

GABRIEL'S

Message

St. Gabriel's Church

Prairie du Chein, WI

April, 1984 Vol. II No.1

Dear Fellow Parishioners of St. Gabriel's,

We're only into the second week of Lent as I try to share some thoughts of Easter with you but by the time you read this, Easter will be fast upon us. Fr. Scherman, in his homily this past week-end, talked about a "transfiguration" that is possible in the life of us all if we but allow the Spirit of Jesus to enter and manifest Itself in our lives. Or, as the Liguorian Press talks about the same matter in a "Dear Padre" letter:

Dear Padre,

Easter is a wonderful feast in the Church, a day of new life and hope. But I find it difficult to feel any real hope about our present world. Padre, where is the risen Lord and his message of God's love in our world today?

Mrs. R.

Dear Mrs. R.,

I agree that we can look around in our world today and ask, "Where is God's love?" We see many things wrong in our world. Has God abandoned us? Where are the signs and wonders today that we might believe his love still endures, that the message of the risen Lord still goes out to all the earth?

Today the visible sign that God is still present with his love is the Church. The Church is the body of Christ. It is through the Church that God's love continues to be made visible in our world; and through the Church, the message of the risen Lord continues to go out to all people. The Church must perform signs and wonders so that people can come to know of God's love for them.

This is where all of us come into the picture - because we are the Church. We are the ones who must perform the signs and wonders that speak the message of the risen Lord in our world today.

We may not all be able to cure the sick, give sight to the blind, or restore hearing to the deaf. But we can all love one another. We can visit the sick, the lonely, the housebound. We can be faithful to our vocations in life. We can be truthful and honest. We can respect human life.

These are but some of the signs and wonders we can perform today. The risen Lord is alive in our world to the extent that he is alive and present in us who are his Body, the Church. On this Easter Sunday, I pray that the risen Lord will truly live in you and all our readers.

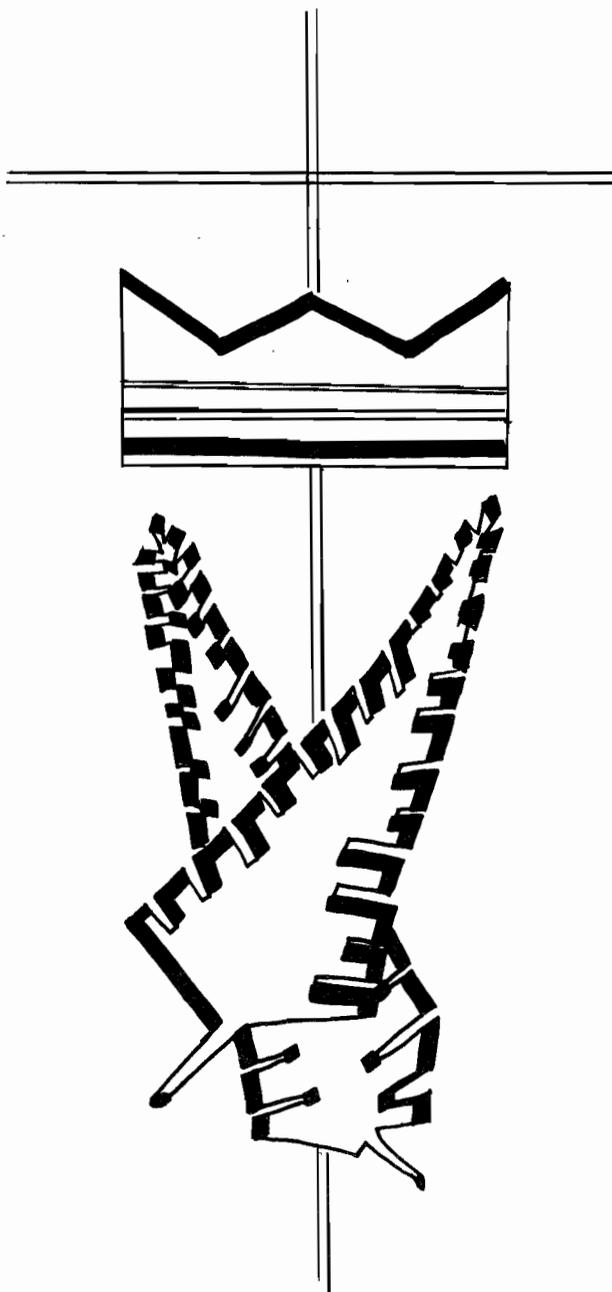
The Padre

My brothers and sisters, serious reflection on the above is truly thrilling! All of us can be warmed at the thought of a Mother Theresa or of Anne Sullivan working with a Helen

Keller of even of Tevye in "Fiddler On The Roof" telling God the contents of the Good Book. What more is the source of this thrill than the awareness of God's presence and action shining through the love and generous service of each of these individuals? nd the deepest thrill of the Easter mystery is God's promise and assurance of His willingness work so through each of us. Like Jesus, in our self-denial, in our weakness, His power can and will be made manifest and He will allow us to be the present instruments of His mercy and peace. May our experience and conviction of this in faith be the source of our deep and lasting Easter joy. God bless each and all of you and yours.

