Their dissolution would not only be a serious blow to these people, but would deprive the parish of many willing hands and energies.

One of the chief tasks facing the Parish Life Committee is to study the present role and future potential of these societies and make a genuine effort to revitalize them. The job will not be easy, and it may even mean

occasionally conflicting head-on with entrenched vested interests; but if it is done with intelligence and tact, and if care is taken to preserve the autonomy of each society, everyone in the community will be the richer for it. The heads of all such groups ought to be members of the Committee, so that their mutual problems can be studied together and they can help each other achieve their respective aims.

The Parish Census

Taking a census calls for some rather specialized knowledge and techniques. It does no good to get a mere "count of noses;" such a thing will, naturally, tell how many people are in the parish, but it will tell nothing at all about them. The principal purpose of a parish census is to assemble a body of present data from which the future can be accurately projected. If statisticians or sociologists are represented among the parishioners they should be drawn on immediately to help plan this undertaking.

Here are just a few of the facts which a census should bring out to form an intelligible parish profile.

What is the average age of the families in the parish? If the majority are still in their twenties or thirties, they will continue to have children, and this will have a very important effect on the demands which the school will have to meet in coming years. If, on the other hand, they are for the most part older people, whose children have already married and moved elsewhere, what effect will this have on the parish's future? How is it going to take care of the elderly, the ill, and those who cannot get out to Church? How will parish revenues be affected as more and more people live on the limited incomes of old-age pensions?

How long have families lived in the parish? In other words, is the population

fairly stable, or is there a high degree of mobility with people moving out and new ones coming?

What is the socio-economic profile of the parish? How many are professional people—doctors, scientists, teachers, executives, how many are white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, laborers? What is the average level of education? Without arousing resentment, it would be well to get some idea of income brackets.

And, since the parish is first and foremost a spiritual community, the census should reveal information of a spiritual nature. Who has not been baptized? Confirmed? Made First Communion? What about the status of marriages? How many of the children are enrolled in the parish school, how many are receiving religious instruction through CCD or some other source, and how many are receiving no kind of religious instruction at all? Are there handicapped people or retarded children who require special attention from the priests? All these things are immensely important, and the census form should be designed to provide for them.

Once the census has been taken, it should be kept up-to-date. Births and deaths should be regularly noted, and every possible effort should be made to keep track of families moving out of and into the parish. If the rectory staff does not do this, then some members of the Parish Life Committee should have specific responsibility for it.

Finally, bear in mind that these census cards represent something more than a collection of names. They are people, the People of God in this particular parish. If they have nothing else in common, they at least come together to worship. Space really does not permit any adequate discussion of ways to bring them together on a social basis, but some mention must be made of

provision to bring in new members. Many a family, moving into a parish and attending its first Mass there on Sunday morning, has been struck by the fact that the people did not make them feel welcome.

The member of the Parish Life Committee who calls on such a family to fill out a census card is doing something more than collecting information; he is, in effect, welcoming them into the community. Lately, many parishes have published brochures listing the times of their Masses, the names of the priests and other personnel, information about the school, parish organizations and activities, and even about the community at large; the Committee's representative should take one with him and go over it in detail with the new arrivals. He can offer to be their host at next Sunday's Mass and help them get to know their new neighbors.

Ecumenical Relations

Before Vatican II, Catholics neatly divided Christians into two neat categories: themselves and non-Catholics. This is as if one were to divide all American voters into Democrats and non-Democrats. With the advent of Pope John, the Council, and the Church's entry into ecumenical affairs, Protestants became "our separated brethren," but even this has an air of exclusivism about it. Whether the term "People of God" must be restricted to Catholics, or whether it can be broadened to include other Christians and indeed the members of other religious bodies, is a theological question that it would be futile to enter into here.

While the theologians are discussing it, along with other doctrinal matters, the rank-and-file Catholic can do a great deal to enhance ecumenical relations with his neighbors. If there are Protestant churches in the community, as there

probably are, they face precisely the same problems that the Catholic parish does. Changing neighborhoods, race relations, poverty, crime, and delinquency are not Catholic problems any more than they are Protestant ones; they are the problems of all the people of a community, and all the people must work together on them. This is the task of the Social Action Committee, which we will discuss at length. The Parish Life Committee can do much to lay the groundwork for such collaboration by a carefully planned program of ecumenical activities.

Discussion groups and living-room dialogues offer an excellent beginning for such a thing. Most Protestant churches now have Interfaith Committees; they should be contacted and a schedule of meetings and studies worked out. Naturally, the more numerous the denominations represented, the better. Meetings in private homes should be as informal as possible, but at the same time it does no good merely to have sessions at which each person tries to convince everybody else that his religion is the right one. Some kind of organized materials should be used and agreed upon in advance. There is a wide selection to choose from.

Once the discussions have gotten well under way, it should be possible to move into the area of parish visits; each congregation plays host in turn to all the others. This can be done at a time when no religious services are going on and the group can be taken around the church and have its various features and appurtenances explained to them; or it can be done at attendance at an actual worship service, with a period set aside afterward for answering questions the visitors may have. The latter is undoubtedly preferable; some Catholics may still feel a bit squeamish about attending services in a Protestant

church, but there is really no reason at all why they should.

Do not forget, too, that ecumenism is not something just going on between Catholics and Protestants. Jews have been overlooked in many ecumenical gatherings; however most synagogues also have interfaith committees and experience has shown that they are quite eager to be a part of this movement. If there are Jewish places of worship in the area, it would be ungracious not to make them a part of such a program. And the Anglicans and Orthodox, who do not consider themselves either Roman Catholic or Protestant, should be included too. The word "ecumenical," remember, means "universal," and there are really no limits to what can be accomplished either in breadth or in depth.

Books and Articles

Lyons and Broderick both treat of Liturgical (or "Worship") Committees in their books, the former in Chapter 5, pp. 41-52, of *Programs for Parish Councils: An Action Manual*, and the latter in Chapter 2, pp. 24-29, of *Your Parish Comes Alive*. In both places handling of the subject is brief, but should be helpful.

It hardly needs to be said that since Vatican II Catholic liturgy has been in such a state of flux that what was current and useful a year ago may be utterly out-of-date now. It is (at the moment of writing) perhaps still a bit early to look for much on the new Order of Mass, but the first thing in the field is very good indeed—the *Manual of Celebration* written by Fr. Robert W. Hovda and published by The Liturgical Conference, 1330 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. Offered "to Christians—priests and laymen—involved in the planning of liturgical celebrations," it covers with admirable fullness not only the new Mass but the

new baptism, marriage, and funeral rites. In each case the official liturgical text is accompanied by a running commentary which not only explains the rationale of the rite but offers many enlightening and useful suggestions. It is priced at \$10.00 and comes in the form of a loose-leaf binder to allow for future changes and additions.

Mention might also be made of *The New Mass* by A. M. Roguet, O.P., (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 189 pp., \$2.95). It is "a clear and popular explanation of the new Mass Liturgy;" though very full and detailed, and not without some scholarly background, it is done in a remarkably easy and readable style. It is not specifically written, of course, for Parish Life or Liturgical Committees, and as a matter of fact every Catholic interested in today's liturgical renewal would do well to read it; but the members of such committees will find it particularly helpful. The same is true of *The Experimental Liturgy Book* by Robert F. Hoey (New York: Herder & Herder, 194 pp., \$4.50), *Eucharistic Liturgies* edited by John Gallen, S.J. (New York: Newman Press, 215 pp., \$6.50), and *Home Celebrations* by Lawrence Moser, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press, \$4.95). There is an excellent little *Handbook for Lectors* by William M. Carr (New York: Paulist Press, 52 pp., \$.75).

The literature on ecumenism is of course enormous, but much of it is of a very theological and scholarly nature that would be of little practical help to a Parish Council. In addition here, too, things happened so fast (for a while at least!) that a great deal of what was written a few years ago is now dated. A very helpful book would be *A Practical Guide to Ecumenism* by John B. Sheerin, C.S.P. (New York: Paulist Press/Deus Books, 262 pp., \$1.95). It contains both historical background and a discussion

of present ecumenical activities, and includes the texts of the Second Vatican Council's *Decree on Ecumenism* and the "Interim Guidelines" prepared by the American Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical Affairs.

Without doubt the two most useful things for a committee desirous of setting up discussion groups with members of other faiths would be *Grass-Roots Ecumenism*, published by the National Council of Catholic Women and the National Council of Catholic Men, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, and *Living Room Dialogues* jointly prepared by the National Council of the Churches of Christ and the Paulist Press. The former is a kit containing four very practical guidebooks for various stages of an ecumenical program; especially notable is the booklet on "Jewish-Christian Dialogues," since this is an area we have tended to overlook in concentrating on unity among Christian churches. The kit is priced individually at \$5.50, but there are substantial savings when it is ordered in quantity.

The *Living Room Dialogues* contains articles and essays written by Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox Christians that can be used as a basis for informal dialogue, along with prayers for opening and closing meetings and suggestions for further reading. There are now three volumes in the series; the first two are priced at \$1.00 each, and the third at \$2.50.

On the general topic of Dialogue, a book that has become a classic is Reuel L. Howe's *The Miracle of Dialogue* (New York: Seabury Press, 160 pp. \$1.65).

Most Catholic magazines—*Sign*, *The Catholic World*, *St. Anthony Messenger*, *Commonweal*, and others—regularly publish articles dealing with almost every aspect of parish life, and the Committee would do well to subscribe

to some of them, or at least make an effort to keep abreast of their issues. *Parish Today*, published 10 times yearly by the National Council of Catholic Men, is the only publication devoted specifically to the work of Parish Councils. A year's subscription costs \$5.00; bulk orders of from 10 to 30 copies to one address cost \$2.50 each. Another very informative magazine in this area is *Today's Parish* which is published bi-monthly by Twenty-Third Publications, P.O. Box 180, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801. A year's subscription costs \$6.00.

Parish Council and *Liturgy*, both published by The Liturgical Conference (see address above), often contain very useful and interesting articles, and are rather liberal in their approach. *The Ecumenist*, published bi-monthly by the Paulist Press, 304 West 58th Street, New York, New York 10019, prints many informative and enlightening articles in its field and reviews current books; it is distributed without charge to interested persons, but recipients are asked occasionally to make a small contribution toward defraying publication costs.

