

Social action viewed firsthand

Notre Dame students take the 'plunge'

Special, The Florida Catholic

University of Notre Dame students Sheila Pfister of Leesburg and Pat Cimino of Tampa met with Diocese of Orlando social ministers last week, observing the apostolate to the migrant farm laborers in Winter Garden, the West Orange Farm Workers Clinic, driver education for the Spanish-speaking, and the diocesan justice and peace commission.

They were two of five Notre Dame students in Florida who took part in an experience the students call "the urban plunge," during their semester break in January. The other three observed social ministries in the Archdiocese of Miami.

The purpose of their 48-hour "live-in" with the organizations they observed is to learn in a concrete way what social ministry is all about. The "plunge" exposes them to the social action approaches being used by the Church today.

Their contact in central Florida was Sister Teresa McElwee, SND de N, who directs the Orlando diocesan justice and peace commission. She is a "connector," linking ideas and services for people in pastoral and social ministry. She is a member of the Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry (CCUM, pronounced SEE-COME), a national coalition of Religious and laity

active in social justice ministries.

Notre Dame and CCUM jointly sponsor the urban plunge project. They send students into courtrooms or other agencies dealing with social problem areas. In some cases, the students take sleeping bags, and live the two days of the experience in a style as simple as the places they observe.

That is what Pat Cimino did, to observe the migrant program in central Florida. Both Pat and Sheila are junior students at Notre Dame.

Miss Pfister is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Pfister, Jr., of St. Paul Parish, Leesburg. Born in Leesburg, she and her brother attended local public schools and both have been students at Notre Dame, together. Cimino is a son of Dr. and Mrs. Louis Cimino, parishioners of Holy Redeemer Church in Tampa. He was reared in Tampa.

Miss Pfister went on a tour of Leesburg public schools with Sister Vivian Cartier, an itinerant teacher of the blind there, who serves the blind children in Lake County Schools. Sister Vivian is a member of the congregation of the Holy Union from Fall River, Mass. She conducted Sheila to the schools where she sees handicapped children twice a week. Later Sheila joined Pat in Orlando for visits to Apopka and the Justice and Peace office in Orlando.

The convent in Apopka is the



Notre Dame University students Patrick Cimino, Tampa, and Sheila Pfister, Leesburg, last week observed how the Church is dealing with social problems in central Florida. Sister Teresa McElwee, of the diocesan justice and peace office in Orlando, is at right.

headquarters for several "movers and shakers" of social action, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur who serve the migrants. Pat went with Sister Ann Kendrick to observe a night class she instructs for migrants who want to learn to drive. They also saw the centers of service to other migrants in the Apopka-Winter Garden areas of the diocese.

Notre Dame and CCUM will debrief Sheila, Pat and the other three students who made the first such "urban plunge" in Florida, when the students make their reports this semester at the university.

Their input will be added to the reports of more than 100 students who took the January urban plunge, nationwide.

Pope Paul calls infant baptism 'holy custom'

By John Muthig

VATICAN CITY (NC) -- Pope Paul VI has reaffirmed the traditional Catholic practice of infant baptism, calling it a "holy custom."

At the same time, the Pope urged baptized adults to make a serious, formal study in their parishes of what their baptism should mean.

"Church law and practice have introduced the holy custom of infant Baptism," the Pope told a general audience here.

"The period of preparation called the catechumenate which in pagan times preceded baptism is entered into now only in a liturgical way in the baptismal rite.

"But in the social environment of today, this method of preparation must be completed by a post-baptismal instruction and initiation into a style of life which is distinctly Christian."

Attending the papal audience were about 1,000 bishops, priests, Religious and laity from around the world who participated in the neo-catechumenal community movement, an intense parish-based course in Christian life and belief for those already baptized.

Some reject infant baptism

Some Catholic theologians and liturgical scholars in recent years have suggested that the custom of infant baptism should be reexamined. Some have theorized that by delaying baptism and demanding a period of catechu-

menate or religious preparation before reception of the sacrament, the Church would have fewer nominal Catholics but more strongly committed ones.

The Pope told the group that the word "catechumenate" is being revived. "But this does not mean that the importance of the present discipline governing baptism is invalidated or diminished. Rather the movement is an attempt to bring back and renew in a certain way the catechumenate of the past through a new method of gradual and intensive evangelization," he said.

The Pope told the international group that all baptized must "understand, rethink, and appreciate" their baptism. "We are happy to see that today this necessity is being met by those fundamental Church institutions and structures we call parishes," the Pope said.

Christians are witnesses for Jesus

The pontiff praised the current development of "new methods and new programs in ministry to adults."

He told the crowds that Christians who appreciate their baptism will become "witnesses and martyrs" for Jesus.

"Those who know how to see into the heart of the world," he said, "know that at the depth there is discontent, disquiet, the need for a word which yields the true sense of life, forgotten by the world.

"We have that lantern, we have that lamp -- the word of the Gospel which becomes the world's light.

"If we have this light," continued the pontiff, "we have to go meet people who are angry, dispersed, and without principles of good conduct."

The Pope then lauded the work of missionaries, especially those who work under "enormous difficulties."

Said the pontiff, "the obstacles which at first made them fearful and uneasy

now have become an attraction for them.

"Those who have lived this experience and have had this good fortune can't help thanking God, for giving them a Gospel which is difficult, painful, costly and which spits in the face of the world's vices and obstacles."

For such people, the Pope said, "Difficulties become stimuli, dangers become attractions and defeats themselves become titles of merit and of serene peace."

The Pope reminded listeners that the 1977 world Synod of Bishops, opening here Sept. 30, will discuss catechesis (religious education).

"This shows that the Church's awareness of her fundamental mission to evangelize . . . is still vigilant and active," asserted Pope Paul.

"This mission commits everyone -- ministers and faithful alike to announce the Gospel, today more than ever, because of the difficulties and the possibilities which the modern world places against and offers to the spreading of this message."



Calling it a "holy custom," Pope Paul VI has reaffirmed the traditional Catholic practice of infant baptism. The Pontiff is shown above, early in his pontificate, baptizing an infant in his cathedral church, St. John Lateran in Rome. (NC Photo)

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