Sincerely,

Fr. Bochner, S.J.



ON EASTER MORN
John Piller

On Easter Morn the golden tones
Of church bells fill the air.
They summon us to worship a God
Whose love we share.
In every church throughout the land
The people come to pray.
And celebrate the rising of our Lord,
Upon this day.

With prayers we seek to thank him
for the sacrifice He made,
And hope that we are worthy
Of the price that He has paid.
With reverence and awe we recall
Why He was born.
His time has come, His Father calls,
His earthly garb is shorn.

So listen on this Easter Morn,
And hear the church bells ring.
We have joys to share and gratitude
And praises we must sing.
Let's bow our heads and thank Him
For the wonders He has done,
And pledge our dedication now
And when our days are done.

St. Gabriel's Altar Sodality - Frances
Dobbs

For many years both men's and women's organizations have been contributing factors to the welfare of our parish.

In looking back over the minutes, the Ladies' Sodality, I'm sure, continues to have St. Gabriel's upper most in its mind.

The Sodality meets the third Thursday of every month, but not during June, July, and August. A business meeting takes place often with an interesting program, followed by a period of fellowship and lunch. There are two pot-luck suppers a year - one in Dec. and the other in June. Deanery meetings are held twice a year in the various parishes.

On the third Sunday of the month, members are encouraged to receive Communion in a body.

Our monthly meetings give Father Boschert an opportunity to discuss with the ladies some projects they might undertake, or o.k. many of their choice, as well as relate what direction he foresees his whole parish moving.

These past months. Sodality members have assisted in the anniversary reception honoring Fr. Scherman and Fr. Brahm, acting as host for the Fall Deanery, a celebration and meeting with Bishop John Paul, a gala appreciation day for our Notre Dame Sisters, who in the past and present have shown their dedication to Christian education, the Mini U. classes, and the communal Penance Service observing our Jubilee Year, to which the Deanery was invited.

Members too, are encouraged to write to our representatives in regard to certain bills which will be voted on by our law makers.

Since our dues are only two dollars a year, monthly card parties have added to our treasury funds. These events are enjoyed by many.

Worthwhile donations have gone to citizens for Educational Freedom Programs, the S.C.C.W. for religious and educational activities, the Madonna Plan, paying for ads in Pro Life Reference Books, as well as contributing to the Times Review Supplement to be put out commemorating the 50th Jubilee of the Diocesan

Catholic Women. Flowers too have been purchased by the Sodality for special days. St. Nicholas treats were given to the pupils of St. Gabriel School.

Sodality Ladies have been involved in packing and mailing glasses for the needy. Bandages in great numbers, as well as hospital gowns, have been sent to areas which so desire them.

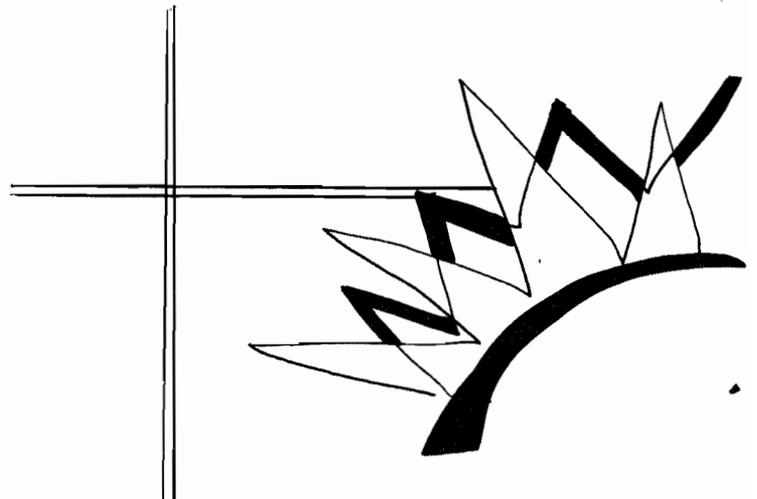
Father Fagan's yearly pleas for clothes and items for Tanzania has not gone unheeded. Ladies from St. Gabriel and St. John's collaborated to help meet this need. Clothes have also been sent to the Indian missions. Some ladies work in groups to fashion creative items that may be sold at our Fall Bazaar.