Virtually all dioceses have a Liturgical Commission, and most of them also have an Ecumenical Commission or Commission for Christian Unity. These offices usually publish guidelines and other materials for the use of Parish Councils (and also interchange them with their counterparts in other dioceses). The Parish Life Committee should make certain that it has all such available materials, and also that it is on regular mailing lists.

Education

The role and function of the Education Committee is not easily delineated. It is not exactly a School Board as that term is commonly used in the public education system. It does not determine such things as curriculums, texts, and marking systems; these lie within the province of the Department of Catholic Education of the diocese. Lastly it is not concerned with the details of administration—this is wholly the responsibility of the principal and the faculty.

To think of it as a body whose sole job is to devise ways to keep the school from being a ruinous drain on the monetary resources of the parish is to fall short of the mark. Certainly this is the most challenging task it faces; it will spend more time wrestling with this problem than with anything else. But it has many other responsibilities too; before we go into the matter of school finances and budgeting, let us try to get a broader picture.

The Role of the Committee

The Education Committee exists to provide guidance, leadership, and practical implementation in the whole field of Christian education, formal and informal, children's and adult's, in school and out. It should be unnecessary to observe that this cannot be thought of in terms of dollars and cents only.

In the past there was a tendency to regard Christian education—or perhaps

it would be better to use here the more specific term "Catholic education"—as something gotten between the first grade and the eighth and terminating abruptly at that point. Although some children went on to a Catholic high school, and a smaller number to a Catholic college, the parish as such had no concern with this. By the time a child graduated from the eighth grade he was presumed to have acquired the rudiments of his faith, and this was thought to be sufficient to sustain him throughout life, to tell him what to do and what not to do to assure the salvation of his soul.

The Second Vatican Council's *Declaration on Christian Education* did not get a very good press, and it must be admitted that it is not on a level with some of the other documents, but it does contain a number of valuable insights. However, it was the events stemming from the Council, rather than any effect of this document, that gave Christian education a new direction and a new urgency. We have already said, in treating of the liturgy, that lay people were not really prepared for the changes that took place, and this is true in other fields as well. Developments in theology and in scripture studies may occur among scholars but they also have a profound impact on ordinary Catholics. The involvement of so many Americans in social problems today has led priests

and nuns to march in demonstrations and—in some cases—to burn Draft Board files and this has scandalized many Catholics. Yet some of this scandal might have been avoided had they had any kind of grounding in the social teachings of the popes from Leo XIII on.

The children in Catholic schools today are much better off in this regard than many older Catholics. They are being educated in the new developments in Catholic doctrine along with their other subjects. Those who finished their schooling before Vatican II not only have to learn a lot of new things, but also must unlearn some of the old. This makes the work of the Education Committee very difficult. It is really called upon to do three things: (a) assure that the children in the parochial school are receiving a quality education in every area; (b) assure, too, that the Catholic children who are not in the school are receiving a religious education as nearly equal as possible to those who are; and (c) try to bring to the parents of all these children a deep knowledge and a better understanding of the changes that are taking place in the Church and the reasons for them.

Any one of these jobs is difficult. The three together constitute an undertaking of herculean proportions. Because education has become almost as specialized a field as medicine, it has to be assumed that no one person will possess equal competence in all of them; and therefore this Committee, too, will have to draw upon many diverse skills. The principal of the school will be a member as a matter of course; so will the head of the CCD; certainly one of the lay teachers should represent the interests and outlook of that particular segment of the faculty; and if there is in the parish someone who teaches or holds some other position in the public school system, he or she might very well be asked

to serve. Anyone with experience in the world of educational administration would have much to contribute, and so too, among others, would a librarian and a physical education instructor. Finally, one or two parents ought to have some kind of voice. Such a group should work together to provide guidance for the whole range of Catholic education in a parish.

The Parish School

Because elementary education takes place in a highly formal structure and requires such things as a physical plant, a trained and accredited professional staff, and many different kinds of teaching aids; because moreover, the education of children is a matter that concerns not just the Church but the state, the parish school is the Education Committee's biggest and most complex area of responsibility.

We have already indicated that we have no easy answers to the problems facing the parochial school system today. The matter of tuitions is a good example. If, at their present scale, the school is not paying for itself and if it is dependent on the parish for a heavy subsidy, it would seem most natural to increase the tuition. But anybody connected with education knows that the answer is not that simple. If tuitions were raised to a level at which the school would be paying its own way, they would be too steep for the majority of the parishioners, and the last state of the school would be worse than the first!

This whole matter of tuition has to be approached with the greatest caution and prudence. Unless and until there is some kind of uniform diocesan rate which would, in effect, distribute the load and have relatively well-off schools helping those in straitened circumstances, each parish will have to

deal with the problem on its own. It may be that an increase is essential; it may be, too, that as a result some parents will place their children in public schools. This is a calculated risk which the Committee will have to weigh, remembering that every child thus withdrawn represents just that much less in overall income. A forthright appeal, backed by a financial report may bring families to realize that an increase in tuition is an absolute necessity and that the school cannot continue to do its work without it. Even after the Committee has settled on a figure representing the maximum increase it feels can be asked, some subsidy may still be necessary from the parish.

In some places it is still customary to take up a special collection on a particular Sunday of the month to defray school expenses. This probably does not help very much and is the least dependable portion of school income. But if such a collection is long established and generally accepted, it would be well to continue it. One of the objections most frequently voiced is that it makes unfair demands on parishioners without children in the school and who hence have no direct concern with it; but an obvious answer to this is that the school exists for the parish as a whole, not just for those families who may be sending children to it.

There are some other sources of possible assistance about which it would be well to know. Before describing them, let us make two points. *First*, the Committee cannot begin to approach the problem of school finances without a complete and realistic budget prepared in advance. It must know how much it will cost to operate the school in a given year, and what its income for the same period will be. Only then can it make intelligent decisions about the steps to be taken to bring income and

expense closer together. *Second*, income and expense for the school will have to be kept rigidly separate from all other parish operations. This is

We have already treated of revenue and expenditures and of the preparation of a budget in the chapter dealing with the Administration Committee. Most of what was said there about salaries, operating expenses, maintenance, and so on, will apply here with only minor modifications. However, some remarks may be made about some other sources of income.

Federal and State Aid. Here again it would be quite impossible for us to treat of this complex issue even in the most summary fashion. While there is no direct Federal Aid Program for education in non-public schools, the Elementary and Secondary School Law of 1965 does provide aid in certain categories and under certain stipulated conditions. Title I of the Act makes assistance available to culturally and economically deprived children. Title II provides for funds to be used for the purchase of textbooks and some instructional equipment for school libraries. The Committee will naturally want to be familiar with these regulations, and the diocesan Department of Education is the natural place to look for information and help.

Some states have now passed legislation making assistance available to non-public schools in the form of purchased services, that is, the state buys the services of faculty members in such schools to teach carefully specified secular subjects. At this time, similar laws, or laws having ultimately the same effect, are under consideration in other states, or are being urged upon the legislatures of such states by concerned citizens' groups. The Committee will have to be acquainted with the applicable legislation in its own state, and if

there is none it should do all it can to work in an organized and effective manner with whatever groups may be striving to obtain the passage of such aid.

Diocesan Grants-in-Aid. In some dioceses assistance is provided for needy pupils in the form of full or partial grants-in-aid. Generally these apply only to high-school students rather than to those in elementary classes but the Committee should at least be familiar with local practices.

Sale and rental of textbooks. The sale of textbooks and the rental of texts on a yearly basis to new classes of pupils may provide some auxiliary income.

Cafeteria. The operation of the school cafeteria may likewise produce supplementary revenues. Consult carefully the legislation on school-lunch programs for needy pupils.

School bus transportation. If the school operates its own bus service at a charge over and above actual tuition, a profit may be realized. On the other hand it may not; the service could actually be operating at a loss. This is something that should be investigated very carefully by the Committee.

Bequests. Bequests may be made with specific provision by the donor that they are for the school rather than for the parish at large. In such a case, both the bequest and the income derived from it are required to be applied to the school budget.

Rental of facilities. The school, like the parish itself, may find it advantageous to rent some of its facilities on occasion to outside groups and organizations and derive some income from this practice.

Concerning expenses it should only be necessary to add that the salaries of the religious teaching in the school ought to be kept separate from that of the lay teachers. The latter will generally be fixed by the diocesan Department of

Education and will be based upon such things as tenure, certification, and academic degrees; in addition, it will doubtless include fringe benefits like group hospitalization insurance and some plan of retirement benefits. The Committee will, of course, have no choice but to abide by the scales that the Department of Education has established.

It makes good accounting sense—it is, in fact, a virtual necessity—for the school to operate on a fiscal year beginning, say, July 1 and ending June 30. The reasons for this are almost too obvious to need mentioning. If it were operated on a calendar year, one budget would be finishing up and a new one going into effect at a time when the actual school year was only about one-half over. The Committee would have to project ahead into the next school year, and could very well lack reliable information on teachers' salaries and other important items. And, if the school operates on a fiscal year, the parish really must do so too. (In some places, both parishes and schools are required by the Chancery Office to operate on the same fiscal year as the diocese itself.)

Let it be repeated here, however, that the Education Committee should never get so bogged down in a morass of figures that it loses sight of the real nature of its job. We have said that its concern is with the total range of Christian education, and this means, among other things, that *all* the needs and problems of the school—not just the financial ones—fall within its area of responsibility.

It must see that, so far as possible, whatever teaching aids the faculty may require to do its work well (for example, projectors, screens, tapes, recordings) are available. Perhaps some things—for example, the closed-circuit TV system

that we mentioned earlier—may simply be desirable, while others are sheer necessities. The Committee will have to use its judgment, but it should be guided, of course, in large part by the recommendations of the principal.

The condition and upkeep of the physical plant will be one of its prime concerns, and periodic inspections of the classrooms and other facilities should be made. Adequate lighting and ventilation, proper heating during winter months, and a clean, comfortable environment are of immense importance to the process of learning, particularly where young children are concerned. Here the Committee will have to work in close collaboration with the Administration Committee, submitting its findings and recommendations to the latter and including in its annual budget funds for whatever repairs and improvements may be needed. It should also see that such things are duly taken care of.

