

THE KANSAS STATE SODALITY UNION

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INTRODUCTION

Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin Mary were societies of laymen begun in the latter part of the 16th century which aimed at leading their members to spiritual perfection in their particular state of life by a threefold commitment to personal sanctification, sanctification of others, and a steadfast defense of the Catholic Church. This commitment was made under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

These congregations are to be called Sodalities of Our Lady not only because they take their name from the Blessed Virgin Mary, but especially because each Sodalist makes profession of special devotion to the mother of God and dedicates himself to her by a complete consecration. . . .¹

Admission into a Sodality constituted a firm dedication to a way of life intended to permeate and influence every aspect of the personal, social, and apostolic life of the individual sodalist. For this reason the Sodality has historically been held out as a religious association for the exemplary Catholic, "those who are by no means satisfied with an ordinary and common kind of life, but who strive to place the most lofty sentiments in their hearts."²

St. Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, had asserted that the Spiritual Exercises, in their full and integral aspects, were to be undertaken only by those desiring to achieve maximum spiritual growth. So likewise

with the Sodality way of life. It was uniquely suited for those people seeking the ultimate in Christian perfection and the greatest possible holiness. That the Sodality was a religious association intended to attract committed and exemplary Catholics is attested to by the fact that some sixteen Sodalists have become popes, forty-seven are canonized saints, more than sixty have been beatified, and some thirty-nine have founded forty-three different religious communities.³

The first rule of the Sodality set forth the essential features of its way of life.

The Sodality of Our Lady, an association founded by the Society of Jesus and approved by the Holy See, is a religious body which aims at fostering in its members an ardent devotion, reverence, and filial love toward the Blessed Virgin Mary. Through his devotion and with the protection of so good a mother, it seeks to make the faithful gather together under her name good Catholics sincerely bent on sanctifying themselves, each in his own state of life, and zealous, as far as their conditions in life permits, to save and sanctify their neighbor and to defend the Church of Jesus Christ against the attacks of the wicked.⁴

The spiritual dynamics of sodality devotion and prayer have remained unchanged for virtually four centuries. The rules of sodality spirituality closely approximate those of St. Ignatius, emphasizing frequent examination of conscience, prayer, confession and communion, meditation, etc., and have generally survived criticism and passing spiritual vogues.

On the other hand, the apostolic activities of Sodalities have taken many different forms of expression, depending upon the particular historical milieu in which they were formulated. A consistent feature of this work is that it has been repeatedly used as a vehicle for promoting and defending the interests of the Catholic Church against social forces and trends perceived as inimical to Catholic doctrine. From the struggle against Jansenism in the seventeenth century to the polemics against "atheistic communism" in the twentieth, the Sodality has been in the vanguard of Catholic lay organizations dedicated to a defense of the faith against heresies, schisms, and the ideological enemies of the Church. Indeed, the history of the Sodality movement began in an atmosphere of crisis and defensiveness when the homogeneous nature of Catholicism suffered a permanent rupture with the emergence of Protestantism in the sixteenth century.

The fact that Sodalities have been among the most consistent, reliable, and zealous organizations in the defense and spread of Catholicism is attributable in part to three features of their raison d'etre. In the first place, they have always submitted their apostolic activities to the direction of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, "thinking with the Church," in all matters sacred and profane. Secondly, they have always shown a willingness to cooperate with other apostolic organizations, judiciously

avoiding promoting only their own sectarian interests. And finally, they have always insisted on working for the universal good of the Catholic Church, as opposed to promulgating parochial or sectarian issues.

The history of the Sodality Movement can be traced to the Jesuit College in Rome where, in 1563, John Leunis, a Jesuit priest and teacher at the college, gathered around himself a group of his better pupils and sketched out a simple program that incorporated an intellectual understanding of Catholicism with the desire to uphold Catholic truth against its adversaries with deeds of charity, zeal, and service that would set these men apart as special followers of Christ. The Sodalities of Our Lady were to become a practical realization of the Spiritual Exercises "under a form of apostolate proper to laymen."⁵

Through the zeal of the Jesuit fathers and in conjunction with the growth of the Jesuit educational system, sodality organizations spread across the whole of Europe. There was no unified affiliation of the sodalities in Europe until Gregory XIII, at the request of Fr. Claudius Aquaviva, General of the Society of Jesus, issued the Papal Bull, Omnipotentis Dei on December 5, 1584, establishing the Prima Primaria Sodality of the Annunciation of the Roman College as the Primary Sodality and the mother, head, and center of all others. The federation was

intended to insure common enjoyment of a special list of indulgences granted the Prima Primaria, maintain a uniformity of aim and direction, and provide an element of vitality.⁶ The General of the Society of Jesus received full power to affiliate all other sodalities to the Prima Primaria; and, by this affiliation, they would receive all the indulgences and communicable privileges granted the Rome Sodality. The sodality had now become a papally constituted society to which a succession of popes have since added privileges and indulgences.

During this early period, although they could exist juridically only in Jesuit houses, churches, or institutions, they were not confined exclusively to the Catholic colleges, but existed in many classes of society. Most of the early sodalities were organized along occupational or professional levels and engaged in a variety of charitable and apostolic works. Rome spoke with lavish praise of the early work of these sodalities, extoling their spirit and high purpose. In a Golden Bull, Gloriosae Dominae, issued in 1748, Benedict XIV enlarged the indulgences and privileges of the Sodality and praised the zealotry of its work.

The sodalities continued to grow in number but remained exclusively masculine associations until 1751, when women were finally admitted. A substantial surge in growth resulted, but the sodalities continued to be highly specialized in their mode of organization and completely

Jesuit in direction and government.

In activity the sodalities of the first two centuries met the challenge of their time in their reaction against heresy; their protection of the Holy See; their defense of Christianity; the sanctification of the clergy; the propagation of the faith; the reform of society; promotion of more frequent attendance at the sacraments; introduction of the practice of Forty Hours.⁷

The situation changed abruptly in 1773 with the promulgation of the Brief of Clement XIV, Dominus ac Redemptor, which suppressed the Society of Jesus, its work, and its ministries, and abolished all the jurisdictions of the Generals and Provincials of the society. As a result of this action the Sodality associations were briefly terminated, only to be revived a year later by Clement XIV, who placed the direction of the sodalities under the tutelage of a Commission of Cardinals. The suppression of the Jesuits deprived the Sodality of their direction and leadership and precipitated a disastrous decline in the number and zeal of sodalities.⁸

Following an interruption of fifty years, the Society of Jesus once again took up direction of the sodalities when, in 1824, Leo XII restored the Roman College to the Jesuits and empowered them to once again affiliate sodalities to the Prima Primaria. The formation of sodalities in parishes and churches during the suppression led to their being placed under the immediate jurisdiction of the Bishops; and, when the society was restored in 1814, this

jurisdictional change remained in force.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Sodality expanded into a world wide lay organization engaged in numerous apostolic works and the defense of Catholic ideology. Toward the latter part of the nineteenth century Sodalities began to publish reviews of their work, form national and state unions and federations to centralize and coordinate their activities, and establish National Central Offices in each country. In 1910 the Common Rules were revised and brought into harmony with the times; and, in 1948, with the issuance of the Apostolic Constitution, Bis Saeculari, the "Charter of Sodalities of Our Lady," Pius XII reaffirmed the goals, ideals, and methods of Sodality life, and ushered in what some construed to be a "new golden area" for the Sodality Movement.⁹ In retrospect, this judgement appeared woefully premature and hopelessly naive, for within twenty years the Sodality Movement had virtually collapsed in the United States, "from a lack of interest in the young, from apathy within its ranks, from charges that it was irrelevant to the real issues and needs of the times."¹⁰ Although it has emerged as the National Federation of Christian Life Communities as a result of an internal transition prompted by Vatican II, the organization today no longer commands the attention, prestige, numbers, or social activism that once characterized the Sodality Movement. As of 1973, fewer than

200 local groups were affiliated with the NFCLC.¹¹

The Sodality Movement in the United States reached its zenith in the second quarter of the twentieth century in conjunction with the emergence of lay activism within the Catholic Church known as Catholic Action. Although not the first pope to use the term, it was Pope Pius XI (1922-39) who popularized the concept beginning with the encyclical, Ubi Arcano Dei, issued in 1922, in which he defined Catholic Action as "the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the Church's hierarchy," and implied that social actions among Catholics were now to enjoy the semi-official status of Church endorsed movements.

Through his voluminous writings and addresses, Pius XI gave Catholic Action a charter, a spirit, and an apocalyptic urgency. While he did not deny that the term could be used in a broader sense, he tended throughout his pontificate to restrict it to (1) action or work of the laity, which was (2) organized, (3) apostolic, and (4) done under a special mandate of the bishops.¹²

Catholic Action was generally implied to signify a call to arms among the Catholic laity to labor to offset the technological and ideological corruption of life in Western industrial society, and return that society to a basic Christian orientation by leading its members to a fundamental commitment to Christian social values as expressed, for example, in the Encyclicals Rerum Novarum and Quadragesimo Anno. Laymen were now encouraged to become an extension of the hierarchy who had become

increasingly scarce and politically weakened as a long term consequence of the rise of nation states. Catholic Action varied in particular form from country to country; but in virtually all situations it encompassed a variety of Catholic lay organizations like the Sodality, united under the direction of the hierarchy in a campaign to alter the direction of twentieth century secular society.

In many respects the Sodality was uniquely suited for the work of Catholic Action: it was a lay movement dedicated to working for the good of Church, it was locally, nationally, and internationally organized, and it was structurally subservient to the dictates of the hierarchy. It becomes apparent then, that the success of the Sodality Movement in the United States, at least in terms of its national expansion in the 1930's and 1940's, is directly attributable to the general posture of Catholicism in the decades prior to Vatican II.

This project is intended to examine that milieu by recounting and evaluating a specific Sodality organization that thrived in the state of Kansas for almost thirty years. Aside from chronicling the history and development of a particular segment of Catholic culture during the 1930's, 40's, and 50's, it is hoped this work may shed some light on the unique problems of Catholic religious development in American culture by examining, in detail, the history of this particular movement. The demise of the Sodality Movement

provokes a variety of difficult but fascinating questions related both to the internal crisis of contemporary Catholicism as it struggles to maintain its cultural integrity in the face of modern secular culture, and to the particular role of organized religion in an American cultural and institutional life racked by a crisis of turmoil.

Several specific questions come to mind. What were the core attitudes of Catholicism as expressed in the ideology of the Sodality Movement, and how have these attitudes been altered in the twentieth century historical milieu? To what degree did the Sodality Movement and its subsequent decline reflect the dynamics of the struggle of the Catholic church to accommodate itself to American culture and/or change the values, institutions, and ideals of that culture? To what degree did the Sodality Movement reflect unique aspects of Catholic culture in general, and in what ways did it promote and foster Catholic ethnic consciousness? How successful were the apostolic programs of the Sodality in accomplishing their desired goals, and how does this success or failure reflect the influence of an organized religious body in its efforts to alter the social structures of a given society? What is the relationship between political power and religious ideology in America? And finally, what is the relationship between sodality spirituality and the religious predicament of

modern man? It is hoped that this project, of which this thesis is the initial part, will shed some light on these and other relevant questions.

FOOTNOTES FOR THE INTRODUCTION

¹Pope Pius XII, Bis Saeculari, The Queen's Work Publication, (St. Louis: The Queen's Work, 1957), p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 6.

³Fr. Daniel Lord, S.J., The New Sodality Manual (St. Louis: The Queen's Work, 1945), p. 28.

⁴Ibid., p. 101.

⁵Fr. Emile Villaret, S.J., Abridged History of the Sodalities of Our Lady, trans. by William J. Young, S.J. (St. Louis: The Queen's Work, 1957), p. 12.

⁶Fr. Douglas E. Daly, S.J., An Introduction to the Sodalities of Our Lady (St. Louis: The Queen's Work, 1957), p. 38.

⁷Ibid., p. 39.

⁸Fr. Augustus Drive, S.J., The Sodality of Our Lady--Historical Sketches (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1916), p. 152.

⁹Pius XII, Bis Saeculari, Foreword.

¹⁰Judith Anne Ronzio, "John XXIII Christian Life Community--A Sodality Revitalized," The Jesuit Bulletin, Vol. 42 (September, 1973), 10.

¹¹Ibid., p. 10.

¹²D. J. Geaney, "Catholic Action," New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967, III, 262.

CHAPTER I

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE AND FR. EDWARD J. WEISENBERG

On the 17th of June, 1864, the United States government signed a contract purchasing the Pottawatomie Indian lands on Sugar Creek and giving them a reservation extending westward from the present site of Topeka for some fifty miles on both sides of the Kansas River.¹ With the assistance of several Jesuit priests who had worked among them since 1838, a site was chosen on the north side of the Kansas River at what is now St. Marys, Kansas, and a mission building was erected.² The beginning of St. Mary's College, one of the oldest educational institutions in the state of Kansas, can be traced to these events.

From its meager beginning as an Indian Mission, the location served as a temporary cathedral for Bishop John B. Miede, S.J., Vicar Apostolic of the area between the Missouri-Iowa western border and the Rocky Mountains. In 1869, with a steadily dwindling Indian population under pressure from an influx of white settlers, the mission was converted into a Catholic boarding school for young men. It grew in size and enrollment for the next sixty years. This era was idealized in the writings of Fr. Francis Finn, S.J., in his books, Tom Playfair and Percy Finn.³

In 1931, during the initial crush of the depression, the college and high school departments were closed and the Jesuit theological school was transferred from St. Louis, Missouri, to St. Mary's. There were a number of reasons for the move.

As the country was becoming more populated and settled, gradually Catholic parochial schools were started throughout the Midwest. Also, in the St. Mary's area other boarding Catholic high schools and colleges were coming into existence, like Rockhurst in Kansas City, Missouri, and Maur Hill and St. Benedicts in Atchison, Kansas. In other words, the hard facts were that the need for a Catholic boarding high school and college at St. Marys was no longer very great. Added to this was the financial problem of the depression.⁴

For the next thirty-seven years Jesuit scholastics were educated in Catholic Theology in the quiet of small town America. It was during this period that the college served as the nerve center of a nationally known Catholic young organization called the Kansas State Sodality Union. This union was structurally similar to the National Sodality Movement that had its base in St. Louis; and, although organized on a statewide basis, it provided essentially the same services to its affiliated sodalities as did the national office to which it was an adjunct association.

The sodalities in Kansas eventually organized on five levels: the grade schools, high schools, colleges, nurse training schools, and in the parishes. There were three major territorial divisions encompassing the three

Kansas dioceses of Leavenworth, Wichita, and Concordia. Each sodality was independent of all others and fell under the jurisdiction of the proper ecclesiastical authority, i.e., the bishop of the respective diocese; and, under him, a priest was appointed as director in accordance with Sodality rules. In most of the schools in which the sodality existed, religious nuns served as moderators; and each sodality, in turn, had a prefect, officers, and assorted committees of students charged with specific duties.

The Kansas State Sodality Union was simply a federation of individual sodalities united to centralize and coordinate their activities on a state wide basis. It was from St. Mary's College that Fr. Edward Weisenberg formulated and directed these programs with the assistance of a staff of enterprising Jesuit seminarians with whom he met weekly to plan projects, do evaluations, or deal with special problems that arose with bishops, pastors, or principals that caused a sodality moderator any worry. He also used the time to bring them up to date on his numerous weekend visits to the Catholic schools throughout the state. Working with the sodality was a prestigious undertaking among the scholastics, aside from the fact that it was a welcome change from the rigors of studying theology. Each man on the staff was given charge of a particular section of the operation, one handling high school correspondence, another college correspondence, etc.

The meetings at Bellarmine depended on the scholastics there, but were informal--brainstorming about what could be done, working together on outlining projects, mimeographing articles, mailing stuff, etc. Great days and nights--and everyone of us enjoyed the meetings--it was a real break from the grind of the theologate.⁵

Fr. Edward J. Weisenberg, the man who organized, directed, and inspired the nationally known Kansas State Sodality Union spent almost one-half of his lifetime at St. Mary's, first as a student and later as a Jesuit and professor of dogmatic theology.

Fr. Weisenberg was born in Jacksonville, Illinois in 1893. As a young man he attended St. Mary's College Boarding School for three years. He entered the Jesuit novitiate at Florissant, Missouri, in 1912 and then returned briefly to St. Mary's during Regency, teaching both high school and college students. When he finished his theological studies, he was sent to Austria for further study. He remained in Europe to complete a doctorate in dogmatic theology at the Gregorian University in Rome.

For a short time following his return to the United States in 1930, Fr. Weisenberg taught theology at St. Louis University. The following year, with the closing of St. Mary's College and the transfer of the Jesuit Theologate to that institution, he moved with the faculty to the new location. There he began his pioneering work among the Catholic youth of Kansas. In addition to

teaching moral theology to Jesuit seminarians and organizing state-wide Sodality activities, Fr. Weisenberg traveled virtually thousands of miles across the state each year giving retreats for students at the Catholic colleges and high schools. He became the first Jesuit Newman Club chaplain in the United States through his work with the Catholic students at Kansas State University. He later established a Newman Club at Kansas University and ministered at Haskell Institute in Lawrence. Because of his involvement with collegiate circles through the Sodality and Newman Club activities, in 1939 he was elected National Chaplain of Phi Kappa Theta, a fraternity of Catholic men.⁶

During the summers, Fr. Weisenberg was a regular member of the Summer Schools of Catholic Action, a national educational program sponsored by the Central Sodality Office in St. Louis. Fr. Daniel Lord, head of the Nation Sodality Office, was grateful for this perennial assistance and expressed his gratitude many times.

A thousand thanks to you for your most important contribution to the SSCAs. It means a great deal to us to have you with us on the course. I feel that the subjects you handle are not only important but that they lend dignity and solid worth to what we are trying to do. And I know too your power of making friends and the influence you exercise upon our priests and religious and laity to the great good of the whole sodality.

You are a most important member of our Staff and one on whom we can count. My deepest thanks for all you've done for the Sodality, the Schools and for us.⁷

Devotedly in Christ,
(signed, Daniel Lord)

Fr. Weisenberg's role in the activities of the KSSU were central. Like Fr. Lord, he was a tireless worker whose presence and leadership skill was the catalyst of the organization. His personal organizational talents, his enthusiasm and dedication to Sodality ideals, a lifelong desire to "save souls," and his ability to engender commitment and action in others were responsible for his successful work.⁸ Fr. Michael J. Lies of Caney, Kansas, pastor of Sacred Heart Church and Wichita Diocesan Youth Director from 1945 to 1955 wrote of Fr. Weisenberg and his proverbial work:

Fr. Weisenberg was the greatest youth leader I have known in Kansas. . . . He used every weekend on some Sodality Youth activity in Ks. If there was no scheduled meeting, he would use the time to visit schools, academies, youth directors, Srs. or priests to plan, study, discuss Sodality Youth Programs.

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Many of his weekends were spent at Newman Clubs at KU & K-State. He pleaded then, 25 yrs. ahead of his time, for spiritual programs & guidance for the students at the State schools. He was a man of seemingly limitless energy. Often his schedule meant getting in at 2 or 3 a.m., but he was up and at it all day, either on the youth work or in his theology classroom at St. Mary's.

I recall times when, as we were driving along in a car after closing a retreat, he would practice his Latin lecture for the next day at the seminary. He knew the train lines & their schedules by heart. When seeing a passenger train in the distance as we were riding along he would give the places where it was going & when--or remark that the train must be hours late on an extra, because there was no train due at that time.⁹

This demanding schedule of teaching, Sodality activities, Newman Club programs, retreats and spiritual directing, touring with the Summer Schools of Catholic

Action, and general priestly duties, required the kind of fortitude that can only come with a total dedication to one's life work. Fr. Weisenberg is now 81 years old. He has been with the Society of Jesus for 62 years. He is currently living at the Regency Nursing Inn in St. Louis.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER I

¹St. Mary's College Bulletin, Historical Sketch and Graduate Register (Kansas City, Mo.: Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 4-5.

²Ibid., p. 5.

³James J. Daly, "Father Finn," The Dial, XXX (June 1919), pp. 221-225.

⁴Lon Smith, S.J., "Good-Bye St. Marys," Jesuit Bulletin, XLVI (June, 1967), 7.

⁵Fr. Richard Pates, S.J., to author, October 22, 1973.

⁶Jerry McElroy, S.J., "A Priest for All Seasons," Jesuit Bulletin, XLVI (August, 1967), 5.

⁷Daniel Lord, S.J., to Fr. Weisenberg, undated, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁸Fr. Weisenberg, interview at Regency Nursing Inn, St. Louis, Mo., June 10, 1973.

⁹Fr. Michael Lies to author, September 4, 1973.

CHAPTER II

FR. DANIEL LORD AND THE REORGANIZATION OF THE SODALITY MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

The first sodality within the geographic area of the United States was established at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., in 1789.¹ The Sodality Movement in America did not become nationalized and centrally coordinated until 1913 when, under the title of The Queen's Work, the Central Office of the Sodalities of Our Lady was established in St. Louis, Missouri.² A magazine by the same name was established on request of the general of the Society of Jesus that Jesuits begin publication of sodality magazines for each of their countries.³ In the United States, this task was assigned to the Missouri Province, under the direction of Fr. Edward F. Garesche, S.J.