Members have aided in preparing for Masses offered at the Convalescent Center, as well as taking part in sing-a-longs and making a large number of shawls to be given to the patients at Christmas.

One could attend Mass every Sunday and still feel they know few people in our Parish. Being a Sodality member is an opportunity to meet, enjoy fellowship, have an outlet, and do much good.

There will be an installation of new members in May, but you are welcome to join us any time. Wouldn't it be great if every lady of the parish would become an active member of our Sodality? That is our hope and wish. Won't you please come next time?

If you have any questions, you might call Mayme Quinn, president; Mary Buenzli, treasurer; or Frances Dobbs, secretary.



NOTES FROM THE SISTERS' CHRONICLE

In 1919, a St. Patrick's Day program in which every pupil of the school took part, was rendered very successfully in St. Gabriel's Parish Hall, whereby \$205 was netted.

On Feb. 22, 1922 the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters was celebrated. In 1924, a Christmas tree was prepared by the Women's Club for the children. Gifts and goodies were distributed as a Christmas present to the school. (This practice, first begun in 1924, is continued by the Ladies' Sodality and Altar Society in a treat given on St. Nicholas Day.) The Women's Club had the school wired and four electric lamps were installed in each classroom to the intense gratification of teachers and pupils. It appears that Decoration Day was the annual parish festival called May Festival. In 1922, through the generosity of the Reverend Pastor, Fr. Speich, the Sisters received half of the proceeds. It was his wish that this now be an established custom.

In 1924, the first orchestra organized at St. Gabriel's was due to the exertion and encouragement of Sister Amanda whose two years were fruitful in the cultivation of an appreciation of the musical arts.

1925: a new set of playground equipment was installed on the playground at a cost of \$330. Provisions have also been made for fire protection: appliances put on the doors for hasty exits, a gong for sounding the alarm for fire drills, etc. All this has been sponsored by the Catholic Women's Club who met all the expenses.

In 1928 a beautiful statue of the Little Flower of Jesus was given to the church by a man from Dubuque, who was miraculously cured by her. The children were all encouraged to pray daily to her for a new school

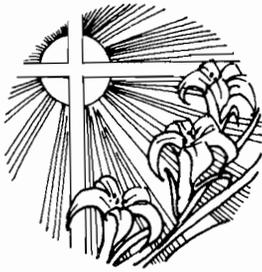
building, the erecting and financing of which were placed under the little Saint's protection. The proceeds from the Christmas pageant were the children's first contribution to the new school fund, amounting to \$117.

On June 15, 1930 two Sisters, Sr. Lukina and Sr. Valois, began their catechizing activities at McGregor. For two weeks, the Sisters labored zealously, going back and forth to McGregor day after day on the ferry. The Sisters' work met with marked success as was testified to by the unfeigned gratitude and appreciation which pastor and people repeatedly expressed.

In the autumn of 1933 we had two candy sales, the proceeds of which were used to help increase the school fund and also to pay partly for rugs needed in the convent.

Sunday, June 10, 1934 marked the parish celebration of the Notre Dame Order's centenary. Beautiful ceremonies were conducted in St. Gabriel's Church. The Sisters from St. Mary's Academy, St. John's, Glen Haven and Lancaster were present as were also the alumni and alumnae from the city parishes and St. Mary's. A Fall dinner was served which netted \$350 and St. Patrick's Dinner netted \$470. Both went toward the Sisters' salary. This year again the pupils of the school had the exceptional grace of a three-day retreat conducted by Rev. Ryan, S.J.

In September of 1935, the school term opened with an enrollment of 270 pupils. This being the beginning of the centennial year the spirit of the celebration was everywhere. The Sisters undertook a history project, which was carried through the grades, correlated with their regular school work. In the project, the children studied the history of the Indians in



TO ALL A JOYOUS EASTER

Prairie, the history of the pioneer white man, the history of St. Gabriel's Parish, and the civic history. The work was begun in November of 1935 and continued on into the spring of 1936. As each class completed its unit of work, the pupils gave a demonstration of what they had learned. As a fitting climax, an exhibit was held on March 17th of all the work. An added feature of this exhibit was the collection of relics, all from Prairie pioneer days. The great objective in carrying out the project was to interest the children in the history of their school, city, and church as well as to create enthusiasm for the centennial celebration. The results were all that one could wish for. Also in late September of '35, ground was broken for the section of the new school which was to be erected. The work on the building was completed by January 30, 1936. It was hoped that the 7th and 8th graders could move into the two new classrooms at the beginning of the second semester, but because of the intense cold this winter the shipment of the new desks was delayed. The 8th grade moved in during Holy Week and began class in their new room on Easter Tuesday.