The safety of pupils is another of its responsibilities. If the school is located on or near a busy street or highway, proper protection must be assured the children as they come and go. In addition to the parish's own safety patrol, this may mean contacting the Police Department to see that hazardous crossings are manned by officers at the appropriate times of day.

While, as we have said, the Committee is not directly concerned with administration, it certainly wants to be sure that the children are being taught by the best available personnel, and it would be well for it to review periodically with the principal the performance of faculty members and to obtain her valuation of them. This is true of both lay and religious teachers.

Neither is it responsible for the actual operation of the cafeteria, but it should see that this is adequately supplied and staffed at all times.

If there is a Home-School Association—and there certainly ought to be—the Committee should work in the closest possible cooperation with it. In theory, if not in actual fact, this association represents all the parents who have children in the school, and it can thus provide an excellent channel of communication. That is, the Committee can use it to make known to these parents all the problems and needs of the school and, on the other hand, it can listen attentively to members of the association to find out what these same parents want and expect from the parish in the way of an education for their children.

In recent years many parents have become highly upset and emotional over what they conceive to be new and unorthodox methods of teaching religion. In some cases this has no doubt been due to outright misinformation and misquotation on the part of the children, for example, "Sister says we should follow our own consciences" or, "Sister says we don't have to go to Mass on Sunday if we don't get anything out of it!" In part, too, it is due to the fact that most of today's parents were taught their religion out of the Baltimore Catechism, and times have greatly changed. Where this situation has arisen, the Committee would do well to schedule meetings—a series of them if necessary—between the religion teachers and groups of such concerned parents so that the new teaching methods can be fully presented and discussed, and questions answered. If at all possible "open days," when parents could visit the school and see the classrooms in actual session, should be arranged.

The Committee should keep in the closest possible touch, too, with the diocesan Department of Education. These people know—better than anyone else—the problems that beset the

parochial school system today. They know, too, that while Parish Councils are not going to solve them, they can at least shoulder a large part of the burden and make some very valuable contributions. In most cases they are not only willing but quite anxious to work with parish Education Committees and can provide an immense amount of helpful materials, information, and suggestions. The chairman of the Committee should see that his name and the names of all his members are on the Department's mailing lists, and—since this should be a two-way street—he should keep it informed of events and developments in his own parish.

Finally, the Committee should not hesitate to work in any way possible with the public school or schools of the area. In some respects, needless to say, the concerns of the one will be different from those of the other: obviously the public school will have no problems about the teaching of religion, and while it may have financial difficulties too, they will be different from those of the parochial school. Nevertheless they will also have much in common, simply because they are both serving the same community. The old days, when a wall of dislike and suspicion existed between the two systems, are long since gone, and both have discovered that they are trying to do pretty much the same job. A sharing of facilities may not yet be practical for very solid reasons, but a sharing of ideas will be quite beneficial to both.

The CCD

Not so very long ago the CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) was thought of in many quarters as a small band of parish volunteers who provided a makeshift form of religious education for the Catholic children attending public school. It is possible that in

some places and among some people, clerical as well as lay, this view is still held. Hopefully, no parish Education Committee will hold it, because nothing could be more erroneous.

Even were it true that CCD had no other job than this, it would still be one of staggering proportions. Approximately half the Catholic children of elementary school age are actually attending parochial schools. According to the *National Catholic Almanac*, enrollment in the latter in 1968 (the last year for which figures are available) was close to 4,200,000. This would mean that an approximately equal number are in public schools, and thus not receiving any formal religious education. While it would be totally unrealistic to think that CCD is reaching all these, it is probably reaching half of them. In other words, it is responsible for the religious instruction of some two million children.

Further, while it is true that the people who carry on this herculean task are indeed volunteers, the instruction they offer is in no sense makeshift. On the contrary, most CCD instructors have taken courses specially qualifying them for the work, and they offer it by means of a thoroughly developed program that makes use of the most recent and best advances in catechetics. Texts and other teaching aids have been prepared by experts in the field. Virtually every American diocese has recognized the importance of CCD by creating an office at the diocesan level, staffing it with professional personnel, and making its services available to all parishes.

There is thus no reason why CCD should be a stepchild of the parish. That it has often been so in the past is undeniable. In many places pastors have granted it a mere pittance with which to operate, and the school has sought to deny CCD staff the use of its facilities

or has granted permission for such use very grudgingly. It is to be hoped that no parish Education Committee will tolerate such a state of affairs any longer.

Since this manual is intended specifically for Parish Councils and their various committees it is entirely unnecessary to discuss how to operate the CCD, especially since many excellent materials on the subject are already available. Our concern here is simply to relate the CCD program to the work and responsibility of the Education Committee as a whole.

If the CCD is itself structured along the lines recommended by the diocesan office, it will undoubtedly have its own Board, made up of persons experienced in such work and who have taken all the requisite courses. The president of this Board will naturally be a member of the Education Committee, representing his body in its deliberations. And it goes without saying that all other members of the Committee must have an adequate knowledge of what CCD is doing and of the problems it faces, in order to give proper consideration to its needs.

In recent years there has appeared in many parishes an entirely new figure, that of the CCD parish coordinator. This is usually a person holding a degree in religious education with a good background not only in theology and scripture but also in parish administration and human relations. The job is to coordinate and direct on a full-time, paid basis the many and varied facets of the CCD program. In some places his duties are even wider in nature, embracing a great deal of other parish work and activities and, in effect, relieving the pastor of much of his administrative burden.

Such a person is at least desirable in any parish; in a large one, where the

work of CCD embraces many different programs and the number enrolled is substantial, he is a necessity. In accordance with the principle quoted earlier that the laborer is worthy of his hire, he should receive an adequate salary (\$10,000 a year is not unrealistic) together with the benefits that normally accompany it in the business world. He should be provided with adequate office space, the equipment and supplies needed to do his work and, if the demands on him are heavy enough, with secretarial assistance. It will be the duty of the Education Committee to see that all this is properly taken care of. If his work is done entirely for CCD then, of course, his salary should be charged to them; if he devotes his time to other parish work and activities, it should be apportioned accordingly.

The CCD program should also have adequate funding for its other normal operating expenses. These would include textbooks and other printed materials; recordings, films, film-strips, and tapes; and the equipment needed to present these things. Such equipment would doubtless be a one-time purchase in each case; the texts and other teaching aids will certainly have to be replaced and updated from time to time. Not to be overlooked are such things as mailing and publicity expenses, subscriptions for periodicals, stipends for guest speakers, and refreshments for meetings. If school or other parish facilities are used in evening hours, then a certain portion of light, heat, janitorial services and other maintenance expenses should be charged to the CCD budget.

This budget should be prepared by CCD's own Board, and while the Board may wish to consult with the Education Committee in preparing it, it should *not* be included in or made part of the total education budget. That is to say, it should retain its own identity and be

submitted individually to the Administration Committee for the latter's consideration and approval.

Adult Education Programs

While many parish programs of adult education will probably function under CCD auspices, we have thought it best to devote a separate brief section to them here simply because of the overwhelming importance of such a thing in the Church at the present time.

We have already said that a lot of the changes that have taken place in the last few years caught most Catholics totally unprepared. Some people welcomed them with enthusiasm; others disliked them, resisted them, and feared that the gates of hell were at last prevailing. If they did nothing else, they provided an entirely new way to classify Catholics—as liberal and conservative.

Whichever of these camps is entrenched, there can be no doubt that both sides need a thoroughgoing educational program to explain just what has changed, and more importantly, why. This would include not only liturgical reforms, the area most immediately evident to the average churchgoer, but also the Church's involvement in and teachings on race relations, poverty, the urban crisis, war, and peace. There is a very pressing need for competent explanations of the Church's present moral teachings, particularly in the area of sex. Developments in theology and advances in Scripture studies, while they are scholarly disciplines which reach the lay person only in an indirect fashion, are nevertheless at the source of all these other things, and so they, too, should be dealt with at an appropriate level.

Whether inside or outside the CCD framework, the Education Committee has a responsibility to see that the adults of the parish have at least the oppor-

tunity to be informed and enlightened on these matters. There is a wealth of material available, far more than we could describe or treat of here. It would be well to have a special subcommittee acquaint itself with the literature, keep abreast of it (because it is constantly being added to), and arrange programs accordingly. Some dioceses now have Adult Education offices or Coordinators of Religious Education who can be very helpful along these lines.

Guest speakers, expert in one or another of the above-mentioned fields, may be engaged for talks either singly or in a carefully planned and integrated series. The question-and-answer period that usually follows such a thing is often more helpful and stimulating than the talk itself. Even more to the point would be informal discussion groups, meeting to consider a particular subject or a particular book, provided they are led by someone with a better-than-average mastery of the material and some skill as a discussion moderator. Whether such groups use parish facilities or meet in private homes is probably not really important; but the latter makes it possible for more of them to function simultaneously and doubtless also permits a greater ease and informality.

The Education Committee would do well, by means of surveys, to try to find out what the needs and wants of the parish are in this area. The programs, speakers, and materials can then be planned accordingly. Probably none of this is going to change a conservative into an avant-garde liberal, or vice versa, but done rightly it will give each side a better understanding of the other, and it will provide each participant, too, with a deeper knowledge and a firmer foundation for his own position.

Books and Articles

The literature on Catholic education is

a virtual library in itself, and to attempt anything like a complete listing of it would be utterly impossible. We have had to be even more selective here than elsewhere, so that it might be well to add that the mere fact that certain titles are not mentioned in what follows does not in the least imply any unfavorable judgment on them.

Moreover, much of what has been written in the field is by educators and for educators, and hence has only a minimum of practical value for Parish Councils. Nevertheless, the Committee ought to be familiar with at least some of these titles, if only because they set forth clearly and succinctly the grave problems facing the Catholic school system today and often suggest possible solutions to them. What applies to the system as a whole will also apply to individual units in it.

Among the volumes which do this quite competently, mention may be made of *Catholic Education in a Changing World* by George N. Shuster (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 241 pps., \$5.95), *Catholic Education Faces Its Future* by Neil G. McCluskey (New York: Doubleday, 311 pp., \$5.95), and *S.O.S. for Catholic Schools* by C. Albert Koob and Russell Shaw (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 150 pp., \$4.95). The famous Greeley-Rossi Report: *The Education of Catholic Americans* by Andrew M. Greeley and Peter H. Rossi, is available in a Doubleday Image paperback at \$1.75. *Are Parochial Schools the Answer?* by Mary Perkins Ryan (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 176 pp., \$4.00) takes a somewhat different approach, and arrives at rather different conclusions, from most of the literature on the subject. (Many of these works, incidentally, carry extensive bibliographies and suggestions for further reading.)