In addition to the magazine, the office of The Queen's Work published numerous religious books and tracts, negotiated the affiliation of sodality units to the Prima Primaria or Primary Sodality in Rome; and, through retreats and addresses by the Central Office staff, furthered the growth of the Sodality Movement throughout the nation.⁴

The American Sodalities underwent a dramatic transformation beginning in 1925 with the appointment of

Fr. Daniel A. Lord, S.J., to succeed Fr. Garesche as editor of the sodality periodicals. Fr. Lord was a man of extraordinary gifts of leadership, a prolific writer, a practical dramatist, a versatile musician, and a man of phenomenal energy, charisma, and personal warmth whose pre-eminent accomplishment was the revival of the "moribund Sodality Movement."⁵

Born on Chicago's South Side in 1888 of Irish-English ancestry, Daniel Lord was educated in the parochial school system before entering the Jesuit novitiate at St. Stanislaus Seminary in Florissant, Missouri, in 1909. Following ordination in 1923, Fr. Lord taught English at St. Louis University where he served for a time as moderator of publications. In 1925, he was appointed editor of The Queen's Work.⁶

In conjunction with his work in the Sodality Movement, Fr. Lord established an impressive literary record: 30 books, almost 300 pamphlets, 66 booklets, 50 plays, 12 musicals, 6 pageants, over 900 transcripts for radio, and a syndicated column.⁷ His talent at the piano and his utilization of theater and dramatics became national trademarks of his ministry. The hundreds of pamphlets in which he popularized the religious beliefs of Catholicism were known to millions. He was also responsible, along with Martin J. Quigley, former Chicago Tribune drama critic, for writing the Motion Picture Production Code of

1930, a statement of moral principle for the guidance of film producers.⁸

Fr. Lord's revitalizing of the Sodality Movement in the United States went far beyond revamping the style and dramatically increasing the number of subscriptions to The Queen's Work. In 1928 he convened the first Catholic Student Leadership Convention in St. Louis, a program that was viewed as a new venture in Catholic education, "handing over the realization of student religious programs to the students themselves."⁹

This convention was a result of the creation of Students' Spiritual Councils in thousands of Catholic schools. The purpose of the SSC was to do for the spiritual life of the students "what the Student Council aims to do for the student's extracurricular life."¹⁰ These summer leadership programs were intended to develop organizational techniques and the appropriate ideological orientation necessary for effective leadership in the spiritual councils.

The structure and functioning of the Students' Spiritual Council was explicitly outlined in a short, practical handbook on Sodality aims and methods written by Fr. Lord and published in 1927. It was entitled, "The ABC of Sodality Organization." This handbook became the national guide to student spiritual activities in which sodality members served as officers or chairman of the

various committees assigned spiritual or apostolic tasks. This shift toward direct student participation and leadership development marked a significant turning point in encouraging lay participation within a authoritarian church structure whose organizational and institutional life had been the sole responsibility of its clergy for centuries.

Fr. Lord was also instrumental in promoting Catholic lay leadership through the annual Summer Schools of Catholic Action, inaugurated in response to the official call to Catholic Action issued by Pius XI. The first of these Summer Schools convened in St. Louis on August 17-29, 1931.¹¹

Although originally designed for sodality leaders, these programs were broadened to give a variety of participants a practical course of organizational methods and procedures, and a deeper personal motivation which would "intensify their spiritual life and inevitably grow into a practical life of zeal."¹² By 1963, the 250,000th registration had been recorded in this program.¹³

A peculiar characteristic of Fr. Lord's work was his effort to destroy the notion that Catholicism was an immigrant faith incompatible with American political ideals. The Catholic sociologist Andrew M. Greeley views this problem, ". . . the dilemma of becoming American enough to survive in the new society and remaining Catholic enough

to maintain its allegiance to the world-wide Roman Catholic faith . . ." as the single most important theme in American Catholic history.¹⁴

The ideological reactionism in the Catholic Church to modern thought and political liberalism in the latter part of the 19th Century characterized by the encyclical Quanta Cura (1864), and the sensational "Syllabus of Errors" which accompanied it, fostered the belief among many non-Catholics that the ideals of Catholicism and those of Thomas Jefferson were mutually incompatible. This notion was the common denominator of such anti-Catholic groups as the Know-nothing party of the 1850's, the American Protective Association of the 1890's, and the KKK of the 1920's. The popularity of Paul Blanchard, the "high priest of American anti-Catholicism," who, in two well-known and highly controversial books published in the late 1940's, charged that "the Church" and "Catholic power" threatened to destroy the "American way of life," indicated the tenacity of this point of view.¹⁵

Fr. Lord worked vigorously to dispel the notion that an immigrant Catholic faith was at variance with the principle of political liberty at the heart of a native Protestant society and culture. He taught that Catholicity and democracy were not incompatible. He believed democracy to be the government of the "great-hearted middle class," whom he viewed as the bulwark of American

Catholicism. In his mind Catholic philosophic principles were the basis of the rights set forth in the Constitution, and a good sodalist was most certainly a good citizen.¹⁶ The social upheaval of the depression and the economic crisis of the times were construed as the result of a good system temporarily misguided; not as an expression of an inherently unworkable social order. The stabilizing influence on youth of this attitude is an important factor in analyzing the lack of revolutionary ferment during the depression years in those areas most victimized by the economic collapse.

Fr. John Lafarge, S.J., summed up Fr. Lord's life work under three main headings:

To make religion live in all the departments of life, teaching great audiences of young and old, in one big city after another in the United States, how to get started on making their religion live. His aim was a working system, by which religion and life are one.

To open to the American public a vast perspective of religion's joyfulness--the joy and honor of professing it openly, frankly, taking it out of the sacristy straight into the theatre or the ballroom. He believed, he said, in recreational opportunities that are "creative, exhaustive, and fairly exhausting." He had his young people--sometimes three thousand of them at a time--begin a religious program by singing the latest popular disc hit; and he had them end a dance with night prayers. His innumerable songfests, with himself at the piano, were "icebreakers" for more serious fare to follow.

His prolific popular writings, mostly in pamphlet form, supplied for his public what he greatly valued: "plain, honest answers to the questions of today."¹⁷

Fr. Lord died of cancer on January 15, 1955, having continued his prolific writings to the very end. Of the many who wrote and reflected on his life, perhaps the most fitting eulogy was given by the Most Rev. Charles H. Hehnssing, Auxiliary Bishop of St. Louis.

The meaning of the life of this great priest and religious . . . should be for all of us the lesson of a great Christian teacher. . . . We might say he was the precursor of those many thousands of men and women who today believe that they can change the world: in communications, in labor relations, and especially in teaching. Such optimism . . . could come from only one source, from his love of his fellow men.¹⁸

Fr. Lord and Fr. Weisenberg worked closely together as fellow Jesuits and close personal friends in promotion of the Sodality Movement. Although men of different personality and temperament, they were "good friends, mutually supportive of one another and each other's work, dedicated, competent, and great believers in the sodality cause and potential."¹⁹

Fr. Lord traveled to Kansas for almost 25 years to take part in conventions and assist Fr. Weisenberg in his statewide sodality work. He was well-known by Catholic and non-Catholic alike. He was an inspirational man of character and charm not likely to be forgotten by anyone who ever knew him.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER II

¹"Sodalities of Our Lady, National Federation of," The New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967, XIII, 409.

²Ibid., p. 409.

³Gilbert J. Garragan, S.J., The Jesuits of the Middle United States (New York: America Press, 1938), p. 577.

⁴Ibid., p. 577.

⁵"Lord, Daniel Aloysius," The New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967, VIII, 990.

⁶Ibid., p. 990.

⁷Ibid., p. 990.

⁸Wichita Advance Register, Oct. 8, 1948.

⁹The Southern Messenger, Jan. 20, 1955.

¹⁰Daniel A. Lord, S.J., The ABC of Sodality Organization, The Queen's Work Sodality Series, No. III (St. Louis: The Queen's Work, 1927), p. 6.

¹¹Bernice Louise Wolff, A.B., "The Sodality Movement in the United States" (unpublished thesis, St. Louis University, 1936), p. 67.

¹²Ibid., p. 67.

¹³Catholic Encyclopedia, p. 409.

¹⁴Andrew M. Greeley, The Catholic Experience, An Interpretation of the History of American Catholicism (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967), p. 307.

¹⁵Curran Shields, Democracy and Catholicism in America (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958), p. 26. The most thorough refutation of Blanchard's writings was a work by James M. O'Neill, Catholicism and American Freedom. Shields criticizes Blanchard not only for his distortion of doctrine, but also because of the fallacies of his argumentation.

¹⁶Daniel Lord, S.J., Played by Ear (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1956), p. 31. This book is Fr. Lord's autobiography.

¹⁷John Lafarge, S.J., A Report on the American Jesuits (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1956), p. 210.

¹⁸Most Rev. Charles H. Hehnssing, "Testimonials to Fr. Lord," Jesuit Bulletin, XXXIV (April, 1955), 10.

¹⁹Sr. Florence Wolff to author, July 30, 1973. Sr. Florence worked with Fr. Lord in the Offices of The Queen's Work during the early years of reorganization. She wrote a history of the national reorganization of the American Sodality by Fr. Lord.

CHAPTER III

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE KANSAS STATE SODALITY UNION

The precursor of the Kansas State Sodality Union was an organization known as the Central Kansas Sodality Union. This union was established as the result of a meeting held at St. Mary's College, St. Marys, Kansas, on November 7, 1930, at which Fr. Daniel Lord, S.J., National Director of the Marian Sodalities, and Fr. Theodore J. Schulte, S.J., of the college, spoke to the delegates concerning the benefit and meaning of the new organization.

Reasons for the new organization were recorded in an article appearing in the Tiefonian,

Enthusiasm entered into the hearts of the Girls Catholic High delegates and they came back home all aglow with zeal for the cause. The central idea of the sodality, the means of spreading more efficaciously the fruits of personal goodness and charity to others, thereby making them more meritorious, was the featured enticement, although the closer relation among Catholic schools, thus inspiring deeper friendship and a firmer spirit of loyalty and fraternity, was a proved magnetism.¹

Fr. Lord had requested this meeting with the intention of limiting the attendance to a few students and faculty members from each school to "talk over problems and draw up a program to meet them."² It was a part of his national efforts to revitalize the Sodality Movement.

After discussion and consideration it was decided to form an organization of Kansas Sodality that would "make for better mutual understanding and closer feeling."³ Just what form this organization would take was not clear at this point, but it was decided to hold "three or four meetings a year on the style of a convention at which sodality problems could be brought forward for discussion."⁴

A second organizational meeting was held at the college on December 15, 1930, attended by delegates from some fifteen schools.⁵ A tentative constitution was drawn up to be submitted to the delegates at the first state convention to be held at Marymount College, Salina, Kansas.

The plan for the organization of a state-wide sodality union in Kansas originated in the offices of The Queen's Work in St. Louis, and coincided with the impending closing of St. Mary's College and transference of the St. Louis University School of Divinity to St. Mary's in the fall of 1931.

Violet Kingston, the first president of the Kansas State Sodality Union, described the circumstances surrounding the formation of the new organization.

During the school year 1930-31, it seems during the fall months, Father J. Roger Lyons gave a retreat at Marymount. As a member of the Queen's Work staff in the Central Sodality Office at St. Louis, he worked closely with our Sodality Program at Marymount, and he remained several days at Marymount after the close of the retreat. During that time he requested a map of Kansas on which he subsequently marked the dioceses then existing in the state. Then he told us

of the possibility of the formation of a Kansas State Sodality Union, with a central office at St. Mary's. I always had the impression that the idea was Father Lyon's, but I can't be sure of this. Anyway, the idea developed in the Central Sodality Office, and it was Father Lyons who worked most closely with us during the formation of plans. I definitely remember receiving a letter from Father Lyons expressing his elation over the appointment of Father Wiesenberg, as the Spiritual Director, saying he had just the qualifications needed to get the organization on its feet.⁶

Fr. Lord had earlier called Fr. Weisenberg and asked him, since he was the youngest member of the theological faculty, if he would assume the responsibility of state director.⁷ Fr. Lord was delighted with his acceptance and wrote to him later saying, "You don't know how pleased I am to feel that the future of the Kansas Sodality is going to be in your hands."⁸ Fr. Weisenberg assumed these duties in the fall of 1931.

The first convention of the Central Kansas Sodality Union was held at Marymount College in Salina, Kansas, on February 14, 1931. Approximately 400 students attended and heard Fr. Theodore Schulte, S.J., sodality moderator at St. Mary's College and temporary director of the new union, speak on modern sodality ideals. There were 18 Catholic high schools and colleges represented at this first convention.⁹

St. Mary's College was to supply the president and Marymount College the vice-president who would succeed to the presidency when St. Mary's closed. The secretary was

to come from Cathedral High School in Wichita, the treasurer from Sacred Heart Academy, Manhattan, and the critic from St. Mary's College in Leavenworth.¹⁰ It was decided to leave the choice of the person to fill the office to each school.

The constitution drawn up at the December meeting was presented to the delegates. The purpose of the Central Kansas Sodality Union was "to stimulate, encourage, suggest, try improve, develop and expand any and all activities that might fall under the scope of active Sodality Work or Student Spiritual Council Work."¹¹

All Catholic Colleges, Hospital Training Schools and High Schools in the state were eligible for membership. The state offices would be filled by the presidents of the three diocesan councils, who would rotate the offices year to year. The state convention would be held each spring in the diocese of the State President for that year.

To alleviate concern over the potential expense of holding a state convention in a time of increasing economic gloom, the constitution stated explicitly that:

The school at which the convention is to be held shall be responsible for nothing more than a suitable place in which to meet including light and heat. All traveling expenses, lunches, etc., must be provided by the individual delegates or the Sodality which he represents.¹²

No pastor or school need fear a loss of autonomy or control over parish or school policy as a result of the new organization.

The CKSU shall have NO mandatory power, or obliging power, whatever. It shall merely act in the stimulating and helping capacity through hearty cooperation of the member-schools. The Sodality or Spiritual Group in each individual School is to preserve its own autonomy completely and be free to follow or reject all suggestions made through the CKSU.¹³

Brother Lawrence J. Gonner, S.M., sodality director at Cathedral High School in Wichita, wrote to Fr. Schulte concerning the importance of this meeting.

It was with the greatest pleasure that I heard the enthusiastic reports of the delegates. Here's hoping our first fervor will continue. We might as well put down the foundations of this thing as firmly as possible. Other organizations have started out this way but the big majority of them do not find the plains of Kansas to be fertile soil. We might as well make the Sodality something that is "here to stay" even after its leaders and founders have been replaced by others.¹⁴

A second meeting of the Central Kansas Sodality Union was held at Mt. Carmel Academy in Wichita on May 2, 1931, with 450 delegates attending.¹⁵ Bishop A. J. Schwertner spoke to the assembled delegates reminding them that the Church expected much from them; and urging them to remember that the sodality was "not merely an organization for school days but a means of sanctification that should continue beyond their period of school."¹⁶

Following a general discussion centered around problems of organization and the student spiritual council, the constitution of the CKSU was accepted by the delegates. Fr. Weisenberg was also introduced to the group.¹⁷

While the CKSU was not strictly a state-wide organization at this point owing to the fact that several of the Eastern Kansas sodalities were allied to the Kansas City Diocese in their sodality work, it did cover an area representing approximately two-thirds of the state including 30 colleges, high schools, and nursing schools.¹⁸

That summer the first Summer School of Catholic Action organized by Fr. Lord met in St. Louis. Delegates from Marymount College who attended this first Summer School met with Fr. Lyons and Fr. Weisenberg to discuss the reorganization of the Central Kansas Sodality Union, and receive training for the task ahead. Mrs. J. C. Hughes recalled the experience.

. . . We did much discussing about the forthcoming plans for the K.S.S.U. I should admit that I was quite frightened at the task ahead and the thought at presiding at conventions, etc. However, the training for leadership, the spiritual direction and the inspiration, the associations--the Summer School as a whole, did wonders to instill confidence, and at its end, we were eager to charge ahead in the inauguration of the K.S.S.U.¹⁹

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER III

¹The Tiefonian, March, 1935.

²Fr. Daniel Lord to Fr. Ryan, September 9, 1930, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³Wichita Catholic Advance, April 18, 1931.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Mrs. J. C. Hughes to author, September 1, 1973.

⁷Interview with Fr. Weisenberg, June 10, 1973.

⁸Fr. Lord to Fr. Weisenberg, May 18, 1931, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁹Advance, February 14, 1931.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹CKSU Convention, Constitution (Salina, Kansas, 1931), Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Lawrence J. Gonner, S.M., to Fr. Theodore Schulte, S.J., February 14, 1931, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁵Advance, May 9, 1931.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Advance, March 9, 1940.

¹⁸Advance, May 25, 1931.

¹⁹Mrs. J. C. Hughes to author, September 1, 1973.
Mrs. Hughes (Violet Kingston), became the active president
of the CKSU with the closing of St. Mary's College in June
of 1931. Mr. Frank Stabb of St. Mary's College had been
president.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST YEAR

Sodality activities for 1931-32 began on the afternoon of September 17, 1931, with Fr. Weisenberg presiding over a meeting of committee and faculty members representing St. Benedict's College and Mount St. Scholastica College in the St. Benedict's Parish Hall in Atchison, Kansas. At this meeting the following suggestions were formulated for the better union of the Kansas Sodalities:

That the Central Kansas Sodality Union, organized two years ago, change its title to the Kansas State Sodality Union and embrace the whole state of Kansas. That a sodality council be formed for each of the three dioceses of the state about the key cities, Salina, Wichita, and Atchison, the officers of each sectional council meeting every two months to plan their program, all sections being represented at occasional state conventions.¹

Fr. Weisenberg promised he would have Fr. Lord and possibly Fr. Lyons there for the fall convention. Various committees were formed and the date was set for October 10, 1931. Invitations were sent to all Catholic high schools and colleges in the state.

The Kansas State Sodality Union formally came into existence at this first state convention held in the gymnasium of St. Benedict's College on October 10, 1931. Over

one thousand delegates were welcomed by Rt. Rev. Martin Veth, O.S.B., president of St. Benedict's, who instructed them to do their bit of work "toward alleviating the present moral and material depression through Catholic Action."²

Fr. Lord attended the convention and delivered a "stirring address" on sodality organization as a means of religious fervor, and the dangers of the "Red" influence threatening the destruction of law and religion," and how it could be combated through knowing and explaining the Catholic religion.³

The afternoon program opened with an explanation of what the three regional councils planned to do, and a short discussion about the division of the organization into high school and college groups. Resolutions were passed changing the name from the Central Kansas Sodality Union to the Kansas State Sodality Union, and calling for two state conventions, one in October and another in May, and monthly meetings for each separate unit. Rt. Rev. Francis Johannes, Bishop of the Leavenworth Diocese, attended the convention. The day ended with speeches devoted to sodality life and ideals, the benediction, and an informal dance at St. Benedict's parish hall.⁴

The first diocesan meeting under the new organization was held in the Concordia Diocese at Marymount College on October 24, 1931. Representatives from 13 units heard

Fr. Weisenberg talk on the ideals and purpose of the Sodality and the reorganization of the KSSU. The sodalists were instructed that "a decidedly prominent place should be given to spirituality, otherwise our lives prove to be nothing but rifraf (sic) . . . personal piety must overflow into Catholic Action. Youth should be organized to help the clergy, and the sodality is the medium."

Three major council activities were discussed and voted upon, namely (1) a Council News Sheet to be called the "Concordia Council News Sheet." The paper will be published bi-monthly and the editorship will be given in turn to each school in the council, the five officers publishing the first five copies. (2) A one hundred per cent subscription to The Queen's Work, the official Sodality paper. (3) Participation in a national Triduum preceding the feast of the Immaculate Conception.⁵

The Leavenworth diocese held its first meeting on November 21, 1931, at St. Mary College in Leavenworth, with attendance limited to two delegates and one faculty member from each of the fifteen Catholic institutions in the diocese.

Under the guidance of Fr. Lyons and Fr. Weisenberg, a constitution for the Leavenworth Council was formulated and adopted. Resolutions were also adopted that the high school and college units be separated, that the council have a "Newsheet" publication, and that each unit in the council was responsible for editing one publication.⁶

The Wichita Council of the Kansas State Sodality Union held its first formal organizational meeting at Cathedral High School in Wichita, Kansas, on November 28, 1931.

Brother Lawrence J. Conner, S.M., moderator of the Cathedral Boy's Sodality introduced Fr. Weisenberg to the 30 representatives from nine different units. In a short address, Fr. Weisenberg indicated the necessity and advisability of diocesan organization and "pointed out the advantages our Catholic students would derive from it."⁷

A tentative constitution was presented to the delegates and a special committee was appointed to prepare it to suit the conditions and needs of the Wichita Diocese. It was decided that the council would meet every two months.⁸

The Concordia Council met again on December 12, 1931, in the basement of Seven Dolours Church in Manhattan, Kansas. Resolutions were passed encouraging each unit to engage in some form of charity before Christmas, calling for a novena to be conducted for the conversion of the Near East, and encouraging each sodalist to mail or hand Catholic literature to a non-Catholic friend. Plans were made for a literature drive in January, 1931, "by which sodalists hope to instruct ignorant people regarding Catholic teachings."⁹

The assembly voted to have the next convention in Hays "in order that the western high schools which are not as yet actively functioning may have an opportunity to send delegates."¹⁰

Following a short address by Bishop Tief, D.D., of Concordia, and benediction, the sodalists attended a

basketball game in the City Gym between St. John's of Beloit and Sacred Heart Academy of Manhattan.¹¹

In mid-December, the Catholic Advance, the official organ of the dioceses of Kansas, ran a new column called "Sodality News," in which it reported sodality activities in the Wichita Diocese. Fr. Weisenberg wrote the editor, Fr. William Schaefers, asking if he would be interested in receiving notes from sodalities of the Concordia and Leavenworth Dioceses. Fr. Weisenberg said he would make it a point to mention "the splendid cooperation afforded the Sodality Movement by the Catholic Advance in all my talks to Sodality units."¹²

Fr. Schaefers replied that he would gladly welcome Concordia and Leavenworth news and thanked Fr. Weisenberg for the publicity.¹³ Henceforth, the Catholic Advance became one of the principal means of popularizing and reporting on sodality activities to Catholics throughout the state. The publicity the sodality received in the pages of the Advance articulated the state-wide dimensions of the movement; and in so doing, cultivated a sense of organizational importance among its members.