May 31, 1936 was the day set for the celebration of the Centennial. God blessed the undertaking and we had most pleasant weather. A solemn High Mass was sung in the morning. The afternoon was appointed for a Holy Name Rally. Hundreds of visitors came to the old parish which had been the scene of their school days. At four o'clock in the afternoon, the children of our school gave a grand pageant outdoors. Hundreds viewed it and pronounced it the crowning event of the day. God grant that entering upon the second century of its existence the blessings of heaven may rest upon the parish-

ioners and the children. A class of 23 graduates left our school this year, June, 1936.

Sr. Mary Ernest

PARISH BULLETIN BOARD

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK - by Mr. Bob Mullen

Students at St. Gabriel's School celebrated Catholic Schools Week the week of February 26 - March 3. This annual celebration allowed the parish and the public to see what our Catholic school is about and to display the good work which is done at St. Gabriel's.

The theme for Catholic Schools Week was "A BEACON OF HOPE". The beacon shone on the students on Sunday, when participants from all the grades demonstrated the religious side of their education by giving a special children's Mass.

Other activities of the week included a student-parent noon lunch, a cooperative sharing of the Mass with the students of St. John's School, and a topping off of the week with a festive Mardi Gras.

The students, faculty, and parents who took part once again showed that Catholic education does make a difference and offers a "BEACON OF HOPE" for our children's future.

ST. GABRIEL'S HOSTS MINI-U

The gift of wisdom makes some appearances in PdC: The last two Sundays of February and the first Sunday of March found St. Gabriel's hosting a series of mini-U classes in scripture and moral decision making. Four of the local pastors: Fr. Jim Miller from St. John's Parish, Pastor Jim Barnes from United Methodist, and Pastor Gary Grindeland of St. Peter's Lutheran Church each taught a separate course in scripture, one on the psalms as prayer, one on the relevancy of scriptures to daily living, and a third on the parables. To round off the presentation, Fr. Boschert taught a session on conscience formation and moral decision making. Each Sunday there was a magnificent turnout of participants from the various parishes, topping 100 on most occasions. All seemed to enjoy the presentations but the most enjoyable aspect, seemed to be the sociability of it all. And of course, the ladies of St. Gab's did a royal job of providing refreshments with their usual outstanding hospitality.

A MATTER OF MEMORIALS AND BEQUESTS

With your leave we would appreciate just saying a few words about people making donations to the parish in memory of loved ones in their wills. To talk about it from the pulpit (perhaps to some anyhow) would come across as too mercenary and yet, if it is never mentioned, then for others it can be a case of "out of sight, out of mind". Most in the parish seem to be aware of and most pleased with our most recently acquired memorial: the new beautiful statue of St. Gabriel which graces our church entrance. Some fewer may be aware of the various memorials that have been acquired over the past several years to enhance our worship: the processional cross, the new priest's vestments and stoles, the new Mass book and lectionary, the altar antependia, candlesticks, etc. (This in spite of the fact that each has been publicly acknowledged and appreciated in the weekend bulletins). Still fewer might be aware that in the 1st several months we have been informed that we have been remembered in several

wills. Combined, the total will most likely not exceed 50 or 60 thousand dollars and, as they are received, each will be immediately invested and the interest received therefrom in the course of a year will not even cover the increases of staff salaries for that year. But believe us, those on the parish administration committee are very aware of how helpful these bequests are to the parish; without them we would really be strapped to meet the ever increasing costs of running St. Gab's. At the outset your leave was asked to mention "just a few words" and already this has become too lengthy. In conclusion, may this reminder succeed in planting a seed in the minds of some and bear fruit in the hearts of many who are happy to call themselves St. Gabrielites.

PARISH STUDIES BISHOPS' PASTORAL

During Lent, two groups from the parish have been meeting on either Tuesday evening or Thursday afternoon to study the Bishops' pastoral letter on peace. Discussion leaders were Ed and Marge Weissinger who performed a real service to all present in keeping things moving and in providing responses from the pastoral to some of the questions that appeared in the study guide. The two priests of the parish joined in these meetings, as did the faculty from the parish grade school. All in all, it seemed evident that some solid reflections were shared and no one was caught falling asleep, even though the language of the pastoral, at times, can be somewhat sleep-inducing. Sincere thanks to one and all who participated in either or both of these events. It certainly helps to build up parish spirit, at least for those who are there.

CALLING ALL TALENT!

Already several groups are working on projects for the special Christmas Booth planned in conjunction with our 1984 Fall Festival. These articles need not be all for Christmas use. Use your special talents on your own, or get some of your friends and work together to make it more fun. We need you! God bless you!

Marie Wagner

Have you prayed, or been prayed for and nothing happened? The road to divine healing is seldom an expressway. The devil may place roadblocks in our way to keep God's people from the blessing of health which God has provided.