The Living Light is a quarterly that

regularly contains excellent and informative articles on Christian Education. A year's subscription costs \$8.00 and is available from Our Sunday Visitor, Noll Plaza, Huntington, Indiana 46750.

In the particular area of the Education Committee of a Parish Council, there is an excellent little booklet entitled *The Parish School Board* by Rev. Olin J. Murdick, published as a paper of the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), Box 667, Dayton, Ohio 45401 at \$1.50 per single copy. It runs to only 31 pages but has a wealth of good ideas and suggestions. *New Patterns for Catholic Education: The Board Movement in Theory and Practice* by Daniel R. Davies and James R. Deneen (New London, Connecticut: Croft Educational Services, 133 pp.) and *Voice of the Community: The Board Movement in Catholic Education—A Report of the Superintendents' Committee on Policy and Administration, National Catholic Educational Association* (Dayton, Ohio: Geo. A. Pflaum Co., 47 pp.) both deal with diocesan as much as with parish boards, but the latter will find a great deal of useful material in them. Both have excellent bibliographies.

Bernard Lyons treats of the Education Committee in Chapter 7, pp. 65-76, of *Programs for Parish Councils: An Action Manual*, and Broderick covers it in Chapter 1, pp. 15-23, of *Your Parish Comes Alive*. Both are quite good in this area.

We make no attempt to list here any of the works written specifically for CCD programs, since the CCD Board of the parish will itself have access to the wide range of excellent materials in the field of modern religious education and catechetics. They will also be largely familiar with much of what is available today—and is constantly appearing—in the related area of adult education. The selection here is literally immense,

and we can do little more than simply list some of the titles. All have their merits, but it goes without saying that some are better than others

Adult Education Pamphlets, by St. Mary's College Press, Winona, Minnesota 55987: "What's Happening?" Series—a set of six titles, e.g. "What's Happened to that 'Unchanging Church'?" "Why Be a Catholic Christian?"

Focus on Hope, HiTime Publishers, Box 7096, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53213: A seven-week series of adult texts with discussion guides, designed for discussion in the parish and informative home reading. Choice of two principal courses—"The Church Today" and "Crisis of Morality."

Come My People, W. H. Sadlier, Inc., 11 Park Place, New York, New York 10007: "A manual of 'Five Vital Topics for Adult Discussion'."

Experiences in Faith, ed. by Donald Wigal and Charles Murphy (New York: Herder and Herder): An open-ended "Program for an Adult Church" based upon the Dutch Catechism. It consists of four books of readings and four discussion leaders guides with study questions and extensive book and film resources.

Belief In Human Life, by Rev. Anthony T. Padovano, Paramus, New Jersey: Pastoral Educational Services/NCRD, 96 pp. \$5.00 per single copy, discounts for quantities: A beautifully printed and illustrated book on the values that Christians place upon the sanctity of human life. The chapters are designed for group discussion, and a leader's manual accompanies the text.

It should be borne in mind, too, that not all of the resource material in the field of Adult Education is necessarily in the form of printed media. There are many very fine films, filmstrips, slide presentations, and so forth, that can be used in conjunction with or in place of

books or pamphlets. The Department of Catholic Education of the diocese, or the CCD office, or the Office of Religious Education if there is one, can be very helpful here.

Family Life

People normally come to church to worship in family groups, and the family is the nucleus of parish life as it is of society in general. However, there are sound reasons to argue that the Church has been the last to recognize this obvious fact. She has expected and exhorted families to contribute to her support, but has offered them relatively little in return. She has structures and institutions to help individuals in almost every kind of circumstance: the young, the old, the poor, the sick, the homeless; but until quite recently, with the advent of such things as the Christian Family Movement and the Cana programs, there was nothing designed specifically for the family as such. Even these, though they have the ubiquitous "priest-moderator," owe their origins principally to lay interest and energies, and married couples usually direct the programs. And the Church's thinkers and teachers have never really developed anything that could be called a theology of family life.

No doubt this is due in large part to the fact that for twenty centuries the Church has been under the guidance and direction of celibates for whom family relationships were, if not unreal, at least of secondary importance. But in any event the development of Parish Councils offers an excellent opportunity to redress the situation. Now much of the inspiration for parish

activities and planning will come from men and women who live in a family milieu, who know the problems of that state of life only too well, and who will be aware of what they, as members of a worshipping community, can do together to help meet such needs. They will know too, as Christians, the fundamental importance of placing that help under the special aegis of Christ's grace, in the environment and amid the ties that he himself knew when he lived upon earth.

In dealing with the work of the Family Life Committee, we shall divide our treatment into three main parts: *first*, the family itself, including not only marriage but the preparation for it during courtship, as these are normally approached in the various Cana conferences; *second*, the problems and needs of youth; and *third*, those problems which apply, in particular, to old age or at least to that segment of the community known as senior citizens. Such an arrangement is logical enough and has its advantages, but it might also be pointed out that in a certain sense it is rather arbitrary.

Life does not break up into neat categories or periods, each separated from the others by a clear line of demarcation. No one ever went to bed one night an adolescent and got up the next morning mature, and no mature person ever got old on a certain date. Life is a

continuum, in which one part flows smoothly and almost imperceptibly into another. Again, if youth, for example, has problems, then adults have exactly the same problems viewed from a different perspective. The Family Life Committee can, of course, help each group meet its own particular needs, but perhaps just as importantly it can also prepare it to meet the problems of the next period, whenever and however they may come.

Marriage and the Family

Pre-Cana. If we proceed in the normal chronological pattern of individual and family life, then the best place to begin would seem to be with consideration of a program of information and instruction for couples planning to be married—the area, in short, which has come to be known as “Pre-Cana.”

In many places the whole Cana structure functions under diocesan auspices and a central office coordinates and provides assistance for the work in parishes. Where this is the case, the Family Life Committee is able to draw upon the human and material resources of this office and should use them to the fullest. Where, however, for any reason it is not the case, the Committee should not feel daunted; it can still do a most effective job on its own.

Pre-Cana conferences should be carefully planned to enlighten engaged couples on every aspect of marriage—spiritual, physical, personal, and social. Sometimes and in some places this is done by means of a single day-long session during which all the material is covered. While such a thing is possible, it hardly seems desirable. It is more sensible to cover the material in three or four meetings spaced perhaps a week apart, each one being devoted to a particular phase of the subject. The Family Life Committee in one parish

may wish to join its counterparts in other Catholic churches in the same broad area and to offer the series now in one of them and now in another and thus make the best use of their combined resources.

A priest should be a member of the Committee, or should at least be available to give the talk on marriage as sacrament, stressing the spiritual and salvific aspects of the marital relationship. On him, too, may very well fall the duty of answering the questions which are bound to come up about current Catholic teachings on birth control. The talk on the physical side of marriage should be given by a qualified physician or psychologist, hopefully a Committee member. But again, if such is not the case, the Committee should obtain the services of one for its programs. This presentation can be carried out in perfect frankness and openness, with no false modesty or prudishness, and yet with complete dignity. There are many excellent films and filmstrips which can be used to supplement the talk itself.

Part of the series must be led by one or two married couples who can speak from the benefit of their own experience. This phase of Cana work has attracted the interest of many couples in recent years, and almost any parish can provide a number of them. Generally speaking, it is doubtless unwise for the married couple to be so elderly that a real “generation gap” exists between them and the engaged couples. They should be fairly young, and yet married long enough to be able to talk about the problems of marriage with common-sense realism and frankness. Such husband-and-wife teams can offer practical advice and answer many questions on a wealth of things—honeymoons, finances, apartment hunting, home and car buying, working wives,

in-laws, the coming of children, marital jealousy, and the difficulties of sexual adjustment.

Pre-Cana conferences, in fact, are intended to be as practical and helpful as possible, but this does not slight the spiritual and sacramental side of the matter. For there is a practicality of the spirit, too: and a well-developed program, presented in a truly Christian frame of reference, will inevitably emphasize that all these other things are but means to deepen and enrich the lives of two persons who, out of love for one another, have elected to become one flesh.

Special attention must be given to what used to be called "mixed marriages" and which are now known, in a kinder terminology, as "interfaith marriages." The material to be presented will for the most part be the same, with an added discussion of the special problems that can arise in that situation. Doubtless these courses ought to be given separately from those designed specifically for Catholic couples. It would not be at all a bad idea for the priest, when he gives his talk, to be joined by one of the Protestant clergymen of the neighborhood (perhaps, out of courtesy, inviting a different one each time) so that the two of them together can deal with this topic.

The atmosphere of a Pre-Cana conference should be as friendly and informal as possible. The attending couples will probably not know one another or the people who are giving it, and they are bound to feel awkward and ill at ease in the beginning. In many cases they may attend only because they are required to do so by the pastor. They will feel a reluctance about asking questions, particularly those concerned with sex. The Family Life Committee, or at least those members in charge of this phase of its work, must make the

experience not just painless but actually enjoyable. Coffee and tea during the meeting and refreshments at the end of each meeting will go far toward doing this. And certainly the last meeting, if no others, should end with some form of liturgical service.

Cana. Cana Conferences were first held in the 1940's, to provide a solid foundation for Christian married life through study and application of the theology of marriage. Pre-Cana was developed a bit later, as a result of the idea that this foundation could and should be offered during the period of engagement. Still later Post-Cana was developed to provide both spiritual and practical help to those who, after years of marriage, suddenly found themselves alone in the widowed state.

These two off-shoots of the original idea, laudable and necessary as they are in themselves, have a tendency to push the basic concept into the background. This is especially true of Pre-Cana, which absorbs more and more time, energy and thought. In many places Cana itself has come after a while to be neglected.

One of the axioms of the spiritual life, often attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux, is "He who does not advance falls back;" in a very real sense this is true of marriage. If it is not kept fresh, it goes stale; and one of the best ways to keep it ever fresh is by a constant enriching of its spiritual sources.