The second meeting of the Wichita Council took place on January 30, 1932, in the western part of the state at St. Mary's of the Plains Academy in Dodge City. Fr. Weisenberg explained the ABC's of sodality organization and met with the prefects and moderators during noon to

discuss sodality organization. A Student Spiritual Council meeting was demonstrated by the boys from Cathedral High. Bishop Tief spoke briefly to the sodalists, telling them that "nothing would bring greater joy to my heart than to have all the boys and girls to be active sodalists."¹⁴

The second Leavenworth Diocesan Convention was held at Ward High School in Kansas City on January 23, 1932. The meeting was divided into a general business session and separate high school and college meetings in the morning followed by an open meeting in the afternoon that included the demonstration of a Student Spiritual Council meeting, discussions on parish work, and resolutions for 1932.¹⁵

Fr. Lyons attended this convention and called attention to the "outstanding position of Kansas in the success of the National Sodality Triduum."¹⁶

Bishop Johannes spoke to the sodalists regarding vocations, pointing out that "it is one of the blessings of the present depression that many more are thinking of the religious state than ever before, and the seminaries are crowded to the door with aspirants to the priesthood." Sodalists were told that the Church taught that the single state is better than the married; but, even though the married state holds "last Place" among the states of life, "it is the state willed by God for the great majority of the people--those in the state of matrimony can save souls just like those in the convent."¹⁷

The Bishop also spoke of Catholic Action, defining it as "acting as a Catholic should act."

The active Catholic receives the Sacraments frequently and devoutly, supports and defends the Church, interests himself in everything of interest to the Church, loves the institutions of the Church, has a good intention in all things and has something supernatural in life. . . . Nothing would bring greater joy to my heart than to have all our youth active sodalists.¹⁸

In his closing remarks, Fr. Weisenberg tried to show the need for organization by pointing to the effectiveness of the organized "radical minority" in Spain.

The happenings there can occur in America but they will not if we are organized and live up to the aims of the Sodality, Personal Holiness, and Catholic Action.¹⁹

The third bi-monthly meet of the Concordia Diocese was held in Hays on February 6, 1932. Sr. Remigia of Girls Catholic High was responsible for organizing the meeting with some helpful advice from Fr. Weisenberg.

1. Get all the publicity you can . . . (This will advertise the School, Sodality, Diocese, and Catholicity--don't lose the opportunity)
2. Try to keep away as far as possible from the appearance of an 8th grade-y sort of program. Have the girls primed for informal discussion, NOT memorized papers, etc.
3. If you feel you must invite Bo McMillan, O.K. I am NOT in favor of it. Nor would I invite anyone else. It is a Sodality affair for sodalists, by sodalists, to sodalists.²⁰

"Bo" McMillan was football coach and professor of physical education at Kansas State Agricultural College in Manhattan. He had been asked to attend at the request of Bishop Tief. Sr. Remigia wrote back:

I, too, prefer not to have him on the program, but Father George said the Bishop communicated with him just recently and again expressed his wish that Mr. McMillan be invited.²¹

"Bo" McMillan spoke to the assembly and emphasized the advantages of "proper Christian training." Sodality organization was discussed, and a SSC meeting was demonstrated.²² Bishop Tief was present at the afternoon meeting and spoke of the importance of Catholic youth leading exemplary Christian lives.

True devotion to Mary is a pledge of what your sodality means to you. Your Sodality will come to naught, unless you promote, first and foremost, personal holiness.²³

The third meeting of the Wichita Council was held at Mt. Carmel Academy in Wichita on February 10, 1932. The theme of the discussion was "Dare we be different enough to live always in the state of grace and thus fight militant paganism."²⁴

Resolutions were passed pertaining to living a correct Catholic life, being true to the faith, and a request that each sodalist be "a member of at least one Parish organization, and show an active interest in all the undertakings of his or her parish."²⁵ Bishop Schwertner spoke to the sodalists in the afternoon on the need for "fervent prayer."²⁶

The third meeting of the Leavenworth Diocese was held on March 19, at Immaculata High School in Leavenworth. Papers on sodality history and practice were presented, and sodalists were asked to give whole-hearted support to

Msgr. O'Farrell in his work of promoting the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.²⁷

The college session meeting separately discussed how to get "salacious" magazines off campus and ways and means of coping with the anti-Catholic "Christian Crusade," an organization "that is the old Klu Klux Klan under a new name--their sole purpose is to villify Catholics."²⁸

The Wichita Diocese met again on April 2, at the St. Francis School auditorium in St. Paul, Kansas. Fr. Weisenberg spoke on the use of prayer books and the coming triduum in honor of the Annunciation, and replied to the talk of "flaming youth" by saying that "if this flame of youth is taken care of, nurtured and directed into proper channels, it will burst into the white flame of Catholic Action."²⁹ He also asked those who would be attending the National Sodality Convention in Chicago to talk up the apologetics contest, showing that this year it has been an activity sponsored by the KSSU. Plans were in the making to extend the contest to neighboring states next year, making it a regional affair, and then possibly a national affair.³⁰ Each school was asked to raise money to send one delegate to the convention.

The last Concordia Council meeting was held at St. Xavier's High School in Junction City on April 9, 1932. Reports were given on February and March activities, Sodality history, rules, and indulgences. Fr. Weisenberg spoke to

the delegates following the election of officers for the coming year.³¹

The second state convention of the new KSSU was held at Marymount College, Salina, on May 7. Over 700 delegates attended the convention to discuss the topic of "Catholic Action." A symposium was presented with topics on "Catholic Action in Social Life, Catholic Action in the Home, Catholic Action During Summer, and, The Sodalist and Catholic Action."³²

Fr. Lyons, S.J., addressed the delegates as did Bishop Tief, who called for "militant and courageous Catholics."³³

Letters had been sent to Bishop Schwertner and Bishop Johannes requesting their presence at the convention and asking them to send a message to the membership of the KSSU. Neither of them attended, but both sent words of support.³⁴

At this convention Fr. Weisenberg distributed to the delegates the first issue of a newsletter called The KSSU Bulletin. Its purpose was to "bring home to each delegate the amount of work that has been done for this year."³⁵

The following September the Central Office at St. Mary's announced that this bulletin would be issued every month beginning in October 1932. Special attention was brought to the fact that the Bulletin would in no way interfere with any existing council paper. Its sole

intention was to bring the members of the Union into closer contact with each other.³⁶

The format remained essentially the same for the 17 years the Bulletin was printed. It was a single page, four-sided tabloid of sodality news and activity. The first page usually contained a picture of one of the diocese or state officers or a winner of one of the KSSU contents, announcements of upcoming events, or an assessment of a previous activity. On the inside was an editorial written by one of the Central Office staff, pertaining to some spiritual aspect of sodality life. Fr. Weisenberg wrote a short column entitled "State Adviser says --." The rest of the material was a synopsis of sodality activities across the state, with special attention being brought to outstanding projects.

The Central Office was insistent that each sodality unit in the state have a correspondent who communicated sodality activity to the Bulletin. Failure to do so meant no publicity for that unit.

The Bulletin was a valuable source of information on state sodality activities. It became an important vehicle of communication, making the individual units aware of their particular role in a state-wide organization. It also served as a uniform promoter of sodality spirituality.

During the first year of publication, part of the cost of printing was paid by advertisements from Catholic

colleges in the state. In 1933 these ads were stopped, and the Bulletin was henceforth entrusted to the generosity of the various units.

In February of this first year the Central Office announced a state-wide apologetic contest open to all Catholic high school students of the state. Each of the three dioceses would hold a regional preliminary in April, with the final contest to be held at St. Marys, Kansas. In previous years this contest had been sponsored by the college, but with the closing of that institution, the KSSU now assumed responsibility.³⁷

The scope of the contest was any point of Apologetics. The goal of each speech was "to convince a Protestant layman."³⁸ After each diocese had held its preliminary elimination, two finalists were sent to the state contest, held for almost 20 years in the Memorial Building in Topeka.

Speeches were not to exceed 10 minutes; and, in addition to the 10 minute speech, each of the state finalists were required to give a four minute extemporaneous reply to one of three questions submitted to them relative to their speech that would "naturally come to the mind of a thinking non-Catholic."³⁹ These questions were prepared by the Central Office.

Judges for the state contest usually included a priest, a Catholic layman, and a Catholic laywoman, chosen from any town in which there was no participating school.

Some years the judges were chosen from out of state.

Awards for the winners were provided by the Bishops.

This annual Apologetics Contest became a prestigious event for the high school sodalities in the state, prompting rivalries between the schools and bringing state-wide publicity to the movement.

The winner of this first KSSU sponsored contest held at St. Mary's, Kansas, on April 22, 1932 was Miss Margaret Geis of Marymount Academy who spoke on "Papal Infallibility." About 700 people heard the six finalists deliver their speeches.⁴⁰

The speeches presented at St. Mary's that year were later printed in Our Sunday Visitor, a National Catholic newspaper published in Huntington, Indiana. The paper had given the KSSU Apologetic Contest publicity in a detailed account of the contest as conducted by the Union, together with a reprint of the entire speech given by Miss Geis. The good effects of such contests were brought out in the appeal made to other dioceses to inaugurate similar affairs.⁴¹

This contest was brought to the attention of the paper by Miss Stella G. O'Brien of Salina, Kansas. She had worked on the staff of the paper until failing health compelled her to resign and come west for relief of asthma.⁴²

Miss O'Brien wrote Fr. Weisenberg early in April regarding the possibility of extending the Apologetic Contest

to other states. He replied that while he felt such a project would be worthwhile, Mr. James Mahoney, S.J., the man chiefly responsible for the idea of the contest and for the details of its organization, did not think that for the present the contest should be national.

. . . Mr. Mahoney thinks that for the present at least, the organization of these contests should be left to the various sodality unions in different parts of the country and that "The Queen's Work" should take the lead in promoting these contests. Fr. McAuliff the editor of the Sunday Visitor wrote to him last year about the contest and understands Mr. Mahoney's attitude.

We should of course be glad of any publicity given to the Kansas contest in the columns of "Our Sunday Visitor." Possibly also the speeches of the finalists could be published therein; these speeches would not improbably require a little editorial "touching up" before publication.⁴³

Nevertheless, the idea of making the contest a regional affair was still very much on the mind of the Central Office staff at St. Mary's. On the 20th of April, Mr. McGinnis, Executive Secretary in the Central Office, again wrote to Miss O'Brien that "our plan to make the Apologetic Contest nationwide in scope will depend a great deal on the resolutions passed at the National Sodality Convention now in session in Chicago."⁴⁴

At state sodality meetings in March, Kansas students planning to attend the National Convention were asked to talk up the Apologetics Contest as an activity fostered by the KSSU and suggest it be extended to neighboring states, "making it a regional affair, and possibly it can then become a national affair."⁴⁵

Father Weisenberg wrote Fr. McAuliffe and thanked him for the publicity given the contest. He mentioned that "it is our intention to make what is at present only a State Contest into a National Contest in the near future," and asked that the KSSU be mentioned when presenting the speeches of the finalists so that "we would be thereby brought into contact with parties who are in a position to further the work."⁴⁶

Fr. McAuliffe replied that he could not "advertize" or "publish your office," but stated he would do all in his power to further sodality organizations; including making an interstate contest known nationally if it were to come about.⁴⁷

The National Sodality Convention did not give the matter the consideration the Central Office thought it deserved and the plan was subsequently dropped. The Sunday Visitor continued to print the speeches of the winners, but the contest remained in the state where it became one of the outstanding features of the high school sodality program.

The bulk of the work during this first year of reorganization was devoted to developing organizational procedures in the various sodalities throughout the state and establishing their affiliation with the Central Office at St. Mary's. With the permission of the three bishops of Kansas, Fr. Weisenberg worked tirelessly to put the new

organization on sound footing, both by visiting with the sodalists and moderators in the schools and colleges and assisting them in running sodality affairs, and by organizing his own staff at the college to aid him in planning and executing a yearly program. There was virtually no opposition to this early organizational work, with most pastors and the bishops eager to solidify and coordinate the spiritual and apostolic activities of the Catholic youth throughout the state.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

¹The Rambler, October 1, 1931.

²The Rambler, October 15, 1931.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵The Catholic Advance, October 15, 1931.

⁶Minutes of the Meeting, Leavenworth Diocesan Sodality Convention, Wichita, November 21, 1931, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁷Advance, December 15, 1931.

⁸Ibid.

⁹The Xaverian, December 31, 1931.

¹⁰Minutes of the Meeting, Concordia Diocesan Sodality Convention, Manhattan, December 12, 1931, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Fr. Weisenberg to Fr. Schaefers, December 13, 1931, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹³Fr. Schaefers to Fr. Weisenberg, December 20, 1931, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁴Windhorst Sunbeam, January, 1932.

¹⁵Minutes of the Meeting, Leavenworth Diocesan Convention, Kansas City, Kansas, January 23, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Fr. Weisenberg to Sr. Remigia, January 27, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²¹Sr. Remigia to Fr. Weisenberg, January 30, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²²Xaverian, February, 1932.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Minutes of the Meeting, Wichita Diocesan Convention, Wichita, February 10, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Leavenworth Diocese Missionary, April 1, 1932.

²⁸Minutes of the Meeting, Leavenworth Diocese Convention, Leavenworth, March 19, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²⁹Advance, May 28, 1932.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Minutes of the Meeting, Concordia Diocese Convention, Junction City, April 9, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³²Xaverian, May, 1932.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Convention Program, 1932, KSSU State Convention, Salina, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File. Bishop Johannes wrote, "The statement recently made by a well known Catholic layman that the Kansas State Sodality Union is the most outstanding movement to organize Catholic youth in the Middle West is no exaggeration."

³⁵Fr. Weisenberg to the Sodality Directors, September, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³⁶Fr. Weisenberg to Bishop Johannes, September 26, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³⁷Catholic Daily Tribune, February 2, 1932.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰KSSU Bulletin, May 7, 1932.

⁴¹Our Sunday Visitor, September, 1932.

⁴²Miss Stella O'Brien to Fr. Weisenberg, April 10, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴³Fr. Weisenberg to Stella O'Brien, April 12, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴⁴Mr. McGinnis to Stella O'Brien, April 20, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴⁵Minutes of the Meeting, Leavenworth Diocese Convention, Leavenworth, March 19, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴⁶Fr. Weisenberg to Fr. F. J. McAuliffe, September 28, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴⁷Fr. McAuliffe to Fr. Weisenberg, November 27, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

CHAPTER V

1932-1933: DARE WE BE DIFFERENT?

The fifty-one member organizations in the KSSU began the second year of activities with renewed vigor, having been given national attention by Fr. Lord during the National Sodality Convention in Chicago and the first Summer School of Catholic Action in St. Louis. The KSSU was spoken of as THE model of organization and enthusiasm due to the "whole-hearted cooperation of the various units of the union and their directors."¹

The deluge of letters and correspondence from the state units and the necessity to communicate uniform Sodality policy led Fr. Weisenberg to recruit further assistance from among the scholastics at St. Mary's. In the fall of 1932, there were 13 men working in the Central Office.² Each man was assigned a particular sodality unit and expected to maintain correspondence with the prefect or moderator of that unit and aid in any special problem that arose. The Central Office kept extensive files of correspondence with each unit. These records aided in organizing sodality activities, determining the effectiveness of a particular unit, and providing resources for

new projects and activities.

A problem arose in 1932 in selecting the state president for that year. Fr. Weisenberg wanted Charles J. McNeill of St. Benedict's College to fill the post. Mr. McNeill had been active in student affairs and had attended the National Sodality Convention the previous spring. Fr. Leonard Schwinn, O.S.B., informed Fr. Weisenberg that Mr. McNeill had previously been elected president of the student council and hence had eliminated himself from the Sodality presidency because "there is a rule here about extra-curricular activities that limits a man's work outside of class."³ Richard Donahue, president of the Sodality at St. Benedict's, was subsequently chosen for the position.

This incident was reflective of difficulties that would arise again between the college and the Central Office at St. Mary's, eventually culminating in the withdrawal of St. Benedict's from the KSSU. The "healthy rivalry" between the Benedictines in Atchison and the Jesuits at St. Mary's apparently had historical origins, going back to the 1850's when the Benedictines "invaded" what had been solidly Jesuit mission territory until that time.⁴

The main theme for 1932-33 was "Dare We Be Different?" a slogan in accordance with the theme discussed at the National Sodality Convention. The phrase challenged the individual sodalist regarding his fortitude and will power to live up to sodality ideals, and reminded him of

his responsibility to be more than a run-of-the-mill Catholic.

The first convention of the new year was held by the Leavenworth Council at Mt. St. Scholastica in Atchison on October 1. Some 800 sodalists attended the convention and heard Abbot Martin Veth, O.S.B., urge them to form a close union with the parish as the fundamental unit of all Catholic organization and keep their activities around a few projects, because "simplicity of an organization is the sign of strength."⁵

Resolutions were passed regarding personal holiness and Catholic Action, with an encouragement to support Catholic literature, particularly the National Sodality publication, The Queen's Work.⁶ This plea was made at all the fall conventions. There were some complaints by the college students that they did not have an opportunity to socialize enough because "most Catholic colleges don't allow social activities on campus." A motion to refuse admittance into the sodality to those who read questionable literature was defeated. Bishop Johannes, D.D., spoke briefly, stressing the need for personal holiness of the sodalists.⁷

The Wichita Council Diocesan Convention was held on October 8, at Cathedral High School in Wichita. This was to be the last Wichita Diocesan Convention before spring because of the bad weather conditions during the

winter months and the long distances to be traveled. Resolutions were passed on the theme of "Dare We Be Different?" and the spreading of Catholic literature. A resolution calling for total abstinence from liquor while in mixed company unless under parental supervision was defeated. Bishop Schwertner was present along with 450 sodalists.⁸

The first Diocesan Convention of the Concordia Council was held on October 15 at Concordia. Over 400 sodalists heard C. J. McNeill who had accompanied Fr. Weisenberg, give a report on the National Sodality Convention.⁹

As a result of a business meeting held during the convention, a resolution was adopted "that each school not in an association will send a representative to a meeting . . . for the purpose of organizing a sodality basketball league."¹⁰ The league was organized because some of the Catholic schools in the western part of the state could not get public school teams to schedule them because they did not belong to that "grand and pure-white State Athletic Association."¹¹

One issue that came up at each of the conventions was the question of whether or not sodality membership should be selective. Longer periods of probation were viewed by some as a possible remedy to the problem of active members being handicapped by "hangers-on."¹²

The Central Office stated its position in no uncertain terms, describing lax or nominal sodalists as a parasitical growth that should be cut away from the organization."

Having removed the useless members, the Sodality can build up a picked and perfect body of men and women, trained to all piety and virtue, who will be fitted to change the entire face of civil society to the likeness of Christ.¹³

No definite policy was established, and this issue was to remain a point of controversy for many years.

In November of 1932, following the conventions in the diocese, Mr. J. S. McGinnis of the Central Office sent a letter to the editor of the Catholic Advance in Wichita informing him of a proposed campaign to send sodalists out to get a "Catholic paper in every Catholic home" during Catholic Press Month the coming February.¹⁴ Partially owing to the hard times of the depression, subscription to The Advance had been rapidly decreasing. In January of 1931, in an official letter to be read in all the churches of the Wichita Diocese, Bishop Schwertner had written:

The Catholic Press is a power, not only as a expositor of Catholic truth and practice, but also as an indefatigable opponent of the persistent and organized misrepresentation of the Church and all that she teaches and stands for. . . .

In looking over the subscription list from the various parishes, I find that our diocesan paper is not receiving loyal and generous support from some parishes.

The Advance cannot prosper with such poor support from our Catholic laity. I therefore

appeal, with all earnestness, especially to the pastors throughout the diocese and to the Altar Societies and all other authorized solicitors, to make a determined and thorough effort to increase the number of Advance subscribers in their respective parishes.¹⁵

It was this situation that prompted the circulation manager of the paper to send a reply suggesting that the slogan be changed to "The Diocesan Paper in Every Home." He also explained that he would gladly attend the next convention to explain the project to the sodalists.¹⁶

Announcements of the proposed campaign were also sent to the Catholic Register in Kansas City, Missouri, the Catholic Daily Tribune in Dubuque, Iowa, and the Leavenworth Diocesan Missionary.