(3 John 2)

Sickness, like death, came as a result of the fall of man. (Gen.3:16-19) But the Lord Jesus made it very clear that not all sickness is the direct result of sin in the individual's life. Yet, some illnesses have their roots in specific sins that we have allowed to enter our lives. In fact, God sometimes uses illness to call our attention to a sin. In these cases, repentance may be the key to receiving God's healing.

One could hardly ask God for deliverance from lung cancer while still secretly planning to continue smoking. Our diet, or our all-night vigils for healing may be the cause of our illness.

Satan may have a hand in some spiritual or emotional disorder which in turn causes headaches, fatigue, or other afflictions. In these cases, in order to open the way for healing we must exercise the authority God has given us over Satan.

God works to heal us not only through our individual prayers, but also through the prayers and ministry of other people. For example, he gives some people within the Christian community special gifts for healing through prayer (1Cor.12:9).

When some people pray for healing, they think they should pray, "If it be thy will." This is a faith-destroying phrase. God has made it perfectly clear in His Word that it is His will to heal the sick.

--- "I am the Lord, the one who heals you." Ex. 15:26

--- "He forgives all my sins, and heals all my diseases." Ps.103:3

--- "It is by his wounds that you have been healed." 1 Peter 2:24

Thirty-nine stripes were laid on Jesus' back, and they represent healing for all our diseases.

Many have sought divine healing before having heard or known enough of the Word of God to produce in them a steadfast faith. The hand of faith cannot reach

out and take from God what the eye of faith does not first see to be the will of God. Unless those seeking healing can say, "It is written," and then can quote the promise which settles the question of God's will, their faith cannot remain steadfast. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17) I sometimes ask the sick person to read specific scriptures as an act of their faith, to be healed.

Healing is primarily a faith proposition on the part of the individual who receives. No matter how much faith the one praying may have, the effects of the individual's doubt will nullify the minister's faith.

An unforgiving spirit, or holding a grudge, hinders some from receiving the Lord's healing.

Sometimes healing comes gradually and often this gradual healing is greater than instant healing. Sometimes, after being prayed with for healing - particularly at a large healing service - individuals claim healings which, in the clear light of the next day, turn out not to have taken place. They have been in the presence of mass faith, but when they get on their own, Satan takes advantage of their unbelief and their sickness returns. Many times while being prayed for, a person falls to the floor. They have been overcome by the touch of the Holy Spirit. When this happens it is important to understand it is a sign that God is present. A person is not healed "by falling" nor necessarily while under the power of the Lord. It is only an indication that the Lord is present to act within the faith-level of the individual.

Several years ago I was asked to pray for a lady who had cancer. I started praying without seeing her, later when I saw the condition she was in I said, "Father, forgive me if I have been praying wrong, I release her into your hands now." About 2 hours later I received word that she died.

Divine healing goes no further than the promise of God. He does not promise we shall never die. -the number of the days I will fulfill. (Ex.23:25-26)

FAMILY

By Valerie Vance Dillon

Straight Talk To Youth on Sex

ON travels around the country, I meet many young people on college campuses, in high school classrooms, at programs and workshops. You are a fun group to talk to — open, enthusiastic, challenging and honest — at times, blunt! When the discussion is about sex, you can be shocking sometimes. You see sex with a freedom my generation never had. Not infrequently your attitudes and values are a world apart from what I — and your parents — are comfortable with.

A lot of you, though by no means all, think it's okay to have sexual relations with someone you simply care about — okay for other people if not for you. You see sex as a legitimate way to express affection, and you don't think it needs to be restricted to a committed relationship or marriage. You're realistic, too, about why many of you become sexually active. It's not just for affection or love. It also might be out of desire, sexual urges, curiosity, pressure from one's friends, because "everybody's doing it," fear of losing a boy or girlfriend, or as a way to prove to yourself and others that you're an adult, or "straight."

For many of you, premarital sex isn't a moral issue at all. If both parties are willing and if no one gets hurt — what's the harm in it?

Meanwhile, I also talk with your parents who are worrying, wondering and agonizing over what's going on in your life. Their problem is they love you and they see nothing but trouble and pain for you if you get involved. But they aren't likely to say that flat out. They are embarrassed or afraid or unsure of how to approach the issue of sex, especially if it hasn't been an open topic while you were growing up.

They don't want to accuse you of anything. Nor do they want to show a lack of trust. Sometimes, they're simply afraid to find out the truth. It's a hard thing to face when you've grown up believing virginity is the most important thing you can bring to your wedding day.

It's no wonder there is a generation gap. So much has changed in just a generation or two. We've gone from a society that repressed sex, that made it a taboo topic in the home, to a society which actually worships sex, which sees it as life's most important pursuit!