The Family Life Committee can undertake no finer work than to make available such means of enrichment within the framework of parish programs and activities. One way would be for groups of approximately six couples to meet informally on a regular basis in parish facilities or private homes to discuss their common problems. In such a structure and atmosphere they can gain valuable insights from one another about questions that they all face—

finances, the upkeep of homes, the raising of children, and perhaps even any difficulties in the specific area of sexual relations and adjustment.

Many fine books on Christian marriage have been published in recent years, some of which are listed in the book list at the end of this chapter. They treat their subject with great reverence and beauty, at the same time dissipating the old idea that the married state was a kind of "second best" grudgingly permitted those who had no gift for celibacy or virginity. On the contrary they emphasize its dignity as a sacrament on a level with all the others, and show how the graces of this sacrament strengthen and sustain every aspect of married life. At the same time they are realistic enough to treat fully and frankly the most basic questions of sex.

Such an informal group could well use one or another of these books as a basis for discussion, proceeding through it chapter by chapter or subject by subject. The essentially religious framework of the meetings can be deepened by Mass (a Home Mass if the members meet in one another's houses) or by some other form of liturgical action, and the rich variety of readings in the Lectionary can add valuable new insights to the meaning of Christian marriage and family life. For the benefit of those who do not belong to such groups the Committee could make recommended reading lists available from time to time, and perhaps assure that a good selection of material is on hand in the parish library.

Married couples' retreats have become increasingly popular during the last few years; the old days, when lay people's retreats were rigidly segregated, are happily a thing of the past. Under the guidance of a skilled retreatmaster, couples have an opportunity to renew their vows of dedication and

fidelity to one another, to learn from others, and to reflect in quiet and prayer on the graces and duties of their state. They also have an opportunity to get away, if only for forty-eight hours, from home surroundings which have perhaps come to seem rather humdrum, but which may take on a surprising new freshness when they get back. Almost every diocese in the country has resources for such retreats, and the Family Life Committee should schedule them as often as they may be needed or wanted.

One final word of caution may be in order. It is not the task of the Committee as such to provide help for marriages which may be in trouble. This is a difficult and delicate job, requiring a professional background in psychology and the other behavioral sciences and great skill in counselling. Someone on the Committee who possesses this background and skill may wish to provide this service for the parish. But what he does he does by virtue of his own qualifications and not on behalf of the Committee. The Committee should make and maintain a resource list of such services for the benefit of persons who wish to make use of them.

Post-Cana. The death of a beloved husband or wife brings with it not only grief, but difficult problems of emotional and spiritual adjustment as well. Often it means adjusting to a new, very different kind of life, at a time when a person is ill-equipped both physically and psychologically to face change. Without intruding upon the privacy of family relationships of those who have been thus bereaved, the Family Life Committee can do much to help members of the parish community meet not only those problems which come with the death itself but others that arise in the years ahead. This phase of Cana work has come to be known as Post-Cana.

Generally (though not always, by any means) widowhood comes relatively late in life, and so to the problem of loss must be added those other difficulties which are so often an accompaniment of age. We will deal with these in the concluding section of this chapter. Here we will discuss briefly some things that the Committee could plan within the framework of parish life for those who no longer have the companionship of spouses and are faced with the threat of loneliness and boredom.

Regular social activities are very important although not to the extent that the Committee becomes a Lonely Hearts Club. A special effort should be made to involve such people in the work of whatever parish societies they may be best suited for by virtue of their age and interests, and to encourage their participation in the various Adult Education programs mentioned earlier. Where necessary, the Committee can even arrange transportation to and from these meetings. Interesting group trips can be planned. And since widowhood is as much a state of life as marriage or religion, its spiritual aspects should not be lost sight of—special retreats, days of recollection, and other forms of liturgical and paraliturgical services should be a prominent part of the Post-Cana program.

It is possible, too, that the Committee can be of help in other practical ways. Death usually brings with it a multitude of details that have to be handled, sometimes on short notice and with very little preparation—insurance, Social Security, pension programs, perhaps trusts and estates. These things can be very confusing, especially to one grief-stricken by loss. While, as we have said, the Committee should never intrude itself into the private details of people's lives, it should at least be ready to offer

help along these lines wherever it may be needed.

The Parish Council and Youth

So much is being said and written these days about the problems of youth that we feel reluctant to add to it. Certainly we have no intention of discussing here such things as delinquency, drug-addiction, sexual looseness, hippies, long hair, short skirts, student unrest, and draft-card burnings. Anything we might say on these matters has already been said elsewhere in detail. All that we want to do in this section is give some indications about the role of young people in parish life, and this can be done without a lot of moralizing and sociological trimmings.

First, it should be observed that a Parish Council which does not provide a place in its structure for youth is failing gravely in its responsibilities. It would be like a Council made up entirely of men and no women, or one in a racially mixed neighborhood that consisted wholly of one race or another. It would, in short, be denying an effective voice to a large segment of the total parish population (larger in some parishes than in others, of course), and to this extent it would fall short of really representing the total community.

Saddest of all, it would be as detrimental to the life of the parish as to the young people themselves. They need to be heard and, what is more, listened to. Modern youth is serious, idealistic, and concerned; it sees some of today's problems and issues much more clearly than its elders. There is at least a danger that the older people on a Council may look at the parish and its affairs in terms of dollars and cents, or bricks and mortar; repairs to the church roof may seem more important to them than the changes that are taking place in the surrounding community. Very often the

voice of youth may be needed to balance this view with an added perspective.

The officers and members of a Parish Council must be aware, however, that nothing could possibly be worse than treating the young people on the Council in a patronizing manner and listening to what they have to say with an attitude of impatience or amused tolerance. It would be better not to have them at all than to have them serve under such conditions.

Youth activity in the parish will normally function through the Catholic Youth Organization, and since this, too, usually has a diocesan headquarters it will be possible to draw upon the resources, programs and materials of this office. CYO, however, can be different things in different parishes. If it consists of nothing more than a Saturday night dance and an occasional athletic event, then it is hardly deserving of a place among the parish organizations. In such a case it is not living up to the original intent of CYO, which was to promote a "program of spiritual, cultural, social, and physical activities."

One of the reasons for its lack of success in so many places is that, like every other Catholic lay group, it apparently had to have a "priest moderator" to watch over it, and this job was almost always handed to the third or fourth assistant—in other words, to the youngest and most recently arrived priest in the parish. If he had a genuine enthusiasm for it, if he was really interested in young people and their problems, and if he knew how to communicate with them, then CYO would flourish. If he took the job only as one chore among others, then it was bound to fall into neglect.

There is no reason in the world why a priest should have to direct parish youth programs, and there may be excellent reasons, considering the other

demands on his time, why he should not. This phase of parish life, too, should be part of the work of the Family Life Committee, under the guidance of men and women who have a special talent for it and who really know how to work with young people. Of course, a priest can be and probably should be a part of the group, ready to give any counseling or advice that may be asked of him in particular cases. It hardly needs to be said that teenagers of both sexes should be members of the Committee, working with their elders as equals, communicating to the latter the needs, wishes, problems, and insights of their peers, and working with the rest of the Committee to provide these to the fullest extent possible.

When we spoke of dances and athletic events, we certainly did not intend to do so in any disparaging sense. These things are important, and should be an integral part of the Committee's programs for young people. All sports events, inter- and intra-parish, should come under its aegis, and the coaches of all athletic teams should serve on it. Events could be planned that would involve both youngsters and their parents—for example, a talk by some competent authority on the dangers of drug addition would certainly be of interest and importance to both old and young. And just as married couples' retreats have become quite popular in the last two or three years, so, too, have retreats for teenagers. The "Search" program, described by its sponsors as a weekend of "search for Christian maturity" which seeks to "give youth a deeper insight into the meaning of Christianity," has proven highly successful, and most dioceses have both the physical facilities and the trained personnel for it.

The Parish and Its Senior Citizens

Ours is a youth-oriented culture. We

spend a great deal of time thinking about the problems of young people, and the all-encompassing problem that young people seem to be to their elders. There is perhaps good reason for this. Of the 208 million people counted in the 1970 census, close to half the total are less than 25 years old. Another 25 million will be in the 25-to-34 age bracket. This means that approximately 60 percent of the nation's total population will be under 35.

Yet at the opposite end of the age spectrum, the census also reveals that one out of every ten persons is 65 or over—a total of 20 million men and women. In five years, this figure will have increased by another three million. And there are now 18 million or more people in the 55-to-64 age group, many of whom will be facing, in the next few years, the prospect of retirement.

The majority of these senior citizens are self-sustaining, able to care for themselves, and making a contribution in one way or another to the society in which they live. But old age can bring its own special set of problems, which youth cannot really conceive of. It can bring illness, and even helplessness; it can bring enforced inactivity and great loneliness; it can bring a dependence on others that is terribly wounding to human dignity and self-respect.

Because of this dependence and need, the Family Life Committee has perhaps a greater responsibility to the elderly people of the parish than to any other group.

The census of which we spoke in Chapter II will give a breakdown by age of all parishioners, and will presumably also supply some details about home and family relationships. Together with the names of those to whom the priests of the parish regularly make sick calls or to whom they take Communion, it can provide a source from which the

Committee will be able to determine the needs in this area and what must be done to meet them. Not everybody over 65—or even over 75 for that matter—is going to be in need of help, but a substantial enough number will and it is these whom the Committee must locate and make the object of its special concern.

Those who live alone and who get out seldom or not at all should be regularly visited, if for no other reason than to see if they may need some errand done. Between visits a phone call can do a lot of good; its real purpose may be to check and make sure that the person is all right, but the sound of a voice and a few minutes' conversation may brighten an otherwise bleak and lonely day. Doubtless, too, many elderly persons would go to Mass on Sunday morning if only they had some way of getting there; an important duty of the Committee should be to provide such transportation on a regular basis.

When a member of the parish has to go to the hospital, and of course this can apply to younger people too, someone on the Committee should not only visit occasionally, but should also make sure that the parish priests are informed. Many priests have been severely criticized for not visiting a parishioner in the hospital, when the simple fact is that nobody ever told them of the situation.

It is important to remember that people do not necessarily have to live alone to need some kind of assistance. An elderly couple may just barely be able to help one another and may really need someone to bring them groceries, pick up a prescription from the drug-store, or even help with the laundry and housework.

