

May 1968

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Recommended Citation

Dworak, Mary (1968) "Continued Adult Education on the Parish Level," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 35 : No. 2 , Article 9.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol35/iss2/9>

Continued Adult Education on the Parish Level

Mary Dworak

INTRODUCTION

An increasing number of adults have become keenly aware of a need to continue their education in ideas and issues developing in the Church today. Reading the signs of the time, the Adult Education Commission for the Archdiocese of Omaha was formed in the fall of 1966.

Traditionally, the Church's educational efforts have been child centered in our parochial schools, CCD, grade and high school programs. "Where does this leave the Adult?" It is the adult today who faces the crisis of faith and intelligence — who is active in society — who is rearing and forming our children. It is the adult today who forms the world and makes the decisions which shape and form our civilization. Therefore, the adult

today needs a kind of continued education that is tailored to his times and circumstances.

FORMAT

The Adult Education Programs of Omaha are organized on the parish level. Committed lay people take charge of securing a free babysitting service and are responsible for advertising and promoting the program in the parish. Lay men also take care of the physical facilities and the Archdiocese provides the speakers and organizational and administrative leadership.

(Mary Dworak is the Director of Adult Education Commission, of the Archdiocese of Omaha.)

The most popular series of this adult education program is titled "Marriage and The Family." Parishoners attending previous programs stated their preference for this course by means of a questionnaire. The positive response resulted in this parish program with a format as follows:

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY PROGRAM

1. RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FAMILY — presented by two social workers with vast experience after taking graduate degrees.
2. THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE — moderator of Cana and Pre-Cana.
3. PARENTAL AUTHORITY AND DISCIPLINE — two interested and vocal parents.
4. FAMILY FINANCE — Manager of Consumer Credit Counseling Service.
5. HUMAN SEXUALITY IN MARRIAGE — a physician with experience in Pre-Cana and Cana activities.
6. PARENT CHILD EDUCATION — a priest with graduate training in sociology.

These sessions are held once a week and are 1½ hours long. Speakers use films, filmstrips, and slides in connection with their lecture.

As an added service to the Archdiocese, an audio-visual lending library containing filmstrips, films, records, and tapes has been developed. Parishoners are given lists of the material available, and they are free to use them to pursue the program subjects in more depth.

CONCLUSION

The structure of the Archdiocesan adult education program presented is successful but will be reorganized and upgraded each year. Other such programs throughout the country may have major or minor modifications which may be of value and criticisms and suggestions of our format are welcomed. Parish leaders who may be interested in beginning such programs would find benefit in reviewing the materials available through our audio-visual lending library and these will be made available upon request.

Evaluation of adult educational programs is difficult and the only measure of success which can be noted immediately is the increase in the number of participants each year. The value to the Church of having involved, educated, and participating members of the laity is inestimable.