Justin Casey, the editor of the Catholic Register, in a humorous reply, said that while he would be willing to cooperate with the project, he did have some serious misgivings:

The great majority of Catholic magazines are sold entirely on either the duty or even superstition of our people. I have seen an agent for a religious magazine hang a cross on the wall of a house and swear the curse of God would be on that home if the Cross were ever removed. Of course, they had to pay for the subscription to keep the cross from being removed, and that occurred not many miles from your college.¹⁷

He went on to suggest that each of the sodalists should become a subscriber for at least one year, and then go out and try and sell the paper. He also had some disparaging words about the Catholic Advance, contending

that when Bishop Tief made it the official organ in the Concordia Diocese "many of the clergy told me that the people would not have it even though they offered it to them at half price." A "foreign paper" might provoke complexities in a subscription drive because

. . . now they are going to demand everything, and as you would not want anything that would give offense you have to watch your step carefully as the bulk of the campaign would naturally flow to us, and I certainly do not want to see you get into a jam.¹⁸

Letters were also sent to Bishop Tief and Bishop Johannes to solicit their permission for the project. They were told that the drive was intended to encourage sodalists to read and subscribe to Catholic periodicals and to induce others to do likewise.

Since there are several papers that enjoy a more or less extensive circulation in the Concordia Diocese we humbly beg your Excellency's opinion regarding the advisability of inviting all these papers, namely the Catholic Advance, the Daily Catholic Tribune, and the Catholic Register to share the campaign.

This office will restrict its activities to supplying mailing lists of the Sodality units to the participating papers and to encouraging the Sodalists to take an active interest in the campaign.¹⁹

Permission was granted, but parochial interests predominated and the project met with less than whole-hearted enthusiasm. The Wichita Diocese was not interested in having papers from other dioceses solicited during a time when subscriptions to its own paper were low. Mr. Casey was informed by the Central Office that "the only

doors open to your worthy paper are in the Leavenworth diocese. . . ."

I expect the pastors of the Wichita Diocese to send the Sodalists into the highways and byways for subscriptions to the Advance because I understand that the pastors must see to it that every family becomes a subscriber even if the subscription must be paid for by the parish. If that is so our services will not be needed very much. The lack of cooperation manifested by Catholics is most discouraging.²⁰

On December 20, 1932, the Central Office was informed that the Wichita Diocese could not have a contest at this time "because the bishop decided on a new plan of circulation to go into effect on February 1."²¹ The editor of the Catholic Daily Tribune was then informed to do whatever he saw fit since there were too many problems for the Central Office.

Let us hope that next year all the Catholic papers in this section of the country will be able to get together to put over a campaign under the slogan, "A Catholic Paper in every Catholic home."²²

In spite of the difficulties encountered with the diocesan papers, plans for Catholic Press Month continued. Several Catholic periodical publications were informed of the impending drive on behalf of "Catholic Press." Letters were sent to several Jesuit publications including America and Jesuit Missions, with the request that "we shall have to exercise the greatest care in order not to seem to favor the cause of our own publications."²³ Fr. Francis P. LeBuffe, S.J., business manager of America, agreed to give

a commission of \$1.00 for each new, full paid, subscription to his magazine, and volunteered as a speaker for the upcoming February convention in Kansas City.²⁴

Because the very life of an organization like the KSSU depended on inter-diocesan cooperation, the initial plan for press month was reduced to a somewhat ambiguous appeal for Catholic "daily and weekly periodicals." The January Bulletin announced that prizes and commissions would be offered to sodalists and schools for new subscriptions. The secretaries of the sodalities were requested to communicate with the papers for further details. The drive was to open at each school with an effort to enroll the family of every student as a subscriber for some Catholic periodical. Once the sodalists themselves had set the example, they were encouraged to solicit others.

The second convention of the Leavenworth Council Sodality was held at the Jayhawk Hotel in Topeka on December 3, 1932. The 600 sodalists in attendance "placed themselves on record as unafraid to be different--to stand by their convictions on attitudes toward the other sex, toward questionable literature, movies, mental prayers, and a knowledge of their faith."²⁵

In spite of a bad snow storm, 300 sodalists met at Mt. Carmel Academy in Wichita on December 10, for the Wichita Diocesan Convention. They proclaimed their desire "to live always in the state of grace and to be uncompromising

in our defense of Christ's enemy--militant paganism."²⁶

During the afternoon session, the nurses and the high school units separated into two sections. The nurses, "realizing the profits to be derived from these sessions, determined to hold a special meeting at each convention."²⁷

The Concordia Council met at St. Xavier High School in Junction City on December 17. As at the other conventions, resolutions were passed condemning the persecution of the Church in Mexico.²⁸

A significant issue at all of the mid-winter conventions was instructing the sodalists regarding responsibilities toward their individual parishes. This concern expressed a desire to alleviate any suspicions that the sodality organization would interfere with or in any way deter the sodalist from his parish responsibilities. A special point was made to invite all the pastors in Wichita to the morning session of the convention so they could be sure to hear the discussion of "The Sodalist and the Parish."²⁹ In February of 1932, Fr. Weisenberg had sent letters to all the pastors asking if there were specific ways the high school sodalists could help the parish. The purpose of this information was to enable the Central Office to establish a "Parish Committee" in each unit, because "in many ways the high school sodality is the training ground for the parish sodality."³⁰ In the November Bulletin the sodalists were told that "it is the work of the Sodality

Parish Committee to foster a spirit of loyalty to parish and pastor." The school sodality was "to demand for membership that each student belong to at least one parish organization."³¹

In December an essay contest open to all high school students of the KSSU was announced. Any subject of an apologetic nature could be selected by the participant, provided it was treated with a view toward convincing a non-Catholic, since "the papers will be judged according to merit on this point."³²

The papers were not to exceed 1,000 words and were to be submitted to the Central Office by February 7, 1933. Only two final essays were to be submitted by each school, but every unit was expected to participate.

The prime purpose of the Apologetic Contest is to train students to defend the truths of their religion as well as to propagate these among non-Catholics. This purpose will not be realized unless EVERY SCHOOL cooperates to the best of its resources.

This year we are making a plea that each school should hold a local contest for its students so as to allow the largest number of students to participate in at least one event.³³

That year 462 sodalists representing 16 high schools of the KSSU entered the contest.³⁴

Both the press drive and the apologetics contest were activities fostered to propagandize Catholicism to the public. Sodalists were encouraged to utilize other, less direct, techniques. Literature committees in the sodality units were encouraged to leave clippings about

Catholicism in library books as "forgotten" bookmarkers. Catholic literature was to be left in public places with "studied carelessness," and literature committee members were to ask for Catholic books at the library, and thus create a demand for the library to purchase them.

If people dislike the Catholic faith, it is because they have wrong ideas of it. They can't dislike the genuine article, no more than they could dislike health of body or a happy corner up in heaven. Make friends for the Church by showing what are the fine traits, fine principles, fine achievements of the Church you admire and love.³⁵

The first February convention was held in the Leavenworth Council at Ward High School in Kansas City on February 4. Over 600 delegates met to discuss the theme of the month, "Sodalists, Readers and Writers," and hear Fr. LeBuffe of America tell them that "bad books are absolutely soul-tainting and morally wrong." American Mercury was cited as an example.³⁶

A list of the ten best Catholic books was compiled at the meeting including works by Chesterton, Benson, Kilmer, Carter, Wallace, Belloc, and Kaye-Smith. Resolutions were adopted that all sodalists would endeavor to read these books and promote their spread and that of Catholic pamphlets. Sodalists were also encouraged to develop writing skills and cooperate with the Student Writers Guild.³⁷

Bishop Johannes directed his remarks toward the issue of vocations, telling the sodalists that the priesthood

as the most important state in life "because the priest is God's instrument." The married state, however, was willed by God for the majority of people because "it is thus that the human race is enabled to increase and multiply."³⁸

The Wichita meeting held on February 11, at St. John's Academy in Wichita also discussed the need for Catholic writers and the circulation of Catholic literature. Fr. William Schaefers, editor of the Advance, made an appeal through the sodalists to the Catholics of the state for their support of the diocesan publication, a plea reiterated by Bishop Schwertner in a "vigorous address" to the assembly.³⁹

The Concordia meeting at Marymount College in Salina held on February 18, attracted some 300 delegates. They, too, adopted a list of "10 best Catholic books" and approved resolutions calling for a Catholic paper in every home.⁴⁰

During March, a letter was sent to all the sodality prefects asking the sodalities to forget party differences and contribute toward a spiritual bouquet "which will be sent to President Roosevelt with the assurance of the prayerful cooperation of the sodalists of Kansas in the big problems he is now facing to bring the country to a balance of prosperity and peace."⁴¹

The State Apologetic Contest was held on April 28, at the Memorial Building in Topeka, followed a week later

by the state convention at St. Mary College in Leavenworth. Highlighting the convention was the appearance of Fr. Lord. Letters sent from the Central Office to all moderators instructed them to see to it that all sodalists attending the convention were adequately prepared for the discussions because "Fr. Lord will be anxious to hear what your school and what the KSSU is able to do in such Sodality discussions."⁴² Fr. Lord's reaction to the convention was recorded in his travel sheet:

St. Mary's--Fine interest here in the Sodality, with the Central Office as its hub. . . . Talked to the men in the morning and found fine response already created. Long talk with Father Weisenberg who has real plans for the future of the Kansas Group.⁴³

Over 1,200 delegates attended this convention to close out the year 1932-33. The Directors of 41 sodalities assembled in a studio after dinner with Fr. Weisenberg for the first Director's Meeting of the KSSU.⁴⁴ This practice became a regular feature at future conventions.

The delegates adopted a uniform constitution for the KSSU, replacing those of the individual dioceses. A new provision called for rotation of the three state offices of president, recording secretary, and corresponding secretary for the state. The three diocesan presidents automatically assumed these positions. It was decided that next year's state president would be the president of the Wichita Diocese.⁴⁵

With summer approaching, sodalists were reminded to be especially vigilant lest they fall prey to the temptations of summer, since they could "no longer appeal to a throng for support."

Each summer temptation tosses back at you your challenge. In challenging that challenge you stand alone. No convention enthusiasm now. No appeal to a throng for support. No Sodality song ringing in your ears. . . . The Sodality ideal lives or falls with you. During the summer, Dare we be different in the way the Sodality expects its members to be different?46

By most measures the year had been successful, with the exception of the abortive "Press Month" campaign; and the difficulties encountered there were due to the parochialism of the diocese and apparent desire to eliminate "outside" newspapers, and not the failure of the Sodality Union or lack of enthusiasm by the sodalists. Over 5,000 delegates had attended the various conventions during the year, the number of sodality affiliations with the KSSU had grown, and the National Director of the Sodalities had given national attention to the activities of the KSSU.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER V

¹KSSU Bulletin, May 7, 1932.

²KSSU Bulletin, November 20, 1932.

³Fr. Leonard Schwinn, O.S.B., to Fr. Weisenberg, September 14, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴C. J. McNeill to author, April 8, 1974.

⁵Minutes of the Meeting, Leavenworth Council Sodality Union Convention, Atchison, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Minutes of the Meeting, Wichita Council Sodality Union Convention, Wichita, October 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁹Minutes of the Meeting, Concordia Council Sodality Convention, Concordia, October 15, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Fr. Arpin to Fr. Weisenberg, December 20, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹²KSSU Bulletin, October 20, 1932.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴J. S. McGinnis to Fr. Schaeffers, November 4, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁵Catholic Advance, January 24, 1931.

¹⁶Circulation editor of Catholic Advance to J. S. McGinnis, November 8, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

- ¹⁷ Justin Casey to J. S. McGinnis, November 28, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Central Office to Bishop Francis J. Tief, D.D., December 9, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.
- ²⁰ J. S. McGinnis to Justin Casey, December 19, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.
- ²¹ Circulation Manager of the Catholic Advance to J.S. McGinnis, December 20, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.
- ²² Central Office to editor of Catholic Daily Tribune, December 12, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.
- ²³ Central Office to Fr. Francis P. LeBuffe, January 7, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.
- ²⁴ Minutes of the Meeting, Leavenworth Council Convention, Topeka, December 13, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.
- ²⁵ KSSU Bulletin, December 15, 1932.
- ²⁶ Windhorst Sunbeam, December 10, 1932.
- ²⁷ Minutes of the Meeting, Wichita Council Convention, Junction City, December 10, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.
- ²⁸ Minutes of Meeting, Concordia Diocesan Convention, Junction City, December 17, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.
- ²⁹ J. W. Dunne, S.J., to Sr. Albert, November 11, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.
- ³⁰ Fr. Weisenberg to Pastors, December 23, 1932, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.
- ³¹ KSSU Bulletin, November 21, 1932.
- ³² KSSU Bulletin, December 15, 1932.
- ³³ Central Office to Moderators, February 24, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³⁴KSSU Bulletin, May 10, 1933.

³⁵KSSU Bulletin, January 20, 1933.

³⁶Minutes of the Meeting, Leavenworth Council Convention, Kansas City, Kansas, February 4, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Minutes of the Meeting, Wichita Council Convention, Wichita, February 11, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴⁰Minutes of the Meeting, Concordia Council Convention, Salina, February 18, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴¹R. W. Donahue to Prefects, March 24, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴²KSSU Bulletin, April 29, 1933.

⁴³Fr. Lord's Travel Sheet, May 7, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union Files.

⁴⁴Minutes of the Meeting, KSSU State Convention, Leavenworth, May 4, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶KSSU Bulletin, May 10, 1933.

CHAPTER VI

1933-1934: THE HOLY YEAR--THE HOLY MASS

The fall conventions of 1933 were held on October 7th, 14th, and 21st, at Girls Catholic High, Hays; Mt. Carmel Academy, Wichita; and the Ursuline Academy at Paola, respectively. At each of the conventions, a guest lecturer gave a historical and theological explanation of the Mass, in keeping with the theme of the year, "The Eucharistic Sacrifice." These explanations were intended to lay the ground work for the formation of "study club groups" on the Mass in the state sodalities.

Following a Eucharistic procession, replete with military escort and band from St. Joseph's College, approximately 600 sodalists convened in Hays under the auspices of Girls Catholic High School. Fr. Gerald Ellard, S.J., Ph.D., professor of Liturgy and Ecclesiastical History at St. Mary's College, gave a "dry Mass" demonstration followed by a discussion of the Mass. Resolutions were passed encouraging use of the Missal, frequent communion, and the formation of study clubs.¹

The Wichita Diocesan convention at Mt. Carmel Academy attracted a much smaller crowd--half the size of

the Hays assembly. Rev. F. J. Morrell, Chancellor of the Diocese of Wichita and co-author of The New and Eternal Testament, a textbook for discussion clubs, presented the explanation of the Mass. Resolutions similar to those passed at Hays were approved, including a unanimous agreement that sodalists would join the Knights and Handmaids of the Blessed Sacrament, a spiritual crusade devoted to worshipping Christ through frequent Eucharistic participation. Bishop Schwertner gave a short talk on the benefits of the Mass. The Eucharistic procession which was to be the climax of the one day convention was prevented by a sudden downpour of rain late in the afternoon.²

The Leavenworth Council convention held at Paola was identical to the ones in Hays and Wichita, with essentially the same resolutions being passed. Fr. William Puetter, S.J., of Rockhurst College, Kansas City, Missouri, presented the explanation of the Mass.³

In December the Central Office announced that the colleges in the KSSU would have an essay contest of their own. The topic was the Mass. The contest was open to all college sodalists of the KSSU; and the award for the winner would be \$10 in cash, the donation of that "staunch friend" of the KSSU, Rt. Rev. Msgr. P. McInerney of Topeka.⁴ There would be no restrictions on the length of the college papers. Each school was asked to submit two final essays to the Central Office before February 7, 1934. High school

entrants were free to choose any apologetical topic but college writers were directed to give an explanation of some aspect of the Mass.

In early December Fr. Weisenberg received a letter from Rev. M. J. O'Farrell, Leavenworth Diocesan Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, regarding plans to use the sodality organizational apparatus in the Leavenworth diocese (through the respective Missions Committees) to handle mission collections and propaganda in the high schools and colleges of the diocese.⁵ An earlier attempt to get Bishop Johannes' permission for the project had failed, owing to the prevailing economic hardships caused by the depression. In March of 1933, Bishop Johannes had written to Fr. O'Farrell:

I agree with you that the students of our Catholic High Schools should be organized into a mission body such as the Students Mission Crusade. Just now, however, I fear is not an ideal time because of economic conditions. Our diocesan collections have dwindled down to about one-third of those in normal times; we find it very hard to collect tuitions from grade and high school pupils, several high schools are in danger of being forced to close their doors. In common with others I am hoping that this year will see the end of the depression. As soon as the economic outlook improves, I shall make Propagation of the Faith work the exclusive subject of an address at a Sodality meeting.⁶

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Francis Johannes, Bishop of Leavenworth
(signed)

By December Rev. O'Farrell would write to Fr. Weisenberg that he was "confident" the Bishop would now

be pleased to give his permission to the project; and would he, Fr. Weisenberg, "therefore, kindly let me know if the Crusade can be organized in connection with the sodality. . . ." ⁷ By January 1934, permission had been given and the project was under way.

It would be advisable to announce the Mission Committee Plan right away. This can be followed by a direct appeal to the Sisters and students at the Meeting in Leavenworth on March 3. The Bishop, I am sure, would be very pleased to make this appeal and, if you so wish, I shall request him to do so.

I wish to give a good deal of publicity to the Mission Committee and would appreciate your giving me a write-up of the manner in which it will function, its aims et cetera. In this write-up, it would be well to stress the fact that the Bishop, who is heartily in favor of a plan, has requested that it be formed. . . . ⁸

Fr. Weisenberg then sent a letter to all Leavenworth Council sodality prefects, instructing them to carry out the wishes of the Bishop and handle all Mission Propaganda and collections in the high schools and colleges of the diocese. An article appearing in the Leavenworth Diocese Missionary and reprinted in the March KSSU Bulletin reminded the sodalists that "this challenge to Catholic Action . . . will be an opportunity for the sodalists to prove their loyalty to Our Holy Mother the Church in the fondest work, the spreading of the Kingdom of Christ on earth." ⁹

Throughout February the sodalists engaged in various apostolic and charitable projects, including a drive to secure signatures to the Assumption Petition, asking the

Holy Father to make the Assumption of Mary a doctrine of the faith, and a campaign at St. Mary College, Leavenworth, to collect Catholic periodicals, newspapers, books, and pamphlets to be distributed among the several thousand Catholic boys stationed in the Civilian Conservation Corps camps of Tennessee. The project was the result of a plea voiced in the February issue of America.¹⁰

During the first two weeks in February, the Sodality of Immaculate Conception High School in Leavenworth began a letter writing campaign in opposition to a bill providing for dissemination of birth control information being debated in the House of Representatives. Letters were sent to the Kansas senators and representatives and to Mrs. Roosevelt, urging them to oppose the "iniquitous" proposal. Fourth District Congressman Randolph Carpenter acknowledged receiving a large number of petitions "signed by a great many people registering their protest against the so-called Birth Control Bill, H.R. 5978." He replied he had these same views but did not think the bill would get out of the Judiciary Committee.¹¹ Senator Arthur Capper pointed out that the bill was still in the House, but stated that he was "inclined to feel as you do about it, however, and shall oppose it in the event that it comes to the Senate."¹² The campaign was rigorously endorsed by Bishop Johannes, who urged the sodalists and other Catholic organizations and individuals to write their Congressmen in protest.

The Concordia Council held the first second semester meeting at Manhattan under the sponsorship of Sacred Heart Academy on February 2. Fr. Weisenberg's letter to the prefects several weeks before the convention was illustrative of his attitude toward responsibilities of discussion leaders.

By all means insist that the Sodalists understand the ideals on the program rather than memorize a set formula of words the meaning of which they do not understand. We want our KSSU Sodalists, the best we think in the country, to be able to stand up and talk intelligently about their religion.¹³

Following the Missa Recitata in Seven Dolors Church, the 300 delegates proceeded to the Wareham Hotel where, for the first time, "a sodality meeting had been held in a public place." Discussions centered around the issue of personal holiness, continuing the work of study clubs, and stressing the need for the theoretical study of the Mass. Bishop Tief spoke briefly to the sodalists, telling them that "the Holy Father would receive an account of their work when he would see him in August."¹⁴ The sodalists were not the only ones the Bishop would have in mind on his visit to Rome. He also had high praise for the work of the Jesuits in Kansas.

Last Saturday afternoon at the Concordia Council meet held at the Wareham Hotel, Manhattan, Kansas, His Excellency, Right Reverend Francis J. Tief, Bishop of the Diocese of Concordia, praised at some length and in the most flattering terms the work of the Jesuit Fathers of St. Mary's among the young men and women of the high schools and colleges of his diocese. He said that, when he comes to make

his ad liminal visit to Rome early this fall, among the many pleasant things which he will report to His Holiness is the work of the Jesuit fathers among the youth of his diocese. He singled out Fathers Lord and Weisenberg for special praise for their work in promoting Catholic Action among the young.¹⁵

Because of the vast size of the Wichita Diocese, covering virtually the lower half of the state, the regional meets for the Wichita Councils were held in two separate locations: St. Paul, Kansas, for the eastern section on February 4, and the following week at Dodge City for the western section. Fr. Weisenberg attended both of these conventions and spoke to the sodalists regarding the Mass and the fundamentals underlying Catholic Action.¹⁶

In March of 1934 the KSSU began what eventually became one of its most successful programs. This was the annual Symposium given by representatives from each of the Catholic colleges to audiences throughout the state during the Lenten season. Its propaganda value was apparent as it attracted widespread attention and publicity, but aside from this, it represented an excellent example of the organizational sagacity of Fr. Weisenberg.