It is ironic that just when government and private agencies have become aware of the needs of the aged, life for them

has become more complicated than it ever was before. How many such people know how to deal with the intricacies of Medicare and Medicaid? How many may need help on a problem of Social Security or Blue Cross/Blue Shield? There are instances where people may be eligible for some kind of public assistance but do not receive it either because they do not know about it or are bewildered by the forms that have to be filled out to apply for it. The Family Life Committee must be familiar with all these matters and have the resources to provide help to anyone needing or wanting it.

The Committee must have a thorough knowledge of the various forms of assistance to older people that federal, state, and local agencies offer and of where, how, and under what circumstances it may make use of them. The Administration on the Aging, a branch of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, serves as a central focus within the government on all matters relating to the elderly. It acts as a clearinghouse for information, administers grants, develops plans, and undertakes research. The National Council on the Aging, a private, voluntary, non-profit agency, has launched at the behest of the government a program known as "Project Find," to serve as a model for helping aged people. Partly because it operates with Federal funds, "Project Find" is not something that a Parish Council could very well undertake on its own. But the Family Life Committee could investigate the possibility of working in conjunction with other community agencies to get such a project started in their area. The "Meals-on-Wheels" program, which provides hot meals and regular visits to shut-ins, can often mean the difference between elderly persons living on their own or entering an institution. This, too, is a program

which the Committee should be familiar with and on whose facilities it may wish to draw.

One of the most important things to bear in mind is that in many cases it is not necessary to do things *for* old people, and that as a matter of fact they do not like to have everything done for them. They are entitled to as much of their independence and self-reliance as possible. For example, many an elderly person would make an ideal baby-sitter, or would be entirely competent to perform jobs in the neighborhood. All that is needed is the opportunity, the contact, and perhaps transportation. The Committee has a very real obligation to see that the best possible use is made of the abilities that these people have, and that within the community they, too, fit into the law of supply and demand. Similarly, an infirm and aged woman may resent the idea of having somebody else go out and do her marketing for her, but may be afraid to do it by herself; simply going along, helping to pick out the items and get them back home, can be a boon beyond the power of a younger person to imagine.

Nobody likes to think about getting old, and "old age" is always at least a decade beyond one's own present years. Nevertheless it makes good sense to prepare for it intelligently ahead of time. The Family Life Committee could undertake no finer or more valuable task than to provide meetings or seminars on "Pre-Retirement Planning" for the benefit of those in the parish who have not yet reached that time but who will do so in the not-too-distant future. In the kind of series that we have in mind, a doctor could speak on the physical and mental aspects of growing old; an occupational therapist might talk on what people can do with their time in retirement; a banker or an insurance agent could offer practical information

on such subjects as insurance, Social Security, Medicare, pension programs, and investments; a real estate man could speak on housing possibilities, both private and institutional, for the aged. The talks could be followed by question-and-answer sessions, and much supplementary printed material is available along these lines. Planning for such eventualities now can prevent many a crisis or heartache later.

At the end of what we have covered in this chapter, someone may still wish to ask the question: "What does all this have to do with the parish?" The answer is quite simple—these people are the parish.

Young and old, men and women, engaged or married or widowed, wealthy or poor, they are the ones who make up this community of the People of God. Each one, in his or her own way and with his or her own particular gifts, has contributed something to this community and they have a right to all that the community can give them in return.

Christ said that whoever gave so much as a cup of cold water to one of his followers would not go unrewarded. The cup of water need not be taken with exact literalness. Whoever talks understandingly and sympathetically to a teenager who cannot or will not talk to his own parents, whoever opens up to an engaged person the beauty and the grace of Christian marriage, whoever calls an aged and lonely person just to say "Hello! How are you?" is offering such a cup. And we have his word, too, that when we do it to them, we are also doing it to him.

Books and Articles

Lyons (*Programs for Parish Councils*) treats of the Family Life Committee in his Chapter 9, pp. 89-99. Broderick (*Your Parish Comes Alive*) does not provide for a Family Life Committee as such, but

covers some of the ground in his chapter on the "Social Commission," pp. 42-47.

The Basic Cana Manual edited by Rev. Walter J. Imborski and published by the Cana Conference of Chicago dates to 1963, and much of its vocabulary is hardly the kind that would be used in this "post-conciliar" period; but it is still very good and very usable, and as its title indicates, it is really the *basic* manual for Cana conferences.

Unhappily it is rather weak on the subject of "interfaith" marriages, and as a matter of fact this whole area has not been too well covered. A recent book, *Marriage: An Interfaith Guide for All Couples*, may, however, be recommended unreservedly. It is edited by a priest, Raban Hathorn, O.S.B.; a minister, William H. Genne; and a rabbi, Mordecai Brill; and is published jointly by Association Press, New York, and Abbey Press, St. Meinrad, Indiana at \$5.95. Every aspect of interfaith marriage is realistically treated; and while it is not a textbook or designed specifically for group use, it would be most helpful in conjunction with interfaith Cana programs.

The Authority of Love by William Maher, published by the National Council of Catholic Men, Washington, D.C., covers the whole gamut of family life and its problems, and is arranged in the form of six discussion units, each provided with appropriate and stimulating questions. It would be ideal for the kind of parish groups we have described in the text. The book is priced at \$1.95 per copy, with substantial discounts for quantity purchases.

Books on Catholic marriage and family life exist in such great numbers that it is really impossible to attempt anything like a full listing of them here. However, any good Catholic bookstore will probably have shelves and display

counters devoted to them. Most may be had in inexpensive paperback form as well as in hardcover, for which reason we have not provided price information. Anything by the Birds, Joseph and Lois, is well worth reading: *The Freedom of Sexual Love, Marriage Is For Grownups*, and even their poem, *Love Is All*. *Love and Sexuality* by Mark Perkins and John Julian Ryan is in the same vein and is also very well done, as is *Our Bed Is Flourishing* by Robert B. McCready, Ph.D. *Lovers In Marriage* by Louis Evely provides an excellent spiritual background.

Marriage, published monthly by St. Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, Indiana, regularly carries good and helpful articles. The Committee should subscribe to it and see that it is available in the parish library, along with some of the volumes just mentioned.

Despite today's emphasis on youth and its concerns, there is a real paucity of program materials for youth work in Catholic parishes. *The American Journal of Catholic Youth Work* carries a good selection of articles and may provide ideas which can be adapted to individual circumstances. It is published three times a year by the Division of Youth Activities of the United States Catholic Conference, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, and the subscription rate is \$5.00.

On the other hand, there is a wide selection of materials on the needs and problems of the aging. Mention may be made of *Handbook of Social Gerontology: Societal Aspects of Aging* edited by Clark Tibbitts (University of Chicago Press, 770 pp., \$10.00); *The Social Components of Care* (American Association of Homes for the Aging, 49 W. 45th Street, New York, New York, 96 pp.); *Protective Services for Older People: Progress Report 1966-67* (Benjamin Rose Institute, Cleveland, Ohio, 82 pp.); and

Resources for the Aging: An Action Handbook, second edition revised, prepared for the Office of Economic Opportunity by the National Council on the Aging, 315 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10010, 224 pp. The latter may be particularly helpful, since it lists all assistance programs available to or of interest to the aging, both at national and local levels.

Social Action

In nothing that we have said so far has there been the slightest attempt to make the work of one committee seem anymore important or indispensable than that of another. Quite the contrary—all are important and all are equally necessary. Neither are we going to argue here that the job of the Social Action Committee is bigger, more difficult or more dignified than any of the other four. All we will say is that it is different, and this is for two reasons.

It is possible for the others to operate more or less as though only the parish exists. In practice, of course, they do not, but the fact still remains that they could. The Administration Committee could devote itself solely to the finances and maintenance of the parish plant without relationship to anything around it. The Education Committee could restrict its attention to the Christian formation of the parish's own people, young and old. The Parish Life Committee could utterly ignore any kind of ecumenical activity and concern itself solely with the worship that goes on in Church. Each one could effectively carry on its work as if the parish were cut off from the world at large.

But this privilege, if such it could be called, is denied the Social Action Committee. By the very nature of its task, it must go beyond parochial lines and strictly parochial concerns. The parish is a community, of course; but it is also

part of a still larger community with which it is intimately bound up, and its life depends in a very real sense on the life of that larger unit. This is the neighborhood, the section, perhaps even the whole town or city. The problems that face this larger community are not just Catholic, and in the strict sense they may not even be religious, but nevertheless they are of the utmost concern to the parish for the simple reason that it is there in the midst of them.

The second reason is directly related to the first. It is, of course, a common cliché to say that we live in changing times. The whole fabric of the society in which we and our parents and grandparents lived so comfortably is undergoing drastic alteration. Values that were long taken for granted are being seriously questioned, and new values are being proposed. No time in history has been without its problems, but the ones that we face today—nuclear war, poverty, hunger, tension among races, environmental pollution, a population almost bigger than the earth can hold—are new and different, and are certainly as terrifying as any plague.

Since Vatican II the Catholic Church has been making an effort to address itself to these problems. Sometimes the effort has seemed frantic, and sometimes it seems misdirected, but that it is a genuine effort not even its severest critics will deny. It operates not just

from Rome (though it started there in the Council sessions), and not just in the work of national hierarchies, but also at the level of the humblest parish. Formerly a Catholic church seemed isolated from the neighborhood in which it stood and indifferent to what went on around it, but in few cases is this any longer true; it is now very much a part of the neighborhood, and works gladly with others to find solutions to common problems.

This is what makes the work of the Social Action Committee essentially different from the others. The demands on it may not be any heavier, but the area of its interest and responsibility is much wider. An enlightened and effective Social Action Committee will relate the life of the parish to the life of the community, for the greater enrichment of both. It will address itself to the concerns of all the members of the community in their role as citizens—black and white, rich and poor, Catholic and non-Catholic. It will get its hands dirty doing what seem to be quite ordinary things, and it will offer proof that the Word of God heard in the church is something lived on the street outside.

The Committee and the Community

Unhappily, in numerous places the very term "Social Action" has turned out to be a catchall designed to pick up anything that did not clearly come under the jurisdiction of the other committees. Although "Social Action" does cover a wide range, each of its activities requires expert knowledge and a high degree of professional competence.

One of the commonest misconceptions about it is that it exists only to do something—many committees are not at all sure just what—in the specific area of race relations; for example, to "stabilize" neighborhoods, and make a

few black families feel that they are welcome at Mass on Sunday mornings. At this particular time and place in history, race relations will undoubtedly be its most difficult and challenging assignment; but it is not the only one. Indeed, a Social Action Committee could still do a valuable and very necessary job even if, locally, the racial problem was not a pressing one.