Even the fundamental meaning of sex has changed for some people. Once the meaning of sex was procreation. It was the act that produced children. And children were seen as a blessing and as an economic asset — one more hand on the farm. Furthermore, 75 or 100 years ago, so many babies died at birth or in early childhood, a couple had to have seven or more just to reproduce themselves. Now, I'm sorry to say, not everybody sees kids as valuable, and for the first time in history it's possible to separate sex from procreation. Contraception — especially the pill — has made it possible to use sex for pleasure only, or for whatever other purpose people want to use it.

So there's plenty of confusion about the meaning of sex and under what circumstances it is permissible.

Maybe your folks don't feel free to talk to you about all of this . . . or maybe you just aren't ready to listen. But here are a few ideas and reflections they might like you to consider.

- Your parents are sexual too. They may be 40 or 50 or more, but believe it or not, they still experience and enjoy sex. More importantly, they understand the feelings, needs and temptations you live with as a sexually maturing person. They know it is tough to grow up in today's world, given the constant sexual titillation in our media. If you immerse yourself in explicit movies, TV shows and magazines, sex is likely to assume a much bigger place in your life than is helpful. If

your date life regularly is marked by heavy necking or petting, you will progress almost inevitably to sexual intercourse. That's not because you're a bad person, but because you're biologically normal. It's the way God made all of us.

- Sex is a whole lot deeper than our consumer culture suggests, as it tries to persuade us to buy products so we can be sexier, more popular or luckier in finding true love. The right mouthwash, diet soda or sports car can't make anybody a truly sexy person because sexuality isn't a surface thing — it's built into all that we are. Every person is sexual, even those who never engage in genital sex. If you want to be a genuinely attractive sexual person, then live your whole life passionately and enthusiastically! Be alive to the world around you! Share your masculinity or femininity with others in a loving and open way! Your sexuality is a gift, a powerful and good part of being human.

- Sex can be beautiful, wonderful and delightful. But it's only going to flourish in a climate of fidelity and commitment. It's only going to be as good as the total relationship between the two people. After all, sexual intercourse is an act in which you give yourself in a total and very intimate way to your lover. By its very nature it's a gift of self which we can make only when we trust that the other person will be there to love and care for us tomorrow as well as right now. Somehow, we always see it as "forever" and "only with you." And though this ideal isn't always met, it is the only way to approach the tremendous experience of two in one flesh. Unless a relationship is one of commitment and permanence, how can sex not become manipulative, selfish or trivial?

- I believe your parents want very much for you to be chaste until you marry. The word "chaste" is an old-fashioned one that simply means you won't have pre-marital sex. A great many of you tell me that if you keep your parents from knowing about your relationship and you use a contraceptive to prevent pregnancy you really don't think that anyone gets hurt. But what about

WASHINGTON

By Russell Shaw

Is the Pope Picking on U.S. Catholics?

NO one could have spent a large part of last fall in Europe, as I did, without coming away with a renewed sense of the high visibility the United States has there. Europeans may love us or hate us. In either case they are intensely aware of us.

Last fall was a period of escalating debate and large demonstrations concerning the deployment of U.S. Cruise and Pershing II missiles in several West European countries. It witnessed the tragic suicide attack on U.S. servicemen in Beirut. It marked the Grenada invasion.

Different as they were, each of these episodes demonstrated the global outreach and the uncertain consequences of U.S. power. All triggered profound reactions among Europeans.

There are, however, more fundamental issues than those centering on the European view of the U.S. military presence. Even more than to our military strength, Europeans are acutely sensitive to our culture and our values, and are influenced deeply by them. Here also the reaction is ambivalent.

Last fall was likewise the period when U.S. media, secular as well as religious, began to play up what many perceived as a new and exciting story — the increasingly strong stance which Pope John Paul II and the Vatican allegedly were adopting toward the Church in the U.S. “The Pope Vs. the U.S. Church,” headlined *Newsweek*.

Is there a link between the two things — European ambivalence toward U.S. military, economic, political and cultural power, and papal concern over doctrinal and behavioral aberrations in Catholicism in this country? It appears that there is. A central element in both cases is the overriding fact of American influence, the enormous impact

which ideas, policies and practices generated here have beyond our shores.

This long has been obvious in the military, political, economic and cultural spheres. Less evident until recently has been the growing impact of the Church in the U.S. on Catholicism elsewhere. But the size, wealth, ferment and high media visibility of the Church here make it today a powerful factor for good or ill in the Church in other countries.

At a press conference in Rome last October an Irish bishop was asked to comment on the fact that the drop-off in Catholics’ reception of the sacrament of Penance in recent years has apparently been less marked in Ireland than in the United States. He declined to crow. Things that happen in U.S. Catholicism, he remarked, have a way of happening five years later in Irish Catholicism.