The Symposium was the result of the successful presentation of a similar program made by six Catholic colleges of western New York in 1933. In October of that year, Fr. Weisenberg had written to Fr. Alfred Barrett, S.J., at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York, asking him for information on a Symposium that had been presented by

the colleges. Fr. Barrett sent detailed instructions and in December of 1933, letters were sent to the Catholic colleges in Kansas asking them to participate in a similar project.¹⁷

The Symposium was initially viewed as a bit of an adventure; but it was thought to have the makings of a "valuable contribution to 'Catholic Action,' aside from eliminating "a lot of difficulties encountered by the traditional Evidence Guild method, while achieving about the same results."¹⁸ The plan was deceptively simple on first appearance: college students selected for their outstanding dramatic or musical talents and representing each of the Catholic colleges in Kansas would travel about the state each weekend and present a Symposium on Catholic faith or doctrine. The separation of the colleges, however, necessitated regimental cooperation between the schools; and it is difficult to imagine a program as perennially successful as the Symposium without the organizational talents of Fr. Weisenberg.

Fr. E. J. Conway, S.J., of St. Mary's College was placed in charge of the first presentation, which was billed as a "new departure in lay-leadership." The first letter to the participants set forth the difficulties and the potentialities.

The practical difficulties confronting both preparation and presentation of this program are great. They challenge the cooperative spirit of

Sodalists, Moderators--and the Central Office. Since the nature of the program demands that one person direct its preparation, I have prepared a general outline and have also briefed the individual speeches. This I have done, not out of distrust of the students' ability to organize their own speeches, and much less out of fear of your lack of cooperation, but simply because of the manifest impossibility of preparing a coherent program, scattered as the speakers are, unless we have a definite program, rather, plan, and someone to knot its parts together.

Doesn't this project seem to offer the college Sodalists a chance to vindicate the countless claims made for them--that they DO know their Faith--that they CAN explain it to others--that they ARE leaders? And here seems to be OUR chance to substantiate our claim that we do produce lay leaders. . . .¹⁹

Little difficulty was anticipated in attracting participants to the program because "besides the eternal dividends accruing from their attempt to justify the faith that is in them, there are many attractive though less spiritual considerations to interest them." These included the honor of representing their college in "alien parts," and the "valuable and interesting experience, both social and platform, to be gained by the chosen representative." An added inducement was the assurance of future engagements in schools and parishes if the first venture was successful.²⁰

The method of selecting the representative from each college was left to the discretion of the moderator, with a reminder of the importance of the participants "platform ability."

No peculiarities of voice, diction, or manner should distract the attention of the audience. The speakers should have poise, personality--and the ability to "wear clothes." The members of the panel, by the way, will be in formal attire. . . . If you can nominate your representative at once, so much the better. . . . If you prefer an elimination contest to discover the best combination of writing and speaking ability, you might set the topics now for a contest to be held soon after the holidays.²¹

Each participating college was expected to work with its own representative once the script had been prepared. If Fr. Weisenberg was in town at the time, he would often stop by and coach the participant. One of the handicaps of separation was the impossibility of having a rehearsal with the entire cast assembled together at one time. This situation usually allowed for only one dress rehearsal and, hence, an understandable amount of anxiety in the Central Office.

Due to the peculiarities of the situation, the Symposiums were usually presented on the weekends. The sponsoring school was expected to make the necessary stage props available and handle transportation expenses and arrangements.

Fr. Weisenberg tried to minimize the concern that some of the participants would be missing too much school. He wrote to the moderators:

From all indications this college undertaking should prove not merely novel, but quite valuable. I know the participants will gain even more than the audience. So I hope you will not consider any loss of class hours as not being amply compensated

for. I believe you know that no one is more solicitous in this regard than I am; but I really believe that the experience will be invaluable.²²

The topic of the first Symposium presented by the SSU was in keeping with the year's theme of liturgical revival and the laity's privilege and duty to participate in the Mass. The title was, "We Do Our Part," an adaptation of the NRA Blue Eagle spirit applied to Catholic Action. Fr. Conway described how the panel discussion would be conducted.

While giving the impression of impromptu, the contributions of the speakers will in reality be carefully prepared beforehand. Actually there will be six dialogues with the chairman. He will hold the key position throughout. It is his office to co-ordinate and interpret the contributions, interjecting questions that might be expected to arise in the minds of the audience as the speakers develop their arguments. He further summarizes and restates the various points made, and links them with those already developed. . . .²³

The setting of the "conversations" was a drawing room in which a group of college sodalists had gathered to discuss their part in the Mass. Participants came from St. Mary College, Marymount, St. Benedict's, College of Paola, St. Joseph's College, and Mt. St. Scholastica. Four presentations were given in 1934 during the first three weekends in March at Atchison, Leavenworth, Salina, and Wichita. The April Bulletin described the results:

Greeted everywhere by enthusiastic capacity crowds, the college participants in the Mass Symposium gave increasingly effective performance. . . . Among the 2500 who heard them were four

Bishops and hundreds of clergy and religious. A big factor in their success was the cooperation of the sponsoring colleges. . . . Their hospitality was little short of overwhelming. . . .

Sodalists will be glad to know that this project was a national news feature in Catholic papers.²⁴

This annual Symposium grew in popularity and number of performances. Its schedule was expanded in Kansas and it eventually went out of state to Missouri and Oklahoma.

The Leavenworth Council mid-semester meet was held on March 3, at Immaculata High School in Leavenworth, Kansas, with Bishop Johannes and Right Rev. Abbot Martin Veth, O.S.B., as guests of honor. Over 600 sodalists attended and heard Fr. Gerald Ellard, S.J., give a lecture at the Lyceum theatre on "The History of the Mass." Bishop Johannes expressed his support for the convention by saying that "gathering . . . of youth from all parts of the diocese, the opportunity to express themselves in public discussions, and the renewal of spiritual enthusiasm resulting in the individual Sodalities fully warranted the holding of conventions by the Kansas Sodalists." The Bishop also took the opportunity to remind the sodalists that since it was Lent, "no Catholic and above all, no Sodalists, will attend any movie, no matter how good and proper it may be, during the penitential season of Lent."²⁵

In early March Fr. Weisenberg again called for a Novena of Masses for the president and the recovery of the nation. During this "Crusade of Patriotic Prayer for the

resident," each sodalist was asked to solicit the prayers of three other persons besides himself. Results of the campaign were printed in the Catholic Daily Tribune of April 25.

A spiritual bouquet gathered together during a recent Crusade of Prayer by the sodalists of Kansas will be mailed in the near future to President Roosevelt at the White House from the KSSU Central Office. It consists of 222,752 Masses, Communions, rosaries and other spiritual works offered up for the president and his recovery program. . . . Last year the Kansas Sodalists sent President Roosevelt a spiritual bouquet. In a letter from Washington dated May 4, 1933, the president had his secretary inform Fr. E. J. Weisenberg, S.J., state sodality adviser, that he was deeply grateful to the Sodalists of Kansas for their prayers.²⁶

In the April issue of the Bulletin, the entire KSSU was awarded the Gold Star for the Mass Novena project. Outstanding methods of eliciting support for the campaign were cited.

Ward, for example, erected an altar in the school auditorium so that Sodalists might hear Mass in a body. Girls High, Hays, enlisted the aid of their Pastor who preached the Crusade in his own church and in a mission church. Farmers who could not attend Mass everyday promised they would make a novena of rosaries. . . . Immaculata distributed a set of mimeographed reminders to all participants.²⁷

The State Apologetic Contest was held at the Memorial building in Topeka on April 20, 1934. According to the chairman's talk prior to the contest, "this year over 1000 students entered the field representing 21 high schools."²⁸ Miss Helen Coffey of Mount St. Scholastica won the contest delivering a speech entitled, "Is the Catholic Church

olerant?" Bishop Johannes presented the trophy in person and stressed the value of such contests in the formation of Catholic leaders. He had earlier contributed \$25 for a "becoming prize" for the contestants. Instead of the usual second place award, medals were presented to all speakers in token of their having reached the final contest.

The 1933-34 state convention was sponsored by the Cathedral High Sodality and held on May 5 at the "magnificent new Allis Hotel, Wichita, tallest skyscraper in Kansas."²⁹ Under the direction of Fr. L. S. McNeill, National Secretary to the Catholic Rural Life Conference, the sodalists entered into a discussion of rural life problems. The topic of the convention was intended to engender enthusiasm for Catholic Rural Life problems at this state meet, so the sodalists could enter the fall semester ready to discuss rural problems. Three other diocesan rural life directors, Fr. Henry Gesenhues of Concordia, Fr. Thomas Green of Wichita, and Fr. Cowell O'Neill of Leavenworth, spoke to the sodalists.

During the afternoon discussion on personal piety, the subject receiving the most attention was the "salacious motion picture." Bishop Schwertner of Wichita addressed the sodalists, making "the present day dangerous amusements the subject of a stirring talk at the close of the afternoon meeting." He told them there is opposition to every great activity ". . . past opposition consists in the bigotry of the last century. Today's opposition is the

attitude toward religion and morals in forms of amusements, especially displayed in motion picture shows." The Bishop made it emphatically clear "that in rallying to the crusade against indecent movies the sodalists are carrying out the expressed and earnest desire of the whole American hierarchy."³⁰ Some 3,000 Legion of Decency pledges calling for united and determined action were distributed to the delegates.

I condemn indecent and immoral motion pictures and those which glorify crime or criminals.

I promise to do all that I can to strengthen public opinion against the production of indecent and immoral films, and to unite with all who protest against them.

I acknowledge my obligation to form a right conscience about pictures that are dangerous to my moral life. As a member of the Legion of Decency, I pledge myself to remain away from them. I promise, further, to stay away altogether from places of amusement which show them as a matter of policy.³¹

The Central Office viewed the pledge as a declaration of war "against those organized enemies of youth, the producers of filthy films." Because the campaign was a visible expression of Catholic Action, every sodalist in Kansas was expected to enlist in this "holy war" by signing and keeping the Legion of Decency pledge.

It will mean living up to your oft-expressed principles of personal sanctity; it will mean cooperating with your Bishops, all of whom have in no uncertain terms called upon Kansas Sodalists to be the spearhead of their drive for decency and morality in the movies.³²

Sodalists were also encouraged to write letters to the producers of "off-color" pictures demanding "remedial

action" in this regard.

This "Legion of Decency" campaign in Kansas was part of a national effort by Fr. Lord through the Sodality Movement to halt the "betrayal" by the movie industry of the Code of Morals "drawn up and solemnly signed by its representatives."³³ According to an article appearing in The Queen's Work in June 1934, the origins of the conflict went back to March of 1930 when Fr. Lord, with the assistance of Martin Quigley, publisher of Motion Picture Herald, wrote a code of "morality and conduct" for the movie industry. In his autobiography, Played By Ear, Fr. Lord described formation of the code as the result of an offer by Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago to send his personal representative on invitation to the office of Mr. Will Hays, head of the Motion Picture Association, to offer a moral code that would alleviate industry fears of the rising tide of state censorship while at the same time make possible "decent" and "entertaining" films.³⁴ The industry agreed, Fr. Lord went to Hollywood; and, at a meeting of all the heads of the motion picture industry, he presented the code, explained it, met with the men charged with enforcing it, and departed with the agreement "solemnly signed."

One year later Fr. Lord returned to Hollywood and spent two weeks with industry representatives reviewing films charged with violating the code, explaining in detail the alleged violations. He recorded that these efforts were

of little consequence primarily because the men responsible for the films were interested in one thing, "the money they could make from a film."³⁵ With the depression and subsequent need to make more money, they had learned how to "outsmart" the code. Finally, in May of 1934, outraged by the "cold cynicism" of the producers and in support of the Legion of Decency launched by the American Catholic bishops, The Queen's Work declared in bold headlines that the Sodality would open a "Fight-to-Finish" for "decent" movies. In a bitter article with a rare and unfortunate reference to "Jewish" influences, Fr. Lord lashed out at the film makers, explaining that while he once believed the motion picture industry could clean itself through self-regulation, and the best policy was to stress the good pictures and remain silent about the bad ones, "I no longer believe any of that."

The motion-picture industry has failed utterly to regulate itself. It has grown worse instead of better under its own code. . . .

Immorality is now the rule and not the exception. It is a rare film that has not its "punch" scene, its element of illicit love, its nudity, its glamorous crime, seduction, open vice. . . . No one can attend the films without getting a course in the paraphernalia of crime and lust.

.
 It is maddening to see this powerful force switched from elevating the human race to portraying and inciting its lowest instincts, not only by the Jewish element which controls about 90 per cent of the industry, but by those false and fallen Catholics who in many cases have done the industry more harm than any single Jew. . . . The Central Office is determined to push this campaign as cooperating with the bishop's plan to clean-up the movies.

The Central Office is serving notice upon all the producing companies that this campaign has begun and that it will continue until we see these companies abiding by the Code of Morals which they solemnly agreed to follow and which they have flagrantly disregarded.³⁶

Sodalists were then directed to take a series of steps to "clean the movies" since they were dependent upon the sodalists for patronage, and "we are numerous enough to turn any picture into a failure."³⁷ The program in Kansas followed this general line of attack. It included boycotting all "indecent and suggestive pictures," protesting to the producing companies and to the offending stars, and enlisting public support for the campaign. Occasionally films designated "a menace to decency" were printed in the Bulletin.

During this last convention of 1933-34, separate conferences were held for the collegiate, high school, and nurse groups because the collegians expressed an aversion to taking part in activities associated with high school students. The general attitude was that the overall program of the sodality should follow a central theme but have features "specially intended for the collegians." The Bulletin reported that "all agreed that the holding of separate collegiate, academic and nurses conferences was an eminently worth-while innovation."³⁸

Fr. Weisenberg expressed in his closing remarks his gratitude to the delegates for a successful year's work.

You are a wonderful group to work with and to work for. The many nice things said about you by your Bishops are not exaggerated. I have no fear for the future of Catholicism in Kansas as long as you are what you are, and as long as you do as you are doing.

The activities of the past year are a veritable monument to your spirit of zealous Catholic Action.³⁹

Sodalists were reminded to carry on with their spiritual practices during the summer, especially devotion to Mary and frequent week-day Mass and Communion, and to engage in catechetical or vacation school work as part of their summer apostolate. Since no resolutions were passed at the convention, the sodalists were specifically directed to lead during the summer the Catholic Crusade against "immoral movies" by enrolling as many possible of their friends and relatives in the Legion of Decency.⁴⁰

That same month an article appeared in America magazine entitled "The Kansas Sodalists and the Mass." It was written by Fr. Gerald Ellard, S.J., of St. Mary's and described in glowing terms the work of the KSSU and its embodiment of initiative and esprit de corps "hardly paralleled in the whole Catholic Youth Movement in America."

Under the helpful guidance of the Bishops of Leavenworth, Concordia, Wichita, the State Adviser, Rev. E. J. Weisenberg and his staff of theologian assistants at St. Mary's College, St. Marys, they have produced a machine, streamlined model of 1934 of some 5,000 intelligent and more-or-less tempered man power, or at least, youth power, in the secondary schools of Kansas.⁴¹

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER VI

¹Minutes of the Meeting, Concordia Diocesan Sodality Convention, Hays, October 7, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²The Catholic Register, September, 1933.

³The Catholic Advance, September, 1933.

⁴KSSU Bulletin, December 15, 1933.

⁵Fr. M. J. O'Farrell to Fr. Weisenberg, December 7, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁶Bishop Johannes to Fr. O'Farrell, March 23, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁷Fr. O'Farrell to Fr. Weisenberg, December 15, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁸Fr. O'Farrell to Fr. Weisenberg, January 17, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁹KSSU Bulletin, March 17, 1934.

¹⁰KSSU Bulletin, February 20, 1934.

¹¹Representative Randolph Carpenter to Fr. Weisenberg, February 2, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹²Senator Arthur Capper to Fr. Weisenberg, February 2, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹³Fr. Weisenberg to Sodality Prefects, January 13, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁴Minutes of the Meeting, Concordia Diocesan Convention, Manhattan, February 2, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁵Central Office to Fr. S. H. Horine, Jesuit Provincial, February 8, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁶Catholic Advance, February 4, 1934.

¹⁷Central Office to Catholic College Prefects, December 7, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁸Central Office to Charles McNeill, February 16, 1933, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁹Fr. E. J. Conway to Symposium cast, undated, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Fr. Weisenberg to Marymount College Moderator, February 22, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²³Fr. E. J. Conway to Symposium cast, undated, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²⁴KSSU Bulletin, April 21, 1934.

²⁵Register, March 8, 1934.

²⁶The Catholic Daily Tribune, April 25, 1936.

²⁷KSSU Bulletin, April 21, 1934.

²⁸Chairman's Address, KSSU Apologetics Contest, Topeka, April 20, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²⁹KSSU Bulletin, April 21, 1934.

³⁰Minutes of the Meeting, KSSU State Convention, Wichita, May 5, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³¹Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³²KSSU Bulletin, May 10, 1934.

³³The Queen's Work, May 1934.

³⁴Daniel Lord, S.J., Played By Ear (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1956), p. 299.

35 The Queen's Work, May, 1934.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 KSSU Bulletin, May 10, 1934.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Gerald Ellard, S.J., "The Kansas Sodalists and the Mass," America, Vol. LI, No. IV (May 5, 1934), pp. 79-80.

CHAPTER VII

1934-1935: CATHOLIC RURAL LIFE

The Kansas Sodalists aimed to carry out a program on Catholic Rural Life for 1934-35 by devoting themselves to work in rural life communities and mission stations throughout the state. The choice of "Catholic Youth and Rural Life Problems" as the year's program originated in Fr. Weisenberg's awareness of the urgent need to protect the role of the Sodality as new Catholic youth organizations began to emerge nationally. In October of 1934 he communicated this concern to Fr. Lord, referring specifically to the upcoming National Catholic Rural Life Conference convened under the auspices of Archbishop John Gregory Murray, D.D., S.T.D., of St. Paul, Minnesota:

As you probably know, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference will hold its convention in St. Paul from Nov. 5 to the 8. It strikes us here that another opportunity for the sodality will be lost if someone does not represent the fact that we have the solution to the Youth problem in the Sodality.

Archbishop Stritch, Father Mooney, and others said at the last convention that the youth program will never be supported by diocesan authorities unless some responsible group sponsors the work. . . . Here in Kansas we have had our fourth meet on Rural Life topics. It is our subject for the year. Big things are being done. The Bishops, the past president and the present national secretary of the Rural Life Conference are backing us. Wouldn't it be just the thing to present a

definite plan before other schemes are organized? The most forward looking pastors will be present, national publicity for the sodality should result: KSSU . . . has the advantage of a strategic location in the heart of the rural problem, and the support of the leaders in rural life, etc.

I am simply mentioning this as I am beginning to fear, in a pessimistic strain perhaps, that the Sodality is losing out gradually as these Catholic Youth organizations are being formed.¹

Fr. Lord thanked Fr. Weisenberg for the advice and said he would see what could be done, but he wrote that he was doubtful of success because "we have not been invited in any way to participate so we are a little bit doubtful about attending."²

Fr. Weisenberg was one of the delegates attending the convention from Kansas. In an address delivered during the conference, he outlined the state-wide work of the KSSU in general and the rural life activities of the year in particular. In flattering terms he described youth of the day as possessing "a spontaneity, a wholesomeness, a resourcefulness, that is unparalleled elsewhere in the human race." He explained how the Sodality was uniquely suited to channel the energies of youth into the proper form of Catholic Action, and how, from its very inception, the Sodality had been organized on the committee or sectional plan. Hence it had the advantage of both distributing work and responsibility and yet by close and compact organization making for perfect subordination to and effective direction of the pastor or director. Any pastor in a rural parish

could become a competent sodality director provided he possesses "three simple qualities: love for his young people, willingness to work, faith in the Sodality Plan." Properly directed, the sodality could become "the right arm of the pastor."³

Rev. Fr. Schmiedler, O.S.B., Director of the National Catholic Life Bureau, paid high tribute in his annual report at the convention banquet to the enthusiastic work of the sodality, telling the delegates that "considerable impetus had been given to the movement by the cooperation of the Kansas Sodalist youth."⁴ Fr. Weisenberg spent much of his time among the delegates generating interest in the KSSU and its rural life work. Fr. Lord expressed his gratitude for the publicity:

I can't tell you how grateful I am for the fine propaganda that you did for the Sodality up there and for the news you also unearthed. . . . Certainly the part Kansas has played gives you a unique authority in talking to the Rural Life.⁵

There were deeper philosophical reasons rooted in agrarian mythology that led the sodality to turn its attention toward the rural life community. A paper in the Sodality Union Files entitled "Why the Jesuits of St. Mary's are Interested in Farm Problems" provides some revealing insight.

7. The RURAL FAMILY is of primary importance to the individual person, the community, the nation, the race, and the Church not only from an economic and political standpoint, but from a moral, cultural, and religious point of view.