But setting racial matters aside, at least momentarily, let us point out that a Social Action Committee has much to concern itself about right in its own immediate neighborhood.

First, it must know the community—and here it has to be borne in mind that a given parish may embrace two or more quite distinct communities, while on the other hand a community may overlap the boundaries of several Catholic parishes. It must know how many people live there, the social strata they represent, and their general educational and cultural background; how old the homes are they live in, and what those homes are worth today; if most of the people own their homes or rent them; what the community's resources are—its shopping centers and stores, its schools, its playgrounds and recreational facilities; the nature and extent of its public services; what major highways flow through and around it, and what the traffic pattern of its streets is.

If the community lies in the industrial area of some large city, what are the products made by its factories? How many people do they employ, and do these people come from the surrounding neighborhood or from elsewhere? Do they pollute the atmosphere with their waste and bother residents with the noise of their machinery, and if so what can be done about it? Are their owners and/or managers interested in the community, and do they relate in any way to it?

If the area is primarily a residential one, what are the extent and quality of its stores and services? What role do the barbers and beauty-shop operators, the dry-cleaners and liquor store owners, the grocers and branch bank managers play in local affairs? Are their shops clean and attractive, contributing to the general appearance of the neighborhood? Are they themselves residents? (In general, and purely as a matter of enlightened self-interest, most owners of such shops are very interested in the welfare and standards of the community in which they are located and are only too happy to cooperate with others in maintaining them.)

What about the local Protestant churches and Jewish synagogues? How large are they, and how well attended? How do they relate to the community as a whole, and how willing are they to work with other groups on common problems? Are there neighborhood improvement associations, and how active and effective are they?

The Committee will, of course, want to know the names and addresses of the elected officials who represent the section on the city council or other local governing body, in the state legislature, and in Congress. It ought to have a pretty clear and realistic idea of political power structures—including any "bosses" who, for good or ill, wield influence and dispense patronage. And it goes without saying that it must really know its Police Department and be prepared to cooperate with it in every way possible.

These, then, are among the things with which a Social Action Committee must be familiar and in which it should have an interest—and this list is by no means complete. But it will at least serve to show how far the responsibilities and sphere of action of this Committee transcend the specific concerns

of the parish, and it should show, too, how impossible it would be for it to do its job unless it worked in close liaison with other groups—with the other churches of the area, with improvement associations, with neighborhood businesses and, where necessary, with the police.

What are some of the matters to which it may and should devote itself? We said a moment ago that it would get its hands dirty doing what often seemed to be very ordinary things, and this is true. But the fact that they are ordinary does not make them unimportant.

Suppose, for example, a traffic light is badly needed at a dangerous intersection. The complaints of a few individuals might go utterly unheeded, but the action of a group—a group composed, moreover, of numerous sub-groups representing the area's churches, businesses, and neighborhood associations—may bring about prompt installation of the signal before somebody is killed.

Or suppose that a given block or stretch of blocks lacks adequate street lights, thus inviting crime and making residents afraid to go out after dark. Here again the proper kind of concerted action may result not only in more and better lights, but in increased police patrolling of the area.

It may be that there is no safe place for the children of a particular neighborhood to play. This problem is somewhat bigger, because obviously it is not as easy to provide and equip a playground as it is to install a traffic signal or a lamp-post. The various groups may have to get together to determine how serious the need is, just where the playground could be put, what equipment would be required, and whether there will have to be personnel to supervise it. It will probably be desirable to collaborate with the schools of the area, and

almost certainly it will be necessary to work with—and “on”—City Hall to bring such a project into being.

But children are not the only residents of the neighborhood on whose behalf the Social Action Committee may have to exert itself. Increasingly, many cities, large and small, are providing community centers for the care and activities of the elderly. Is there one of these in the area, and if not is there a need for one? And do not forget teen-agers—the Committee may want to work with members of the Family Life Committee and with groups from other neighboring churches to make sure that there are ample social and recreational facilities for them.

If some local gathering place is known or strongly suspected to be an outlet for dope this will require swift and vigorous action. Here is where liaison with the police department, and even with the district attorney's office, is immensely important. Here, too, is an area which clearly demonstrates just how far the Committee must go beyond the immediate problems of the parish as such.

If the parish is one located in the inner city, it will face a battery of problems of greater magnitude than most of those we have just been talking about. These will demand resolution, tireless patience, and hard work. Rats and vermin are not disposed of by holding a meeting, and children who go to school in the morning hungry will not get much nourishment from a motion in committee. All the social ills that one could think of—dirt, overcrowding, poverty, hunger, disease, crime, dope, illiteracy, neglect and indifference by city authorities and by the police—will be here concentrated and multiplied; and while they all have to be handled together, it will doubtless be necessary for each of them to be handled separately.

Obviously there is not sufficient

space here to treat these matters with anything like the care and thoroughness which they demand. Fortunately this subject too has built up an immense library in recent years, and some of the better materials are indicated in the book list. The Committee will have to take whatever action it deems appropriate in each area. It may have to bring strong pressure to bear upon the city's Department of Education and School Board to assure that inner-city schools are not crumbling fire-traps and that they are provided with competent teachers, decent textbooks, and all other necessary aids. If the children in these schools are suffering from malnutrition—and some of them probably are—it will have to press these people as well as government officials to see if some kind of free-lunch program cannot be set up. It may be necessary to work on the Department of Sanitation to provide more frequent collections of garbage and trash in order to cut down on the rat population and the threats to health and personal safety that it poses.

Crime and drug addiction can be serious problems here, and thus collaboration with the Police Department will be even more important than elsewhere. The situation is complicated by the fact that many inner-city residents fear and hate the police, and the police themselves have misgivings about venturing into it. In many cities, though, the Police Department has now set up neighborhood “community relations” centers to improve its image with these people, and in many cases the results have been good. If there is no such center, the Social Action Committee should exert its efforts to get one; and if and when there is, it should cooperate closely with it.

Neighborhood meetings can be held, if necessary block by block, to encourage people to take pride in their homes and

streets. Remember that, by and large, what is now the inner city was once a prosperous middle-class community, and that the homes are sometimes much bigger and more solidly constructed than most of the homes that are being built today. Generally, it does not take much to restore them to something like their original attractiveness, if only people can be stimulated to do it. And in this connection, absentee landlords should be sternly given to understand that they have a responsibility here too, and that neglect and exploitation will not be tolerated.

One of the things that will make the work of the Social Action Committee in a section like this so much more difficult is the fact that there are relatively few human resources to work with. In all likelihood there will not be a merchant's association, because most of the merchants will not live there and many of them could not possibly care less about conditions in the neighborhood. Probably, too, there will not be any kind of improvement association such as one is likely to have in more affluent areas. The Committee will have a hard, lonely, and often discouraging task; but it will be worth it if, somehow and in spite of everything, it can make what was once a slum into an attractive, livable neighborhood.

Its counterpart in the better endowed suburban parish may not have exactly these same problems, but it, too, will have plenty to do to keep it busy. For one thing, it has a duty to at least know something about the conditions in inner city parishes and to investigate seriously what it can do to help. Also, crime and drug abuse do not stop at the boundaries of the inner city; and traffic conditions can be much more dangerous on a suburban highway than on narrow streets farther in town. Delinquent youths can come from well-to-do homes

as well as from poor ones. And remember, too, that the inner city is likely to resemble a bubble, constantly expanding. This brings us to the matter of "changing neighborhoods" and race relations, to which we now turn our attention.

The Committee and Race Relations

Some years ago an American Cardinal was booed when he appeared before a public meeting to plead for the passage of open-housing legislation in his city. By their own admission a fair number of those who engaged in this display of bad manners were Catholics, of whom he was the spiritual leader.

Although he may have been the highest ranking churchman ever to be subjected to such treatment, the incident is not really unique. Bishops, priests, religious of both sexes, and lay persons have faced resistance, abuse, and in some cases threats of personal violence, from other Catholics over the matter of race relations. Usually their argument is that the racial problem is not a moral but a political one, in which the Church and its members have no right to intrude.

This is what we meant when we intimated that a parish which does not think it has a problem in this area may have a serious one indeed. The Social Action Committee of a white urban or suburban parish has a real duty to educate its members in the theology and practical aspects of race relations. It must make them see that it very definitely is a moral issue, as well as a political one. It has this duty even if there is not a black person within miles of the church; but the duty becomes more pressing, of course, if blacks are moving into and becoming part of the community.

How is this education to be undertaken? It is not easy. One method that

has yielded good results is Project Commitment, originally launched in the Archdiocese of Detroit and later used successfully in a number of other places. This program brings together a group of parishes, perhaps a dozen or more, representing a geographical, racial, and socio-economic cross-section. They meet weekly for six or seven weeks, and at each meeting a qualified speaker talks on some aspect of race relations: on housing, for example, or public welfare, or crime and violence. The participants are seated at tables holding ten or twelve, and seating arrangements are very carefully worked out in advance to assure that each table has both blacks and whites, men and women, religious and lay persons, and people from a number of different parishes. Following the talk and a question-and-answer period, the participants engage in informal discussion on the material they have just heard.

The great advantage of something like Project Commitment is that it brings whites and blacks together, perhaps for the first time in such conditions and such an atmosphere, to set forth fully and frankly to one another their attitudes and problems. One possible disadvantage, from the standpoint of an individual parish, is that the program requires a cross-section of people from different parishes. For this reason it can really only be undertaken by the diocese, with the bishop asking the cooperation of a number of pastors.

But even without this kind of diocesan program, there is much that a Social Action Committee can do to awaken parishioners to some sense of their responsibilities in this matter and to inculcate an understanding of human and racial equality. If they cannot effectively come together with a black parish

from the inner city, the Committee can at least bring in speakers who can talk authoritatively on the problems of that area and on what can be done to alleviate them. Most dioceses now have Offices of Urban Affairs or Urban Commissions whose specific task it is to formulate policy and carry out action on the issues of race and poverty. These agencies are not only willing but quite anxious to work with parishes in all types of educational programs and, as a rule, they have speakers' lists through whom qualified persons may be obtained.