Today’s problem here is tomorrow’s problem elsewhere. That, it seems, is a large part of the explanation for the pope’s recent emphasis on straightening out problems in the U.S. Church. Against the petty view of a spiteful pontiff picking on U.S. Catholics is the reality of the pastor of the universal Church trying to prevent difficulties in one sector from becoming difficulties everywhere.

To be sure, the pope has not addressed these matters in so many words. But in word and deed he has indicated strongly that concerns of this sort form part of his thinking about the Church here. So, too, have some top Vatican officials.

It is possible to caricature the pope’s attitude as a harsh, arbitrary crackdown. Nothing of the sort has occurred.

The matters much on his mind —

seminaries, religious life, doctrinal orthodoxy, family life, sexual morality, the role of women — are undoubtedly issues where American Catholicism has witnessed and suffered from abuses in recent years.

Moreover the pope has by no means acted high-handedly or unilaterally. In initiating studies of U.S. seminary education and religious life, for example, he was at pains to enlist the involvement of U.S. bishops and others in planning and implementation, with the evident intent of making the search for solutions a team effort.

Evidently this is not good enough for critics, who resent any effort originating in Rome aimed at correcting abuses. For many the long-range goal is the emergence of an “American Church,” attached to Rome by little more than symbolism and emotion.

But the pope’s view of things here is by no means an isolated one. On the contrary, a stint overseas reminds one that in one way or another, interest in — and sometimes concern about — events in the U.S. are widespread in Europe.

The pope’s view of Western culture as a whole is not uniquely his own. On the contrary, it is hard not to be reminded in much that he says and does of the distinguished, exiled Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Much that he has said and written makes it clear that Solzhenitsyn views the West as a spiritually flabby society urgently in need of spiritual revival.

Much that Pope John Paul II has said and done suggests that he holds similar views. It is not unrealistic to think this concern is focused in a special way on the U.S. and the Church here. That is an acknowledgement of American importance in the world today. But it is also a reminder that many things need correcting if the nation and the Church here are to exercise an entirely benign leadership in the world. ■

A veteran reporter on developments in the U.S. capital, Shaw is secretary for public affairs at the U.S. Catholic Conference.

RELIGIOUS ED NEWS

PRE-SCHOOL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Introduction:

St. Gabriel's pre-school Religious Education Program was established in 1978 under the direction of Sister Rita Ann, the Religious Education Coordinator at that time.

Classes for 3,4, and 5 year-olds have been taught by many lay volunteers over this 6-year period and are held in a well equipped schoolroom in the convent basement.

Each group meets once a week or sometimes bi-weekly for 1 - 1½ hours during the day.

The following articles written by the current pre-school teachers, provide a more complete picture of each program.

PRE-SCHOOL CLASS FOR 3-YEAR OLDS

There are two groups of 3 year old boys and girls who meet once a week for 1½ hours. In these classes we are using "The Jesus Story" consisting of thirty topics relating everyday human needs to Biblical stories of Jesus' life. Each lesson has a cover picture of life as children view it, the two inside pages are a read-a-loud story of some phase of Jesus' life. This is discussed in more detail after reading or telling the story to the class. The back page is an activity for the child to complete; for instance, color, draw, or paste pictures, or make some easy item regarding the lesson. Each student gets his own copy to take home to complete the back page if not done so in class, and for the parents to see what their child is learning.

Each class opens with prayers and singing a few simple songs. The program is varied, often playing a record and acting out the games, doing exercises, giving each one a chance to tell something that happened that the rest may

like to hear about, and sometimes just letting them play together with the many toys provided.

Some of the things we did this year: visited the church with a simple explanation of the altar, statues, stations of the cross, holy water, etc., made a growing chart for each child, had a Christmas and Valentine party, visited the Convent Chapel during the Christmas season to pray and see their Nativity Scene, planted corn in individual containers for each to take home and watch grow, walked to church to see the new beautiful St. Gabriel's statue, made little sail boats, a friendship chain, and special recognition when anyone has a birthday.

Each child takes a turn to bring cookies or a snack to have with fruit juice at the end of each session, and all must help to put toys away and clean up the room before leaving. While the attention span for this age is rather short, they are getting an early introduction into learning a little about Jesus, prayers, sharing and getting along with others, and making new friends. The enthusiasm of each boy and girl is a very rewarding experience.

by Carrie Gillitzer

PRE-SCHOOL CLASS FOR 4-year olds

We the teachers of the 4-year old group know that the children really like coming to their weekly classes.

The parents are well satisfied with what we are doing and they thank us for it. The children are learning to make the Sign of the Cross and pray with no set form of words. They are doing well with it and learn that we receive everything from God. They give us some real wonderful answers to the questions we ask.