"MAN HAS HIS ROOTS DEEP IN THE SOIL"

8. That is why we are interested in flourishing FAMILY SIZED FARMS. That is why we are interested in the ideas, the methods of farming, the legislation, the organizations which make for the better interests of the family life on the farm. That is why we are against those forces and practices which disrupt and kill family life on the farm.⁶

At a time when, reflecting the immigrant composition of the faith, almost eighty per cent of the Catholic population in the United States lived in urban areas, many Catholics believed that the Church had both a strong practical need and strategic importance in promoting a stable agricultural population and sound church in rural areas. The country was looked upon as the optimum environment for "wholesome Christian family life and is prolific in children who will serve not only to maintain the rural parishes but also feed into the cities in large numbers to develop and strengthen the urban church."⁷

Professor Francis W. Schruben, author of Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-1936, has pointed out that, in spite of the many hardships of farming during the depression years, the number of Kansas farms actually rose from 166,042 in 1930 to 174,589 in 1935.

Farm tenancy rose from 42.4 percent in 1930 to 44 percent in 1935. This period marked the height of the movement back to the farm. During the Depression, Kansas farmers did not flee en masse to the Pacific states or the industrial cities.⁸

One reason they did not was that a significant number of them were Catholic; and it was through organizations like

the sodality that the Catholic Church helped preserve this population by extolling the virtues of rural life and providing assistance to the pastors in promoting the spiritual needs necessary for preserving the "healthy family life" of rural parishioners.

The first diocesan meeting for the year 1934 was held in Wichita at Sacred Heart Junior College on September 29. Rev. Leon A. McNeill of Wichita, National Secretary of the Catholic Rural Life Bureau chaired this meeting and all of the fall conventions that year. Rev. T. W. Green, pastor of St. Martin's Church, Caldwell, and Diocesan Director of Rural Life, addressed the delegates on rural life work; reports were given on the National Sodality Convention work of the past summer and on the Legion of Decency campaign. Miss Miriam Marks, National Organizer of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, who was visiting the state at the request of Bishop Schwertner, spoke to the delegates in regard to ways in which sodalists could provide practical cooperation to rural life problems by assisting in vacation schools, teaching catechism, etc.⁹

The Concordia Diocesan fall convention met on October 13, at Marymount College in Salina. Msgr. C. J. Luckey of Manhattan, Rev. McNeill, and Miss Marks all reiterated to the sodalists the importance of assisting the pastors in rural life work. The delegates discussed 4-H clubs, with some students suggesting they organize clubs

for "only Catholic youth." Bishop Tief attended the convention and described the highlights of his recent trip abroad to visit the pope.¹⁰

The Leavenworth Diocese Sodalists convened at St. Benedict's College on October 20. Abbot Martin Veth, O.S.B., opened the convention with Mass in the Abbey Church. In a sermon setting the theme for the day's discussions, he described in rustic terms the urgent need to return

. . . back to the land, back to the country, back to God's city, and away from man-made city, back to the country where you can see God in the stars above, in every flower at your feet, where you can hear God in the treetops and in the murmuring streams. This is the call which is extended to you today.¹¹

Sodalists discussed teaching catechism, assisting in mission stations, study clubs, correspondence courses, credit unions, and the 4-H programs, with one delegate pointing out that Catholic membership was not encouraged in 4-H clubs where the meetings were "held in Protestant churches." The Legion of Decency came in for considerable discussion in the afternoon session. Fr. Weisenberg told the delegates that the KSSU would formally announce the Legion of Decency campaign in November. In the absence of Bishop Johannes, who had just returned from a visit to Rome, Rev. M. J. O'Farrell, rector of Leavenworth Cathedral and Diocesan Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, spoke to the sodalists regarding the need for assistance to the missions.¹²

During the fall months the sodalists carried out the convention resolutions and engaged in a variety of rural life projects: taking parish census, informing pastors of newcomers in the parish, bringing non-Catholic friends to parish missions, gathering clothes for the needy, and providing transportation to and teaching catechism classes.

In late November, problems again arose with St. Benedict's. J. P. Gallagher, student at St. Benedict's, had been elected president of the Leavenworth Council of the KSSU at the fall diocesan convention. He was subsequently asked by Fr. Lord to serve on the National Advisory Board, but had hinted to Fr. Lord that there would be difficulties in this regard owing to the status of the sodality at St. Benedict's. Marian Pendergast, Fr. Lord's secretary, wrote Fr. Weisenberg wanting to know what to do about the situation. Fr. Weisenberg replied:

With regard to Gallagher of St. Benedict's, this is the situation. There is a new spiritual director at St. Benedict's. Moreover, this is the first year the college is entirely separated from the high school. . . . As a result St. Benedict's in general and the new spiritual director in particular, have not made up their minds as to whether they want a sodality or not. The CISCA is a rather bad exemplar for such a union as mine, as word has reached out here that the sodality is after all only a minor part of CISCA and therefore St. Benedict's would like to reorganize everything and just have a State Youth Organization. Confidentially, I saw the bishop and he says not to worry, the sodality will remain. Naturally as long as things are in that condition at St. Benedict's I would suggest that nothing definite be done about Gallagher. Moreover, Gallagher is not acceptable to this new director, despite the fact that he was elected at our Council meeting at St. Benedict's just a few weeks ago.¹³

He then instructed Miss Pendergast to write a letter to Rev. Henry Courtney, O.S.B., asking him what the status of the sodality was and have Fr. Lord sign it. He also called for more publicity for the work taken up by the KSSU on behalf of the Catholic Rural Life Movement, complaining that they were getting publicity in many quarters, but not from The Queen's Work where it should be expected.

The letter was sent to Fr. Courtney. He replied that the sodality at St. Benedict's had not yet been formally organized for the year, but the Prior, who had been away most of the school year and had just recently returned, now promised "speedy action."¹⁴

The eventual outcome of the issue appeared in the March 1935 issue of the St. Benedict's Rambler.

Owing to the fact that St. Benedict's College is now passing through its first year on a strictly collegiate basis, since it has divorced itself from the high school, when Maur Hill was reestablished, some time and pains have been taken in determining the policy of the school with reference to religious organizations on campus.

After much consultation between the faculty and student body as well as outside institutions, it was decided that the Holy Name Society would be the organization to which the general body of students would be invited to join. The Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, while open to all students, would be made up of a smaller number of students. . . . Unlike former years, the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary will function as its own unit this year. . . .¹⁵

Fr. Weisenberg persisted in his efforts to keep St. Benedict's actively involved in the KSSU. In September of 1935 he wrote a letter to Fr. Florian Demmer, O.S.B., at

the college describing the situation which had developed in 1934.

Last year with Father Henry in charge of spiritual direction at St. Benedict's, the St. Benedict's unit of the Sodality more or less withdrew from active participation in KSSU activities. No public announcement of this fact was made either to the officers or to the student body of the state at the state convention held in Manhattan, May 4. In fact, Joseph P. Gallagher took his position as president of the Leavenworth Council at that Convention, and answered when St. Benedict's name was called.

He then informed him that several younger members of the St. Benedict's faculty, two alumni, and several students asked him (Fr. Weisenberg) to get in touch with Father Demmer "thinking you might see things differently than Father Henry . . . and ask [ing] you whether we should defer publicly withdrawing St. Benedict's from the KSSU." He also asked whether, if they intended to keep the name Sodality or not, "you should care to belong to the KSSU as it is the approved Catholic Youth organization of the three Bishops of Kansas." Fr. Demmer was then told that whatever fitted in with their conditions would be most agreeable with the Central Office, as the KSSU is functioning "simply as a means with episcopal approval of organizing the youth of Kansas for united Catholic Action."¹⁶

Fr. Demmer replied:

We feel that in a boarding school like our own these societies (St. Vincent de Paul and Holy Name) have been doing great work and that any close outside affiliations will not be of any great advantage to us.

I do not want you to feel that this is my own personal opinion and action but rather our general policy that St. Benedict's College does not wish to be a member of the KSSU: that we will continue to send delegates to your meetings, if it meets with your approval, in order to bring home further inspiration: that you may continue to send us the literature, bulletins, etc. of your organization.¹⁷

Henceforth, support of the Sodality Movement in Kansas by St. Benedict's was somewhat begrudging and less than enthusiastic. This disguised withdrawal of the college from active participation in KSSU affairs was a blow to the prestige of the organization, as St. Benedict's was rapidly becoming one of the best-known Catholic colleges in the state.

The Catholic nurses in Kansas were also pressing for a change in their role in the KSSU. In December of 1934 Fr. Weisenberg wrote Fr. J. Roger Lyons, S.J., head of the Department of Nursing Schools of the National Sodality Office informing him that the nurses in Kansas wanted their own state organization distinct from colleges and high schools. Traditionally regional and state sodality conventions had been attended by nurse sodalists, but little time was devoted specifically to problems unique to nursing. The sentiments for change appeared strong, and on January 17, 1935, the first nurses convention to be held statewide and nationally convened in Wichita. The morning session was held at Wichita Hospital and the afternoon session at St. Francis Hospital. This marked the formation of the third

unit of the KSSU, the Nurses Conference. Approximately 75 delegates representing 15 of the 17 hospital units belonging to the KSSU took part in discussions led by Fr. Lyons. "Personal holiness" was one of the topics of discussion since it was believed that "the general hospital atmosphere tends to a slackening of morals: because the temptations are many, the nurse needs character." Nurses were told they needed an "appropriate" social-cultural life in the hospital because "Catholic nurses thrown in with a student body which is predominantly Protestant are influenced accordingly, because there is then danger of the school becoming Protestant in thought and spirit and social activities." The afternoon session of the convention included a business meeting, election of state officers, and presentation of a constitution. It was decided to adopt a five-point program for the coming year, including a plan to collect sample medicines for the Catholic Medical Mission Board, an activity vigorously advocated by Fr. Weisenberg.¹⁸

The nursing sodalities were never as successful in their sodality activities as the college or high school units, not only because they were much smaller in number, but because the burden of nursing duties and the demanding schedule of their training left little time for apostolic activities. Nurses and nursing moderators consistently complained that the nurse sodalist was simply too busy to give all but cursory attention to sodality activities.

Letters like that from Miss Elizabeth Honisch, first president of the KSSU Nurses Conference were fairly typical:

Father, do you have any plans or suggestions by which we could instill a little pep and enthusiasm into our sodalists? Most of them, I am sorry to say, feel that they are too overworked to put forth any extra effort. Our committees have been organized but we might as well be without them for as much interest as they have shown toward them.¹⁹

This point of view was not shared by everyone. Regarding the matter, Fr. Lyons wrote to Fr. Weisenberg:

. . . I believe it is a fallacy. They [the nurses] are no busier than girls working in factory or store, and yet parish sodalists find time to work for the poor, to work for the missions, etc.²⁰

In compliance with the plans outlined by the staff in the Central Office at St. Mary's, the week of January 6-12, 1935, was devoted to arousing concern and attention to a growing national campaign among Catholics, and especially the hierarchy, to bring the country's attention to a campaign for justice for fellow Catholics in Mexico. The governmental persecution of the Catholic Church in Mexico had been a smoldering issue among American Catholics for several years, until finally, in the closing months of 1934, a growing number of angry articles began to appear in the Catholic press condemning the situation and protesting against the refusal of the Roosevelt administration to make at least a symbolic gesture of diplomatic indignation against the actions of the Mexican government.

The relationship between the Mexican government and the Catholic Church in the twentieth century was tenuous at best, ranging from a niggardly tolerance to intermittent persecution, confiscation of church property, and eventual expulsion of the clergy. The situation became acute in the early 1920's when Plutarco Elias Calles became president of Mexico, established a schismatical church, and began to enforce with severity a series of blatantly anti-religious laws. Following a Papal denunciation, protests by the Mexican Bishops condemning the hostile laws, an armed rebellion, and a joint pastoral protest; and with the official assistance of Dwight Morrow, United States Ambassador to Mexico, a precarious agreement was effected between the Church and the Mexican government in May 1928.

The churches which had been closed were reopened; and public worship was resumed, with the number of priests limited according to the state laws. This meant that no more than five hundred priests could be assigned to serve fifteen million Catholics. Not one priest was allowed in the State of Vera Cruz, with one million Catholics; in Chiapas, with three hundred twenty thousand, or in Sonora, with three hundred thousand. Religious instruction was made illegal; priests were forbidden to teach catechism even in private houses; and seminaries were prohibited.²¹

Tension continued to mount in spite of the agreement. In 1934 the government confiscated all property that had at any time served as a rectory, seminary, school, convent, or place of worship. The final blow came with the government's announcement in the mid-thirties that it would "take

possession of the consciences of the children" through the total secularization of the school system.²²

In October of 1934, Fr. Lord wrote a lengthy article in The Queen's Work entitled "United States Yawns as Persecution Crushes Catholic Mexico," in which he berated the United States Government and American Catholics in particular for their failure to protest the assault.

Just why American Catholics are sitting back and watching this murder of the Catholic Church in Mexico is something of a mystery. The same Catholics grow irate over the Hitler persecution of the Jews. They grow indignant at Russian atheism that is throttling the Greek Orthodox Church. And without a flicker of an eyelid they watch Mexican Catholics go through a far worse persecution.²³

The campaign to arouse public sentiment continued in the pages of The Queen's Work with a series of articles written by three Mexican women, whose names "for obvious reasons" could not be divulged, describing in lurid detail the persecution of the Church.

By this time the situation in Mexico had gained national attention among Catholics. At the general meeting of the Bishops of the United States held at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., on November 16, 1934, the Assembly issued a statement solemnly deploring the "anti-Christian tyranny" in Mexico and citing the grave persecutions directed against Catholics and all religion in the country.

. . . As American citizens we present our plea that justice be done, that all our fellow Americans may make themselves advocates of that common justice for man which is the security of every man and every nation.

We sincerely deplore the evident indifference on the part of many to the life and worth of those principles upon which our American Republic is founded. . . . As we declared in our pastoral of 1926, our own country cannot view with indifference the persecution of religion and the exiling of its citizens by a neighboring country.²⁴

The statement went on to warn that it was in no way to be construed as a call to "purely human action," apparently indicating only a desire for a symbolic gesture.

It is no interposition of our influence either as Bishops or as citizens to reach those who possess political power anywhere on earth, and least of all in our own country, to the end that they should intervene with armed force in the internal affairs of Mexico for protection of the Church.²⁵

American Catholics were being called to a "crusade for prayer" for ending these "sad conditions." In Kansas the campaign took the form of a "Prayer! Pennies! Protest!" Sodalists were encouraged to write individual letters to Washington protesting "the indifference and almost favorable attitude of the United States Officials toward the Mexican government's policies of making education a state affair and their interference with the fulfilling of clerical duties by the native priests." Any money collected for the "robbed brethern South of the Rio Grande" was to be sent to Fr. Abdon Zungia, S.J., at St. Mary's College.²⁶

The issue of persecution in Mexico received widespread attention throughout the state in the Catholic press.

The Catholic Advance published the lengthy text of an appeal made by exiled Bishop Jose de Jesus of Huejutla, Mexico, decrying the conditions.

We Mexican find ourselves already in the clutches of Red Communism, that is the very hell of Bolshevism. . . . Our priests are decimated and persecuted like wild beasts everywhere . . . and what is even more pitiful, all of our young students are in the throes of the revolution, which teaches them to desecrate the name of God and poisons their soul with the foulest doctrine.

The bishop asked for prayers and "some pecuniary help to enable us to meet the evil on its own grounds." And finally the warning:

. . . we who have lived in the hellish dominion of Bolshevism in Mexico can and must warn you of the tremendous calamities threatening you in case you fail to give a generous hand to the submissive Mexican people in order to help deliver themselves from the clutches of their implacable enemies. If Moscow succeeds in prevailing over Mexico, completely, that wave of evils shall also invade your country and submerge you all in an abyss of misfortune, Bolshevism has set its eyes on America. . . .²⁷

It was largely through the efforts of the Catholic Press and organizations like the KSSU that Catholics in Kansas were made aware of the situation in Mexico and the danger this supposedly represented to their own well being.

The second semester convention of the Wichita Diocese convened at Cathedral High School on February 2, 1935. Fr. Weisenberg and Rev. Leon McNeill reviewed the work on rural life projects; Fr. J. Lopez, C.S.S.R., who would soon be on his way to Washington to lobby on behalf of the Borah Resolution, discussed the Mexican situation,

and Emmett Blaes of Wichita, state chairman of the Legion of Decency, gave a report on that campaign. Upward of 500 delegates attended a large banquet served at the Twentieth Century Club at which Bishop A. J. Schwertner was guest of honor. In his address to the delegates, the bishop took the opportunity to make a "stirring demand" to the sodalists to put the Advance in the Catholic homes of Wichita.²⁸

The Concordia council convention met in Junction City at the Elks Club auditorium on the following weekend. Sodalists discussed first semester rural life projects under the direction of Fr. McNeill, who put special emphasis on the importance of family prayer in rural homes and religious vacation schools for those not in Catholic schools. Fr. Lopez attended this convention, dwelling for some time on the "horrible persecutions and teachings of communistic schools" in Mexico.

Anyone acknowledging a God is put before the firing squad; consequently, every day large numbers give their lives for Christ.

Following his address, a motion was unanimously passed to send a telegram to Senator William E. Borah of Idaho "congratulating him on the stand he has taken regarding the Mexican situation, and encouraging him to continue his efforts to bring about an investigation into the religious persecution in Mexico."²⁹ This motion referred to a resolution presented in Congress by Senator Borah protesting "the vindictive, anti-religious policy of the present Mexican

government that has warrantably and arbitrarily restricted the number of ministers, priests, and rabbis." The resolution referred to the "ruthless persecution of helpless men and women," and demanded an investigation by the Foreign Relations Committee or a sub-committee of that group which would determine the policy of the United States "in regard to this vital problem."³⁰

In April The Queen's Work published a special pamphlet describing in detail the measures sodalists were to take to assist in the "Mexican Fight." It contained the text of the Borah resolution and described the situation as of April 23:

1. Focus your efforts on Senate resolution No. 70 introduced by Senator Borah.
2. The obstacle to the Borah resolution is Roosevelt, candidate for President in 1936.
3. The reason for opposition seems to be the greediness of the United States BIG BUSINESS which does not want the tyrannical Mexican Government irritated lest it discriminate against United States BIG BUSINESS on the new Pan-American Highway soon to be opened through Mexico.
4. The Roosevelt Administration, through Secretary of State Hull, having recognized Communistic Russia has pressured the Senate Foreign Relations Committee into not even allowing Public Hearings on the Borah Resolution aimed to curb the atheistic persecution in Mexico and investigate violation of American lives and property in Mexico.³¹

Sodalists were further instructed to bombard Roosevelt with penny post cards and the threat of the ballot, "almost sacramental weapons if used to help the bleeding and suffering Christ in Mexico."³²

The second semester Leavenworth Council meet was held at Ward High School in Kansas City on February 16. The format was the same as the preceeding conventions; Rev. Leon McNeill leading a discussion on rural life activities, Fr. Lopez warning of the horrors of the Mexican persecutions, and Emmett Blaes naming certain "guideposts" which will enable the sodalists to judge for themselves the moral values of motion pictures.

The first of the three is 'no film shall be produced which shall lower the moral standards of those who see it. The sympathy of the audience shall never be on the side of vice.'

The second principal (sic) is 'correct standards of life shall be portrayed--with exception for necessary dramatic contrast.'

The last of the three principles is 'No picture shall ridicule law--neither natural nor human. Sympathy shall not be aroused for the lawbreaker.'³³

Rev. George A. McDonald, S.J., associate editor of The Queen's Work, acquainted the sodalists with a plan suggested by the Central Office to boycott summer travel into Mexico, "especially conducted tours." A telegram was sent from the convention floor to Roosevelt protesting his neglect of the Borah Resolution and asking his "personal recognition of their just complaint."

Bishop Johannes attended the convention and spoke to the delegates about his recent trip to Rome. During the noon hour, a film on the "Mexican situation" was shown to the high school and college sodalists.

During Catholic Press Week in February, the KSSU once again planned to throw its support into a drive for the Catholic press, with the slogan this year calling for support of "our own" papers in the dioceses. Sodalists were asked to show "generous appreciation" to the Kansas Catholic Press for their help in promoting "our union and local endeavors."³⁴

The most extensive press campaign involving the KSSU took place in the Wichita Diocese where sodalists were recruited by the bishop to make a subscription drive on behalf of the Advance. This particular paper was undergoing severe economic strain verging on bankruptcy due to declining subscriptions. In October of 1934, an editorial castigated Catholics for their lack of support for the official organ of the diocese.

Yet in the Wichita Diocese, where enthusiasm for Catholic Action is raging and calling for the establishment of diocesan and parochial organization and societies in order to carry on an extensive Catholic Action program, not one thing has been done to promote the welfare of the Catholic Advance--the very paper which gives our Catholic Action program that publicity needed to ensure its success.

In the midst of the birth of numerous Catholic Action organizations, societies, and clubs; in the midst of regional conferences and diocesan conventions; in the midst of an unprecedented flowering of Catholic projects; in the midst of a tidal wave of Catholic Activities that are promoting Catholic education, drama, music, sodalities, rural life, study clubs, clean movies, boy scouts, activity clubs, etc.--not a single definite thing has been done to organize the diocese in support of the Catholic Advance. We are afforded the utterly sad and incongruous spectacle of the Catholic Advance dying for want of support in the midst of the most

energetic and organized Catholic Action program ever undertaken by the pastors and faithful of the diocese.

.....
 The Advance is left to struggle along hopelessly, ignominiously ignored by 56% of our Catholic families . . . in a territory that could easily give it 10,000 paid subscriptions.³⁵

The drive was organized by the sodality unit at Cathedral High School, where the names of 1800 families to be solicited were typed up by the commercial students. The campaign was to take place on the week of February 25, and the preceding Sunday, "vigorous announcements" were made from the pulpits about the drive.