One thing that has proven effective in many places is the practice known as "pulpit exchange." Here a priest from an inner city church, accompanied by some of his black parishioners, visits a white suburban parish on Sunday morning and preaches at one or more of the Masses. Either at the same time or later, a priest from the suburban parish and some of his people go for Mass to the church in the inner city. Both ways, this has been a revealing experience for many people. And we have already mentioned in the chapter on the Administration Committee the possibility of an affluent parish adopting a poor one and providing in a very practical way for some of its needs.

If the neighborhood is beginning to change its character, the Social Action Committee has a group of problems to meet promptly and directly. There is hardly any need to rehearse here the gloomy story of what has happened to so many sections of many large American cities in the past two decades: the influx of a few black families into a hitherto white area, the flight of the white residents to an outlying suburb, the sharp decline in property values, and finally, after a couple of years, the conversion of the all-white neighborhood into one that is all-black.

In this situation the Social Action

Committee will, as we just indicated, have to act with intelligence and vigor. Here too, if anywhere, it must join forces with all the other groups and organizations of the area—because it must be obvious that this is not just a Catholic problem but a general social one. The parish will have to league itself with all the surrounding Protestant churches, with the local improvement associations, and with the business community. It will have to ask for the cooperation of the real estate companies who are active in the area and offer its own cooperation in turn. (It is almost a necessity that a realtor be on the Social Action Committee.)

If there is any place where education is needed, it is here. The Committee must mount a full-scale program with meetings, talks, discussions, and the use of any kind of helpful printed or visual material. In at least one case we know of, a parish faced with just this crisis met it by holding block meetings with all its members. Each week the Social Action Committee would invite the residents of one block to a meeting and there discuss with them the problem, set forth the facts, and make its appeal. The task was not easy and it was rather drawn out, because the parish was large. It was also at times rather discouraging; all the people in a block would be invited but more than once only a handful would show up, and not all these were agreeable by any means. But in the long run and for the most part it seems to have worked; the parish still has problems, but an exodus of its members is not one of them.

The Committee should also work closely with the Parish Life Committee in extending a warm welcome to black families coming into the parish fold. Such a family, going to Mass on Sunday morning only to be ignored and cold-shouldered, is not exactly seeing Christ

in its fellow-worshippers. We have already said that all newcomers to the parish should be made to feel at home, and the obligation is perhaps more pressing here than elsewhere.

The Committee should, of course, maintain close touch with the Chancery Office of the diocese and be familiar with all of its agencies, programs, and directives that bear upon social problems. It has also a duty to keep abreast of local, state, and federal legislation relating to such things as housing, urban renewal, public assistance, food, and medical aid to the indigent and aged, and laws covering drug traffic and abuse. As it plans, it should think as much of tomorrow as of today—what are the parish and the community going to be like five, or ten, or twenty years from now, and what can it do to help prepare for these changes. The city's Planning Commission can be of great assistance here, and would doubtless welcome interested and intelligent cooperation in return.

And just as the Committee's concerns are not limited to the parish but extend to the community, so they need not stop here but can embrace national and international problems as well. The whole recent emphasis on ecology, the pollution and waste of natural resources, could very well be a focus of activity, and if it only succeeded in doing something at a local level, it would have made a very valuable contribution indeed. Inflation, good government, war and peace, justice among nations—these are among its natural and legitimate concerns, and there will doubtless be many public issues on which it will have not only the right but the duty to "stand up and be counted."

Some parishes have "Public Affairs" or "Justice and Peace" committees as integral parts of their Councils. The function of these bodies is usually to

provide information and knowledge on the great issues of the day, and to take a stand where such a thing seems useful or necessary. These are good if there seems a need for them; but even without them, the Social Action Committee both by its words and deeds, can continually remind parishioners that they are citizens of this world and that they have very definite Christian duties toward it.

Books and Articles

As in the case of the Education Committee, the available material on social action (and on each of its many subdivisions) is so great that we can call attention to only the tiniest fraction of it. Fortunately any good public library can help here, and most such libraries are not only willing but eager to work with churches, neighborhood groups, and community organizations. This Committee, more than any of the others, should learn how to make the best possible use of library resources.

Without doubt the most important piece of "must" reading for anyone concerned with social action is the famous Kerner Report, the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 607 pp., paperback \$1.25). This documents fully and dispassionately the history of race relations in the United States and the causes, open and hidden, leading to the troubles of recent years. It also sets forth some of the things that must be done to work toward a solution of the problems. It is, of course, enormously long, and a quite good summary of it is available in the form of a 30-page pamphlet published as a public service by various organizations (including the National Council of Catholic Men) at \$.15 per single copy.

Two other works that might well be read in conjunction with it are *One Year*

Later, an assessment of the nation's response to the original Report (New York: Urban America, Inc. and the Urban Coalition, 122 pp.) and *Civil Rights and the American Negro* edited by Albert P. Blaustein and Robert L. Zangrando (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 671 pp., paperback \$1.45). The latter is especially valuable since it includes with its text many official documents ranging from early state constitutions to recent court decisions.

Beyond this, in the specific field of race relations, the field is wide open. Interested members of a Social Action Committee will certainly want to read such things as *The Nature of Prejudice* by Gordon W. Allport (New York: Doubleday Anchor Paperback, 496 pp., \$2.45), *The Church and the Urban Racial Crisis* edited by Mathew Ahmann and Margaret Roach (Techny, Ill.: Divine Word Publications, 262 pp., paperback \$2.95), *The Church and the Black Man* by John Howard Griffin (Dayton, O.: Pflaum Press, 133 pp., paperback \$2.95), and *Am I a Racist?* edited by Robert Heyer (New York: Paulist Press and Association Press, 143 pp., paperback \$1.95). These are only a few suggestions; there are many more books and equally good ones.

Turning from race relations to the field of urban renewal and the Church's role in it, one finds a similar wealth of material. We mention but two books that should be helpful: *The Church and Urban Renewal* by George J. Younger (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 216 pp., \$4.50) and *Steeple in Metropolis* by Robert G. Howes (Dayton, Ohio: Pflaum Press, 200 pp., \$5.50). The latter describes in detail an elaborate survey undertaken on this problem by a particular archdiocese (Baltimore), and goes on to discuss the present and future role of the Church and of parishes in our changing cities. Interested persons will,

of course, also want to read *The Secular City* by Harvey Cox (New York: The Macmillan Co., 244 pp., rev. paperback edition \$1.45), which has become a modern classic in its field.

A Social Action Committee will naturally want to know about the programs of governmental assistance in the areas of poverty, housing, and so on, and these are covered exhaustively in the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* published by the Office of Economic Opportunity. Its 610 pages cover the whole range of "the Federal government's domestic programs to assist the American people in furthering their social and economic progress." It may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Another book of this kind, "a handbook for human relations programs," *Organizing for Community Life* by Christopher T. Carley is available from the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Some specific things that Parish Councils can do are covered by both Bernard Lyons and Robert C. Broderick in their books. Lyons breaks it up into two chapters, one (Ch. 6) on "Community Life," pp. 53-57, and another (Ch. 10) called "Social," pp. 101-112, in *Programs for Parish Councils: An Action Manual*. Broderick deals with the "Social Commission" in Chapter 5, pp. 42-47, of *Your Parish Comes Alive*.

Tying Things Up

Young

Thirges

no

Let us repeat here a point which was made in the introduction but which may have been lost sight of as we dealt, one by one, with the work of the various committees. No one of them can function on its own or in a state of isolation; each must relate in the fullest possible way to the others, because together they make up that single body which is the Parish Council. Some examples may illustrate how mutually interdependent they are.

Suppose that the Parish Life Committee decides that there is a real need for parishioners to be instructed in the new Order of Mass, not just in external details but in the whole spiritual and doctrinal foundation for liturgical renewal. It must obviously work closely with the Education Committee, and in particular with any subgroup of it specifically charged with adult education, to plan programs, talks, speakers, schedules, among other things.

Or suppose that the Family Life Committee, in its work with parish youth, finds serious or potentially serious problems of drug traffic and usage in the area. It and the Social Action Committee have a job on their combined hands locating and stamping out the distribution spots, and making young people realize the dangers to which they are exposing themselves. The two of them together may want to enlist the aid of the Education Committee in bringing

qualified speakers to the parish to talk to both adults and teen-agers about this problem.

It is highly desirable that the Education Committee know not just how many children will be enrolled in the school next year, but how many are likely to be in it five years or ten years from now. The census records of the Parish Life Committee, extrapolated by competent hands, should enable them to project this with a high degree of accuracy. And if the social, racial, and economic nature of the parish is likely to shift during this time, it will want to work with the Social Action Committee in getting ready to meet these changes.

The relationship of the other four to the Administration Committee, which is responsible both for the raising and use of parish funds, is of course obvious.

These are just a few examples. The list could go on and on because the number of ways that the committees could be called on to work with each other is as extensive as the activities and problems of the parish, and as complex as the nature of those problems.

Remember, too, that while each committee has responsibility in its particular area, authority in major matters will rest with the full body of which it is but a part. In the case, for instance, of school tuition, it will be the task of the Education Committee to assemble all the pertinent data, consider all the possible

alternatives, and certainly to make its recommendations; but the final decision as to whether tuition will or will not be increased must be made by the whole Parish Council.

Whether democracy, as we know it in our American system of government, will ever enter into the structures of the Church is an open question which it would be pointless to enter into here. But certainly the years since the close of Vatican II have seen the beginning of forms of shared responsibility, of "collegiality," ranging from the union of bishops with the Pope to the union of parishioners with their parish priests. Undoubtedly this will increase in both breadth and depth as time goes on. It cannot, however, be something that sounds good on paper but has no practical application; to be effective it must be real, and to be real it requires the hard work, mutual trust, and close collaboration of many people—clerical and lay, men and women, young and old—coming together in the unity of the People of God.

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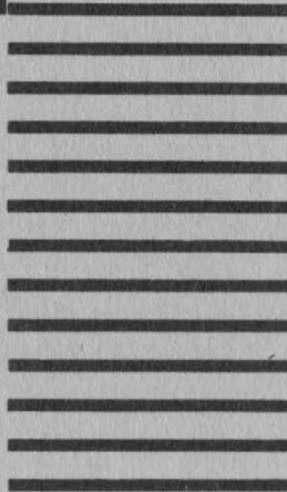
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