They look forward to each class they have and also the small parties they have. They also have learned that they are SPECIAL in God's eyes as individuals,

Virginia Konichek & Ursula Kasperek

PRE-SCHOOL CLASS FOR 5-YEAR OLDS

The pre-school class for 5-year olds meets twice a month for 1½ hours. The program for the kindergarten children centers around the belief that God wants us to recognize and celebrate the wonders of life.

This theme is developed throughout 5 basic units which teach about: Our-selves-We are Special; Our World and God's Love; People in Our World; Our Feelings-Jesus Knows How We Feel; and Our Words-Listening and Answering as Jesus Speaks to Us. There are also special lessons for Halloween, Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, and Easter. A "parents page" is sent home from each class to encourage family participation.

The boys and girls enjoy learning songs and playing games which relate to the lessons. They are encouraged to ask and answer questions and also to be silent at times to think. At this age, they work well independently, completing lessons in their workbook and creating nice wall displays.

A special time is set aside when the lights are dimmed, a candle is lighted and spontaneous prayer is encouraged.

NOTE: The 5-year old Religion class will be discontinued after this year as a result of the establishment of our long-awaited kindergarten at St. Gabriel School. This will be a great asset to our school and community.

by Rita Hamann

COMING OF AGE IN CHRIST

Many of us have confused notions about what Confirmation is and what it does. To understand Confirmation we must remember that it is actually the second part of the Church's initiation rite. Whereas the person is received as a member of the faith community through the action of Jesus in Baptism, he is commissioned to begin to take a full part in the Church's life and mission in Confirmation.

Thus, Confirmation is intended to mark the Christian's coming of age, the beginning of mature Christian life, and through the Sacrament, Jesus promises to continuously provide the person with his Spirit so he can begin to live this life fully. As such, nothing special is necessarily "felt" at Confirmation, nor is the person suddenly enlightened in the way the Apostles were on Pentecost. However, through the Sacrament the Spirit begins to move the person and to guide him in living out his commitment in a new, more mature way.

Besides the ritual of the sacrament which consists of the anointing with oil and the words of the bishop, the faith community is also involved. They are part of the sign in that they receive the newly confirmed into their midst as one of their equals, and support them in whatever way necessary in the living of a mature faith. Thus Jesus not only acts through the ritual, He continues to act through the faith community during the person's entire adult life. The ritual is the beginning of the sacrament; the ongoing gift of the Spirit comes through the community's ongoing love, support and example.

The decision to be confirmed is actually a renewed faith commitment to the person of Jesus and to his Church. The initial commitment made at Baptism is now renewed as a person reaches maturity, but this time it takes on the quality of a vocational decision. It is a decision to devote one's whole adult life to a particular set of values and goals. It is a total commitment of oneself to Jesus and the Father by surrendering to the influence of the Spirit who is given in a renewed way through the Sacrament.

Confirmation does not bring about a sudden change in life style therefore, but it does point a person more firmly in the direction of full Christian life which we began at Baptism. Thus it has the same integrating effect on a person's life as does any authentic vocational decision. But in Confirmation the Spirit becomes the source of that integration.

Just as the faith community is and continues to be part of the sacramental sign through which Jesus gives his Spirit to the individual, so the individuals, because of their new status, are now able to have a great influence on the faith community. They can become in turn a sign to others and help foster the community's growth. This is part of the responsibility we accept through Confirmation. The individual and the community together become a sign to the rest of the world, and together they carry out the task of proclaiming the Good News and communicating the Spirit of Jesus to others.

If you plan on being confirmed on May 27, then call Father Boschert at the Rectory (326-2402) and make an appointment for an interview between April 23 and May 16. Please bring the following information with you:

1. Your confirmation name
2. Your father's name
3. Your mother's maiden name
4. Your sponsor's name
5. Church where baptized, city and year
6. If baptized outside PDC bring baptismal certificate from parish you were baptized in.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Wed., May 2 - Parents and those being confirmed meet at St. John's Church Hall at 7:30 P.M.
- Wed., May 23 - Confirmation rehearsal in St. Gabriel Church at 7:30 P.M.
- Sun. May 27 - Confirmation in St. Gabriel Church at 2:30 P.M.

AT EASTER - by Frieda Howes

Now the golden hours of Easter
Come again across the land,
Bringing hope and faith and courage
And new strength to understand.
Hearts respond to warmth of springtime
With display of all things new,
So deep shadows can be lifted
To reveal a brighter view.
Then each life can find new purpose,
In rebirth of all God's things.
To inspire the golden moments,
With the love that Easter brings!

ST. GABRIEL'S MESSAGE
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