Approximately 200 high school sodalists participated in spite of a raw biting cold day. The drive continued through the week and was initially judged a mild success by the paper which now saw "better days in store" for the Advance.³⁶

The annual Apologetics Contest, "KSSU's greatest forensic event of the year," was held at the Memorial Building in Topeka on March 28. The contest was held a month earlier than usual, thus reducing the number of participants in the preliminary contests. The contest was viewed as an indication that in Kansas,

We are awake--for we are talking Catholicity and taking a huge interest in it. . . . This state contest is no longer a fad but a glorious institution, a bright omen on a new day, a proof conclusive that we no longer sleep, that in a time of greatest need, we can take the field for Christ, and will.³⁷

With the Apologetics out of the way, preparation now began for the May state convention, this year to be held "For Mary, in May, at Manhattan." The topics of discussion were to center around the program for next year, "Atheism in this country and how to do away with it." The KSSU objective for the coming year would be "one of aggressive action against influences now working for the downfall of religion in our land." The battle cry for 1935-36 would be "Kansas for Christ."³⁸

A flurry of energy went into preparation aimed at having attendance as high as possible in light of the appearance of a special afternoon guest, Governor Alfred Landon. Fr. Weisenberg traveled to Manhattan to confer with Msgr. A. J. Luckey, pastor of Seven Dolors Church and the sodalists of Sacred Heart Academy, who were in charge of the convention. In an interview with the Manhattan paper, Fr. Weisenberg explained the purpose of the sodality in general and the activities of the KSSU in particular, pointing out that young people themselves are encouraged to carry on the discussions in order that they may "develop a spontaneous expression of their faith."³⁹ Fr. Lord was invited to the convention and told exactly what to do. Fr. Weisenberg asked him to be with the Bishop and clergy during the noon luncheon.

The point is that you may be expected to say something about the sodality and its national aspects.
 . . . You see, we don't have you out here every

two or three years just to say hello, but I believe you understand how eager we all are to hear as much from you as possible.⁴⁰

The accommodations in the church where the opening solemn high Mass was heard were far from adequate for the over 1,000 delegates who attended the convention. The morning activities session was held in the ballroom of the Wareham Hotel. Rev. McNeill gave a summary of the activities carried out in the past year on behalf of the rural life movement by the KSSU. The meeting was then turned over to Fr. Lord who led a lengthy discussion of atheism and the Catholic counterattack. In his address on "The Young Catholic in the Changing World," Fr. Lord pointed out two courses of action to eliminate communism and atheism as a threat to Catholicism:

- . . . by obtaining a thorough Catholic education
- . . . and setting up a good example in the practice of Catholic principles.

In uncompromising language he denounced communism and atheism as "heretical movements that will some day be thrown into the scrap heap along with other radical movements that have appeared in the past. . . ." ⁴¹

Resolutions drafted the night before by the resolutions committee were presented to the delegates and approved. One decried the "godlessness and insidious atheism" that was becoming "an increasing menace to the world at large and our own United States in particular." Socialists resolved to take "the most efficacious means to remedy this

ungrateful denial of God and His laws, namely, our own individual holiness. . . ."

A resolution was passed relating to the Legion of Decency Campaign in which the sodalists pledged to continue to back the Legion of Decency crusade "to the utmost," both by abstention from condemned pictures and attendance at the higher-class type of films on the approved lists. They also vowed to "boycott those theatres which, though exhibiting wholesome pictures, nevertheless offend against decency by their immoral stage shows."

Another resolution passed deploring the Foreign Relations Committee's failure to act on Senator Borah's Mexican resolution. It was decided to send a telegram to the president protesting the matter.⁴²

During the luncheon period, group meetings were held under the direction of Fr. Weisenberg with the college and high school units. Officers for the coming year were elected. The nurse conference had a special meeting to discuss nurse-related matters.

The main feature of the afternoon session was the presence of Governor Landon. He was asked to attend the convention by Arthur A. Farrell, secretary of the sodality in Manhattan, who thought it would be a good idea to extend an invitation because "in Manhattan he is quite well thought of and has many friends among the Catholic men and women, the Knights of Columbus being the large supporter of the

idea."⁴³ Landon remained for the entire afternoon and gave a short address at the close of the report of the resolutions committee in which he told the delegates how the Church could make life "worthwhile," and how "Christianity gives a heart and a soul to living." He also urged the Sodality members to take an interest in government and to exercise the right to vote, asserting that "the one who felt he was too good to participate in politics was worse than the machine politician."

When the governor finished speaking to the delegates, he was followed by Bishop Tief, who insisted in his address, much to Fr. Weisenberg's consternation, on an end to the religious bigotry affecting the hiring of public school teachers and "the rights of Catholics in the state of Kansas as regards educational matters."

. . . 'We ask nothing of the state, we are not requesting any help,' said Bishop Tief, 'and thank God, despite the depression we have not been forced to close a single school in the diocese. But we do demand that our rights as citizens be respected.'

The bishop asserted that the questioning of Catholic prospective teachers when applying for a position as to the nature of their religion, resulted in discrimination against those of the Catholic faith and called this an abuse which must be corrected by the proper use of the ballot. The bishop made it clear that it was not owing to the presence of the governor that he spoke as he did but because of the discussions and resolutions presented by the assembled.

The bishop went on to deplore the legislature's failure to pass a law which would have prevented interrogation of applicants for teaching positions concerning their religious

beliefs. In his closing remarks in reference to a resolution passed on education, he urged Catholics to combat atheism, warning that "some university professors were boasting of their disbelief in God."⁴⁴

The issue of discrimination against Catholics referred to by the bishop was alluded to in an article in The Catholic Advance publicizing the defeat of a bill in the Kansas Senate "relating to applications required for applicants for positions in the public schools of Kansas, prohibiting certain inequities therein, and providing penalties for violation thereof."

A grave injustice has been done to many of our Catholic teachers through religious discrimination by prejudiced superintendents or public school board members. It is difficult for our Catholic graduates even of our state educational institutions to obtain positions as public teachers. They are denied their civil rights because of their religion and regardless of their educational qualifications. Proof of these acts were obtained by one of our Catholic organizations a few years ago, but apparently no concerted effort was made to ask our people to urge their representatives to eliminate this injustice, hence the above vote (16 to 18 against).⁴⁵

Socialists passed a resolution to do "all in our power to induce the members of the Legislature of the state of Kansas to correct this violation of liberty and justice by proper legislation in the coming special session or the next regular session." In spite of these efforts the issue was never settled legislatively, but simply became mute as prejudice against Catholics waned in the coming

years. The incident was significant as an example of the kind of social factor, i.e., religious bigotry, which contributed to the inordinate degree of defensiveness among Catholics in these years.

The convention ended with the customary announcements, presentation of awards, some closing remarks by Fr. Weisenberg, and a dance in the Wareham Ball Room.

The editorial in the May Bulletin, "Kansas for Christ," set the tone for the coming year's activities in unequivocal terms:

Kansas for Christ is an offensive--Catholic Action against godless action. Godless action is not confined to Russia. We have our Communists, our atheists theoretical and practical. He who is not with Christ is against Him. But the quasi-passive godless we must help. The militant we fight.

This is good Catholicism, good Americanism. Church and country are in danger from foes as subtle as they are relentless. The attack is on every front. The foe is strong. In religion, art, education, recreation, industry, giant efforts are under way to oust Christ from the Kingship that is His and none other's, to blast the Christian foundations of our homeland and supplant them with foreign atheism. Sodalists? Kansas for Christ!⁴⁶

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER VII

¹Fr. Weisenberg to Fr. Lord, October 15, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²Fr. Lord to Fr. Weisenberg, October 20, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³Fr. Weisenberg, The Sodality in the Rural Parish, Report to the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, St. Paul, Minnesota, November 7, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴KSSU Bulletin, December, 1934.

⁵Fr. Lord to Fr. Weisenberg, December 26, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁶"Why the Jesuits at St. Mary's are Interested in Farm Problems," Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁷Catholic Advance, May 2, 1936.

⁸Francis W. Schruben, Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-1936 (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1969), p. 215.

⁹Minutes of the Meeting, Wichita Diocesan Convention, Wichita, September 29, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁰Minutes of the Meeting, Concordia Diocesan Convention, Salina, October 13, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹¹Mount St. Scholastica Mirror, November 12, 1934.

¹²Minutes of the Meeting, Leavenworth Diocesan Convention, Atchison, October 20, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹³Fr. Weisenberg to Marian Pendergast, November 25, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁴Fr. H. Courtney to Fr. Weisenberg, December 6, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁵St. Benedict's Rambler, February 1, 1935.

¹⁶Fr. Weisenberg to Fr. Demmer, O.S.B., September 19, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁷Fr. Demmer, O.S.B., to Fr. Weisenberg, September 23, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁸Minutes of the Nurses Convention, Wichita, January 17, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁹Elizabeth Honish to Mr. H. J. Duffy at the Central Office, November 9, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²⁰Fr. Lyons to Fr. Weisenberg, December 5, 1934, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²¹Joseph McSorley, An Outline History of the Church by Centuries (St. Louis: Herder Book Co., 1943), pp. 955-956.

²²Ibid., p. 956.

²³The Queen's Work, October, 1934.

²⁴Catholic Advance, November 24, 1934.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶KSSU Bulletin, January, 1935.

²⁷Catholic Advance, January 12, 1935.

²⁸Minutes of the Meeting, Wichita Diocesan Convention, Wichita, February 2, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²⁹Minutes of the Meeting, Concordia Council Diocesan Convention, Junction City, February 8, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³⁰Seven Dolours Parish Bulletin, Manhattan, February 10, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³¹The Borah Resolution (St. Louis: The Queen's Work, October, 1934), Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³²Ibid.

³³Minutes of the Meeting, Leavenworth Diocesan Convention, Kansas City, Kansas, February 16, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³⁴KSSU Bulletin, February, 1935.

³⁵Catholic Advance, October 24, 1934.

³⁶Catholic Advance, February 27, 1935.

³⁷KSSU Bulletin, April, 1935.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Manhattan Morning Chronicle, May 5, 1935.

⁴⁰Fr. Weisenberg to Fr. Lord, April 23, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴¹Minutes of the Meeting, KSSU State Convention, Manhattan, May 5, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Arthur A. Farrell to Fr. Weisenberg, undated, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁴⁴The Catholic Register, May 6, 1935.

⁴⁵Catholic Advance, February 16, 1935.

⁴⁶KSSU Bulletin, May, 1936.

CHAPTER VIII

1935-1936: KANSAS FOR CHRIST

By the fifth year of its existence there were 228 parish and 65 high school and college units affiliated with the KSSU, including virtually every Catholic educational institution in the state.¹ The program for the 1935-36 year was intended to achieve a threefold end: deepening spiritual growth as "untrustworthy Catholics are our greatest peril;" intellectually grasping the truths of the Catholic faith as a living religion to be applied to the problems of the day; and, finally, inaugurating programs intended to overthrow "atheistic communism" so "the social reign of Christ" could be established. These were the goals for which the KSSU sodalists would win "Kansas for Christ" in the coming year.

The intended assault on "atheistic Communism" stemmed in part from the social and religious tensions in Mexico and the belief that if the communists were successful in persecuting and destroying the influence of the Catholic Church in Mexico, then the church in America would be their next victim. It was primarily this assumption that helped to foster a defensive attitude of besiegement.

For some years the Pope and many bishops have viewed with genuine alarm the rapid spread and devastating effects of atheism and communism, and leaders of Catholic thought are agreed that it is now a question of 'Rome or Moscow' and that unless Catholics in the United States, and the world over can do something to stem the tide of atheism we will soon be forced into the 'catacombs' as our brethern in Mexico.²

There were two new organizational developments this year which greatly expanded membership in the KSSU. In early October the Central Office canvassed the state to ascertain information concerning the status and number of parish sodalities.

To meet the demand of graduates from school sodalities for assistance from KSSU in their new field of work for Our Lady, the parish sodality, the Central Office plans to canvass the state in the near future and offer what help it can give to the parish sodalities.

It is with great consolation that the members of the Central Office staff realize that their sodalists have grasped the idea that a primary aim of their training in the school sodality was to prepare them to be active workers in THE sodality, the parish unit.³

Up to this time the Central Office had not been rendering any specific services to the parish sodalities, but now a staff member was appointed to handle affairs and correspondence from parish sodalities.

The second development was the formation of an entirely new unit of the KSSU. In March of 1936, a junior union of sodalities for seventh and eighth grade students was formed in the Concordia Diocese. It was known as the Kansas Junior Sodality Union. Its purpose was to train

"future workers" in the KSSU, and it was viewed by many of the sodality moderators as an answer to the need for training in sodality activity for the younger pupils before they came into the senior division.

Heretofore, without preliminary training, the sodalists could not really become active in the sodality until their junior or senior year, the first⁴ two years being taken up with training them.

Since many of the students, particularly those in rural areas, would not continue their education beyond the eighth grade, the program was also viewed as a means of providing a last opportunity for spiritual training. The new work received the approval of Bishop Tief, the diocesan school board, and the Sisters' Superintendent of Schools in Concordia, Sr. Bernard, C.S.J., and Sr. Romegia, C.S.A. Sr. Petrona of Sacred Heart Junior College in Wichita was the one who suggested to Fr. Weisenberg the idea of affiliating the junior sodalities with the KSSU, although it was Sr. Bernard who initially approached the Bishop in the Concordia Diocese.

In response to your letter I asked the bishop about having the sodality introduced into the seventh and eighth grades. He is satisfied with the experiment to be tried out in the Concordia Diocese.⁵

Most of the grade schools in the diocese affiliated with the KJSU, although not all of the pastors were enthusiastic about the idea.

It is not an easy matter to get a project like this started. The priests are an important element. Some of them are foreign and have never changed their ideas after being here thirty or forty years.⁶

Nevertheless, the junior sodalities grew rapidly in number. No sooner had the experiment been started in Concordia Diocese "than requests began to pour in from all the rest of the state for a similar work in the other two dioceses." In May of 1936, it was announced that when school got under way next fall, "the younger Catholics of Kansas will all be sodality members, beginning with the first grade."⁷

The first diocesan meet of the year was held in the Wichita Diocese at Mt. Carmel Academy in Wichita on October 5, 1935. Fr. Lord, who was attending a diocesan semester meet for the first time, chaired the meet and was the special guest of honor. The night before the convention he gave a public address in the Twentieth Century Auditorium on how the modern literary revival was combating communism. The topics of discussion at the convention were all concerned with ways and means of effectively halting the spread of "militant atheism." Sodalists discussed "Catholicity and Godless Education, Atheism in Russia, Mexican Atheism, Catholic Evidence Work, and Rural Life Activities vs. Atheism" in an open discussion on "The Atheism of Communism" led by Fr. Lord. During the afternoon session, a "Communist" meeting was held with Fr. Lord acting as "chief communist"

and convincing all that the only "safe place" for a Catholic student was in a Catholic college.⁸

The Concordia Diocese held its convention at St. Joseph's College and Military Academy in Hays on October 12. During the morning session Fr. Weisenberg spoke to the delegates on the nature of atheism and communism and its evident influence on American youth.

He gave the sodalists some terrifying statistics. The atheists and the League of the Militant Godless are concentrating their attention on America. The country is divided into districts each centering about prominent cities Father said.

Since 1932 atheism has increased three-hundred percent in the United States. There are thirty-seven daily atheistic newspapers in this country alone and one Catholic daily alone which is struggling for existence.

Recently \$25,000 was sent to the Kansas City headquarters of the League of the Militant Godless to found a night school for training new leaders there.

The atheists, realizing the necessity of teaching children have taken over 17,000 young boy scouts in America into their youth section the "young pioneers" and are instilling into their young and pliant minds atheistic principles.

Fr. Weisenberg concluded by saying that 12,000,000 Russian Catholics had been converted to atheism and there were only 60,000 Christians left. He predicted that within the next twenty years it would be either "atheistic communism, or Catholicism."⁹

Fr. Edwin Dorzweiler, O.F.M.Cap., of the Capuchin seminary faculty in Victoria, Kansas, and organizer of the Catholic Evidence Guilds, spoke to the delegates regarding

evidence guild work. In the afternoon, St. Joseph's College Guild put on a practical demonstration of the technique. Fr. Henry Baumstimler of Plainville addressed the delegates on Catholic education, warning that "since four out of every five Catholics who enter a non-religious college lose their faith, it was courting moral suicide to abandon Catholic schools." Bishop Tief delivered a short address to the sodalists in which he expressed his pleasure at the way in which the convention had brought the young people of his diocese together. At the conclusion of the day's discussions, the assembly marched in a solemn Eucharistic procession in reparation "for the crimes of Atheism." The social hour which was scheduled to begin after the afternoon discussions was shortened due to the length of the talks. It was then decided to extend it into the evening "to the great delight of the delegates."¹⁰

The Leavenworth Diocesan meet was held at St. Mary's College in Leavenworth on October 19. Sodalists discussed topics similar to those covered in the Wichita and Concordia meetings. One theme that was discussed at all three conventions was the belief that communists were doing more than Catholics to propagandize their beliefs. If the ideals of the communists and Catholics were diametrically contrary to one another, their methods of propagandizing were not; and it was the conviction that the communists were out-working, out-selling, and out-proselytizing Catholics that prompted

sodalists of the KSSU to espouse an attitude of militant Catholic Action.

Led by Fr. Gerald Ellard, S.J., the sodalists discussed various ways of combating communism and atheism, making specific reference to the work of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin and the Catholic Worker staff among the impoverished industrial workers of New York City. Dr. A. M. Murphy, president of St. Mary's College, spoke to the delegates on the subject of Catholic education, accusing universities of teaching godlessness "under a cloak of neutrality. . . ." He pointed out that the communist element had become so dangerous on the University of Chicago campus that the state representatives had signed a bill requiring all teachers to take the oath of allegiance to the United States.¹¹

A discussion on the sensitive issue of why more Catholics did not attend Catholic schools revealed that some of the reasons for attending non-Catholic colleges were social, athletic, financial, and lack of an adequate curriculum at Catholic colleges. Some instances of discrimination in public colleges were pointed out, with Fr. Weisenberg citing the example of a Hays boy "who received a D- on his theme because he stated at the end that he hoped to meet his maker face-to-face."

As the result of the discussion on the Mexican situation, a resolution was offered proposing that "every

sodalist and family in the future buy nothing that was made in Mexico." After debate, Fr. Weisenberg pointed out that "the poor people who are Catholics and who are working on some of these articles" would most likely be the first to suffer the consequences of an economic boycott. It was then suggested that "most of the money from merchants went to big business anyway," but the resolution was killed.

November 22 was set aside for the commemoration of Fr. Miguel Pro, S.J., an American priest executed by the Mexican government for purportedly plotting against the life of President Obregon. His martyrdom became a cause celebre among American Catholics, many of whom shared Fr. Charles Coughlin's view that he was "the first martyr to communism in the Americas."

The prime feature of the day's exercises will be Mass, communion, and other spiritual exercises in every school having a sodality for the liberation of Mexico from the hands of its oppressors, and for the perseverance of those who must suffer injustices so acute.

The purely spiritual devotions were to be supplemented by prepared programs of lectures, speeches, plays, and other forms of instructive presentations "by which the sodalists will be brought to a keener realization of the actual suffering that is being borne so near us by thousands and also by which they will be inspired to do all in their power to relieve the situation from this side of the border by conversation with others who may have influence. . . ."12

Bishop Johannes spent the entire day with the sodalists and told them in his address of the importance of their meetings:

They give you a genuine love of your faith. . . . We must stir ourselves, we must become active. Our Catholic religion is worthwhile living for, fighting for, dying for. We cannot love what we do not know. Meetings such as this teach you to know and love your religion.¹³

A novelty of the meet was a large outdoor dinner served on the "Oak Kiln" at the college.

Over 2,000 delegates attended these first conventions of the fall semester. The resolutions passed at the meetings included a commitment to study and discuss the adverse conditions of the Church in Russia, to form study clubs, to disseminate the truth regarding the persecution of the Church in Mexico, to study the methods and extent of the "atheistic education attack" in America, and to supply definite data for furtherance of this project. The sodalists also pledged to continue their support for the educational program of the Church with regard to strengthening and assisting the rural life communities.

In late October Fr. Weisenberg attended the 13th annual convention of the Rural Life Conference and Confraternity of Christian Doctrine meeting in Rochester, New York. Again he related the success of the Kansas sodalists in their rural life projects. Fr. Leon McNeill of Wichita and Miss Violet Kingston, former president of the KSSU, also attended the convention.

One outcome of the fall conventions and the campaign of the KSSU to counter the threat of "irreligion" was a substantial increase in the number of study clubs organized in the individual sodalities. Most of the clubs were engaged in studying some aspect of communism, but others examined the Mass, the life of Christ, problems of social justice, etc. The purpose of the study clubs was to "increase the sodalist's knowledge of the Catholic faith and the enemies she has to fight, most notably, communism."

What the atheistic profs are doing in the colleges, the everyday communist is doing to the Catholic masses--taking Christ out of their hearts and leaving them nothing to live for.¹⁴

Knowledge of the faith gained through participation in the study clubs would counter this surge of spiritual degeneracy and strengthen the sodalist against the threat of atheistic communism covertly penetrating the social fabric of American society.

Communists were not the only ones, however, engaged in a systematic persecution of Christian ideals. The prefect of the sodality at St. Benedict's College was asked by the Central Office in November if he was aware of a campaign urging Catholic schools to protest against America's participation in the upcoming Olympic Games in Germany. The letter from the Central Office stated that while it was true that Germany discriminates against Jews, "who of us does not realize that our Catholic athletes, too, are being ruled out of the Olympics solely on the grounds of their religion?"

An article had appeared in the October issue of Commonweal by George N. Shuster, managing editor of the magazine, declaring that the Berlin Olympics of 1936 "have an evident and sinister anti-Catholic purpose." The games were a pageant glorifying National Socialism "as the up-to-date religion of youth"; and aside from the idolatry of the state, the Nazis had abrogated by force "one of the fundamental provisions of the Concordat and undid the work of more than a century of vigorous German Catholic Action."¹⁵

Sodalists at St. Benedict's were asked to do something to make American Catholics "Olympic-conscious and persecution-minded" by sponsoring a program whereby they would urge the other schools in the state to protest American participation in the Olympics. They were asked to contact all the boys' schools in the KSSU and have each student write a post card protest to Mr. J. Mahoney, director of the Amateur Athletic Union, who would preside at a meeting of the AAU on December 6 to decide definitely whether or not the United States would take part in the games.

St. Mary College at Leavenworth was asked to contact all the girl colleges in the state on the same matter. Letters were sent informing their sister colleges that "no Catholic should share in these games, either as a participant or a supporter without aiding and abetting an effort to destroy the Christian faith."¹⁶

In December the Central Office announced that Miss Dorothy Day, "nationally known editor of the Catholic Worker," would be the featured speaker at the February mid-semester conventions, and she would also speak to public audiences in various towns throughout the state according to an itinerary being prepared for her by the Central Office. To publicize her appearance and as a practical application of the work done in the study clubs sponsored by the college unit for combating "atheistic communism," Virginia Lysaught of St. Mary College in Leavenworth, president of the KSSU, announced the launching of a campaign to spread the Catholic Worker.

If agreeable to the pastor and the moderator of the sodality, each school belonging to the KSSU is requested to purchase monthly 100 or more copies of The Catholic Worker and distribute them regularly and systematically in taxi-cabs, buses, trains, railroad stations, and in other public places or conveyances where the average worker will always have free access to them.¹⁷

The campaign, which had the approval of Bishop Johannes, was not to mean that the sodalists were to cease distributing The Queen's Work, "but we feel that the Catholic Worker is the working man's paper and would have more universal appeal."

Bishop Tief of the Concordia Diocese had some initial reservations about the project in view of Miss Day's recent background. In a letter to the KSSU State Corresponding Secretary, Major Louis Bushey of St. Joseph's College in Hays who had asked his permission for the distribution wrote:

No doubt it would be safe for me to do so; however, you know that she is a recent convert to the Church from Communism. Therefore in my position I must be careful in fostering her magazine.¹⁸

The Bishop instructed Major Bushey to ask Fr. Weisenberg for his opinion and then have Fr. Weisenberg advise him of Miss Day's reliability. Fr. Weisenberg dispelled his fears and the campaign was subsequently begun.

Dorothy Day was a native of New York and the daughter of an American journalist. At the age of twelve she became a member of the Episcopalian Church; but in later years, notably after her graduation from the University of Illinois, she became an avowed atheist and "ardent communist writer." From the beginning, as a free lance writer and in her early career as a journalist, she became associated with the struggles of the working class, spending much of her time picketing and giving street talks in New York. During her imprisonment for a minor penal offense, she read a copy of the New Testament, and traced her conversion to Catholicism to this incident. In 1933, together with Peter Maurin, she began The Catholic Worker in the kitchen of an East Side New York tenement house. The rest of her life has been passionately dedicated to furthering social justice based on Christian principles.

In the 1930's the reform program of the Catholic Worker Movement was viewed by most Catholics as a viable alternative to the radicalism of communism and the potential

welfare-state policies of the Roosevelt Administration.

The Catholic Workers believed that all Christians, if not indeed all men, should embrace decent poverty, that is, be satisfied with a minimum sufficiency of food, shelter, and clothing. Should they do this, they could have the disposition, the material and spiritual strength with which to carry on the works of mercy and thus to lift the destitute poor out of their hopelessness and misery. Miss Day claimed with a breath of serene triumph that the houses of hospitality--soup kitchens, discussion clubs, and reform centers all in one--were true object lessons in poverty's success. The Catholic workers stressed personal rather than state responsibility for the care of the poor. . . .¹⁹

It was her familiarity with communism in the 1930's that made Dorothy Day the choice of the Central Office as the featured speaker for the mid-semester meets.

No one who can get the opportunity of hearing Miss Day should let the chance slip. She has a knowledge of Communism from study and direct contact with it that few can claim. The chance which is given to us of Kansas, many throughout the country have wished for in vain. Be sure to hear her--more than once if possible. Tell your parents and friends to hear her.²⁰

During her two week stay in Kansas Dorothy Day made 24 different public appearances in various cities and towns in Kansas, including Dodge City, Pratt, Parsons, Ft. Scott, St. Paul, Topeka, Manhattan, Kansas City, Atchison, Ottawa, Paola, Leavenworth, Salina, Beloit, and Wichita. The socialists, for their part, aided her cause by soliciting over 2,000 subscriptions to the Catholic Worker.

On January 11, the second state nurses' convention was held at St. Margaret's Hospital in Kansas City, Kansas. The previous November, a questionnaire had been sent to all

nurse sodality units asking if they believed a separate state convention was necessary. Most moderators answered no. A reply from Sr. Mary Basil, moderator of the sodality at Providence Hospital in Kansas City, was typical of the attitude prevailing among the nurses.

At a meeting of our Sodality last night we discussed the question put forward in your recent letter, concerning the necessity of holding a separate state convention for nurses' sodalities. At the close of the discussion the nurses almost unanimously agreed that the regular conventions with a special session for nurses would suffice to satisfy our needs. It was decided that our problems are not different enough from those of other schools to justify the expense of a special convention.²¹

Miss Elizabeth Honisch, president of the KSSU Nurses Conference, expressed the opposite point of view.

We nurses need it and need it bad. . . . I got something out of them (state meets) but not enough. Nurses are not in the same class with high school and academic students, their problems are markedly different and although a brave attempt was made at Manhattan to include the nurses and give them their special meet. . . . It is my estimation an utter impossibility.²²

In the work of the meeting following the opening Mass said by Bishop Johannes, the nurses discussed efforts to plan definite activities for the coming year. Fr. Lyons attended the convention and spoke on "The Social-Cultural Life of Nurse Sodalists." After the election of hospitals to choose officers for the state, the convention closed with Benediction and a social hour. The issue of a separate convention remained unresolved for the time being.

The first second semester meet was held in Wichita on February 1 at the Twentieth Century Club. The main topic of discussion was "Atheistic Communism and the Catholic Remedy," with Dorothy Day as the featured speaker. She pointed out that because communism and Catholicism are two opposite philosophies, a Catholic "cannot be a communist and still remain a practicing Catholic." The best way to fight communism was to try to convert its adherents because "they are well-meaning people; their aim is ideal and Christian--but their philosophy and methods are wrong because they are ignorant of the right teaching." Sodalists were asked to do what the communists were doing and "become martyrs to the cause for both capital and labor." During the afternoon session held in Cathedral High Auditorium, Miss Day answered questions on communism proposed by the sodalists.

After thanking the sodalists for their pledge of support and loyalty to him, Bishop Schwertner praised the work of the KSSU.

I am very pleased with the sodality work in the diocese. I have watched the movement very closely during the several years it has been in existence. I was a bit skeptical at first. I have seen many sodalities: I have been a sodalist since a small boy. Each sodality was alone, went its own way. I think it is through its organization, its union, that the sodality has accomplished so much in the diocese. And I want to make public expression of my appreciation and of the splendid work it has done in the diocese.²³

The bishop concluded his remarks by proposing a drive for The Catholic Advance. The following week an article

appeared in The Advance reminding the sodalists they "had promised the bishop to support the paper." Two practical suggestions were proposed: sodalists in the diocese were to adopt the slogan "The Advance in every Catholic home," and they were to get one other subscription besides their own. The article spoke disappointingly about the 1935 drive.

Last year the sodalists in the city made a house-to-house canvass for subscriptions. Three hundred sodalists participated in the drive and approximately 2,000 Catholic homes in Wichita were on the list of prospective subscribers. But the drive, which bogged down for various reasons, netted the Advance only 48 new paid subscriptions.²⁴

The drive in 1936 proved to be no more of a success.

In April The Advance reported the disparaging results and lack of sodality support.

The high school sodalists in the Wichita Diocese, who last year and again this year promised the Bishop to put on a drive for Advance subscriptions, evidently were not in great interest about the matter. To date the only city sodality unit to have made a drive is the Cathedral unit of 400 members. This unit handed the Advance office 83 paid subscriptions, which were gratefully received. But with 1,200 city families to solicit, the Cathedral students might have done better.²⁵

There appear to be three factors responsible for the hostile attitude of the paper: the feeling that many Catholic organizations were flourishing as a result of publicity in the pages of The Advance, but were not showing their appreciation for that support by subscribing to the paper; resentment that "foreign papers" like The Sunday

Visitor and the Denver Register were being sold in the diocese at a time when The Advance was undergoing acute economic problems; and the fact that the paper took a small financial loss in printing up special subscription blanks for the sodality drive.

Despite severe winter weather conditions, some 500 Leavenworth sodalists met at the Roof Top Garden of the Hotel Kansan in Topeka on February 8, to discuss first semester resolutions and communist activities relative to the family, the press, recreation, education, and the Church. Dorothy Day spoke to a meeting of the Knights of Columbus the night before and then addressed the convention delegates on Saturday. It was reported to be worthy of note and indicative of the interest of the clergy in the work of young people that "every pastor of the city of Topeka, besides many of the clergy from out of town, was present." Bishop Johannes was confined to bed by illness and did not attend the meeting.²⁶

The last second semester meeting was held in the Concordia Diocese on February 15, at the Public High Auditorium in Beloit. A number of different talks were presented illustrating the difference between Catholic and communistic ideals. Miss Day addressed the assembly on the same issues and answered questions on communism during the afternoon session. In her address she warned that "Communists are just biding their time when they can

step in, seize the government, and establish in our country a dictatorship of the proletariat as they have in Russia." As an effective means of combating the threat of communism she recommended that Catholics put into practice "the principles of Mother Church, and that all unite in promoting social justice and peace in our country."²⁷

All three of the mid-semester conventions were attended for the first time by a large number of parish sodalities. The resolutions passed at each convention were virtually the same, stressing unity and loyalty to the Church that would be as efficient and extensive as "communist youth activities." Any external actions were to be accompanied by spiritual exercises in which the sodalists pledged

To make a serious attempt to devote a few minutes each day if possible to the practice of mental prayer; that each sodalist strive to make at least one act of self-sacrifice each day if possible in reparation to the Sacred Heart for the sins of Atheistic Communism, the conversion of Communists, and the spread of Christ's Kingdom.²⁸

A pledge of loyalty and a promise "to work with all our hearts in the work of Catholic Action that is proposed to us by his direction" was made to each of the bishops. The sodalists further promised to make every effort to restore the sanctity of the family and use practical means to make the home an attractive center of family and social life since it was now undergoing attack by "communist" elements in American society. With regard to recreational

activities, sodalists pledged not to take part in any activities that could "destroy faith and morals and build up a godless society," vowing to patronize only such social activities as came up to sodality ideals of "clean entertainment."

Aware of the necessity of "proper" educational training and "the dangers that accompany secular university training," sodalists resolved:

that the high school graduates pledge themselves to register, if possible, in a Catholic College; and that a committee be appointed in each college unit and each senior class of high school units to study the advantages of, and ways and means of securing a Catholic education.²⁹

A capacity crowd of over 800 attended the finals of the KSSU Apologetics Contest held on March 26 at the Memorial Building in Topeka. This was the seventh year of competition and the first time all of the judges were from outside the state. Gerald Marnell of St. Joseph's Military Academy in Hays, Kansas, won first prize with his address on "The Immaculate Conception."

Preparations for the state convention celebrating the fifth birthday of the KSSU called for a special program.

Departing from the procedure of former years, we have decided to have the major portion of the convention consist in open-forum discussion on three general points: (a) This year's projects; (b) Sodality organization; (c) Our KSSU Union.³⁰

To help the delegates prepare for the discussions, a special set of questions pertaining to the above was sent

to all the units in the state with the request that everyone be frank and honest in their replies and "speak their minds freely."

Despite the extremely bad weather of the two days preceding the state convention, 1,200 sodalists from all parts of Kansas gathered at Mt. St. Scholastica in Atchison on May 2, 1936, for the fifth annual convention of the KSSU. New features at this convention included a field mass in the morning, a slogan contest, and a contest for the best scrapbook on "Communism" submitted by a school.

The opening address was given by Rev. Bonaventure Schwinn, O.S.B., of St. Benedict's Abbey, vice-president of Mt. St. Scholastica College. Each unit then gave a brief report on their best and worst project of the year, with Fr. Weisenberg moderating the discussions. Cathedral High School of Wichita reported that its worst project was the abortive effort to sell Catholic Advance subscriptions. Fr. Weisenberg pointed out, however, that they should not take too much blame because "they were a sort of clean-up squad to get the subscriptions that nobody else could get." No one project stood out as generally successful or generally a failure owing to such factors as "size of school, town, boarding or day school, coeducational or non-coeducational system, presence or lack of specialists on faculties, limited library resources or the opposite, concentration on a gifted few or effort to interest all students,

cooperation or no cooperation from faculties." Fr.

Weisenberg expressed some displeasure that not enough of the projects were directed specifically toward the special program of the year, "combating atheistic communism."

Are we doing the wrong thing in getting an elaborate set of resolutions that are prepared in order to give one definite project for the year, and then you disregard them and take up the ordinary things.

All of the delegates agreed that they had learned a good deal about atheism and communism, and that the best offense would be the positive Catholicity planned in some of the resolutions of the past year.

In the discussion of Sodality Organization most schools reported using "The ABC of Sodality Organization" as the general plan of their units. It was agreed that the sodality was the best organization to lead the campus and cooperation with other clubs was urged. There was much difference of opinion on the amount and method of leadership, with the Central Office supporting the view that the matter of election or appointment of officers "can best be settled by a golden mean in which the students elect, as intelligently and honestly as possible, those of their companions who have the most interest and ability in Sodality work." The moderator or director of the sodality was then to assign the work. At the officer's luncheon an amendment was made to the state constitution that gave Fr. Weisenberg authority to appoint the state officers

annually for the next three years.

During the afternoon discussion on "The KSSU" the delegates debated the value of the February mid-semester meetings. Some of the schools objected to those meets because of the distances, travel expenses, and potentially hostile weather conditions, suggesting that perhaps just the officers might attend the meetings. There was also the added expense for the school sponsoring the convention. Fr. Weisenberg was not in agreement with this point of view, arguing that "they have money for basketball games, football games, and dances. They could get it three times a year for sectional meetings." One of the delegates suggested a registration fee to help the school sponsoring the convention defray the expenses. Fr. Weisenberg objected to this proposal, pointing out that it was cooperation and self-sacrifice that had made the KSSU the success. "I am opposed to putting in dues. We have kept money out of it and will get into trouble if we put money into it." He said that with the present rotation system, "each school would not have to sponsor a state meet oftener than once every ten years." The assembly agreed that the ideas and enthusiasm derived from the conventions were the best reason for having them. Fr. Weisenberg promised the Central Office would canvass the moderators for their opinion of the matter and report the results in October.

It was agreed that the method of drawing up resolutions that had allowed one school to monopolize that issue would be changed to allow each school to draw up a resolution to submit to the resolutions committee before the convention. The general opinion of the convention also favored a transfer of some of the burdens of the Central Office to the sodalists themselves; "the Central Office is doing too much, OR, at least, the officers would welcome a chance to do more."

It was decided to continue The Bulletin with the same method of finance and the same general make-up. In speaking of the expenses of the Central Office, Fr. Weisenberg told the delegates it took approximately \$125 to print The Bulletin and contributions from the schools had covered all the expense. He said it took an additional \$500 for assorted expenses to run the operation, "and this is met by stipends, by retreats, by lectures, etc." He also mentioned his gratitude to the railroads.

The railroads furnish me with free transportation--the Union Pacific, the Missouri Pacific, and the Rock Island especially--and we should patronize their roads.

The delegates agreed that there was a need to do something for the graduate sodalist: "their excellencies the Bishops have urged that something be done." Fr. Weisenberg emphasized cooperation with the pastors and establishment of parish sodalities in which sodalists

would be the "soul" of these organizations by bringing to them the spirit and skill learned in the KSSU.

Fr. J. Roger Lyons attended the convention and spoke to the delegates, congratulating them on the "excellent work" they had done during the last five years. He also tried to explain the publicity problem with The Queen's Work since the union did not feel it was receiving adequate representation in that magazine.

Bishop Johannes praised the Kansas Sodalists "as representative students of a state which stands in the front rank for educational work in the U.S." He contended that the success of the KSSU was attributable to the fact that they had good leaders. At the conclusion of his address he distributed the awards won in the various contests sponsored over the year by the KSSU. The day's activities ended with a process, Benediction, and a dance held in the gymnasium of the college.³¹

Fr. Weisenberg's last message to the sodalists before the summer vacation summed up his appraisal of the first five years.

KSSU has completed the first five years of its activity in the service of Christ and His Blessed Mother. You have proved yourselves zealous workers in the great cause. After these five years of working with you, I think that I may say with the backing of ample experience and without flattery that I consider the Catholic youth of our Union the equal of any in the world, perhaps a little better. In the years that are to come when you will be in the front lines of the army of Christ I sincerely trust that you will be as valiant and as ardent in your service of the Master as your beginnings in that service have the promise of being.³²

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER VIII

¹Record of affiliation, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²Fr. Weisenberg to Sodality Moderator at Andale, Kansas, September 24, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³KSSU Bulletin, October, 1935.

⁴Catholic Advance, March 14, 1935.

⁵Sr. Bernard to Fr. Weisenberg, April 2, 1936, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁶Ibid.

⁷KSSU Bulletin, May, 1936.

⁸Minutes of the Meeting, Wichita Diocesan Convention, Wichita, October 5, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

⁹Sacred Heart Gleanings, October 12, 1935.

¹⁰KSSU Bulletin, October, 1935.

¹¹Minutes of the Meeting, Leavenworth Diocesan Convention, Leavenworth, October 19, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹²The Catholic Register, November 21, 1935.

¹³The Catholic Register, October 24, 1935.

¹⁴Central Office to Sodality Prefect at Marymount College, undated, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁵Catholic Advance, October 30, 1935.

¹⁶State President to College Prefects, undated, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁷The St. Mary Taber, January, 1936.

¹⁸Bishop Tief to Major Bushey, December 28, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

¹⁹"Dorothy Day," in American Catholic Thought on Social Questions, ed. Aaron L. Abell (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Inc., 1968), p. 415.

²⁰KSSU Bulletin, February, 1936.

²¹Sr. Mary Basil to Fr. Weisenberg, September 27, 1935, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²²Elizabeth Honish to Fr. Weisenberg, undated, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²³Minutes of the Meeting, Wichita Diocesan Convention, Wichita, February 1, 1936, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²⁴Catholic Advance, February 8, 1936.

²⁵Catholic Advance, April 4, 1936.

²⁶Minutes of the Meeting, Leavenworth Diocesan Convention, Topeka, February 8, 1936, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²⁷Minutes of the Meeting, Concordia Diocesan Convention, Beloit, February 15, 1936, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

²⁸Catholic Advance, February 29, 1936.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Fr. Weisenberg to Sodality Prefects, March 31, 1936, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³¹Minutes of the Meeting, KSSU State Convention, Atchison, May 2, 1936, Kansas State Historical Society, Sodality Union File.

³²KSSU Bulletin, May, 1936.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST FIVE YEARS IN RETROSPECT

Prior to the formation of the Kansas State Sodality Union, there had been no systematically organized effort to consolidate and coordinate the religious, social, and apostolic activities of the Catholic youth of the state. There were some religious youth organizations like the Holy Name Society, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and some sodalities functioning in the parishes, high schools, and colleges; but none of their activities extended beyond the confines of their own school, parish or diocese. The formation of the KSSU radically altered this situation by centralizing these activities, associating them with a national movement, and promoting a spirit of religious mission and unity among the schools. This development, in turn, encouraged the realization of Catholic cultural identity by publicizing and propagating Catholic social and apostolic programs within the larger framework of the Church in the state of Kansas.

The psychological significance of the sodality organization to the youth of the time was an important aspect of its value. Insofar as the sodality constituted

an important reference group for a considerable segment of the Catholic youth of the state, it engendered an identification basic to the individual sodalist's own self-concept. The individual sodalist was part of what, at the time, was a prestigious religious movement growing in popularity and influence. The rituals and disciplines of sodality life were symbols of this association. The sodality commitment to exemplary Christian living not only identified the individual with this larger movement, but implicitly encouraged him to view himself as somewhat above the run-of-the-mill Catholic of the day. This important psychological function of membership in an organization like the sodality assumes added significance when considered in the general context of the social disarray of the depression years. The statewide contests, the conventions, the apostolic and charitable works, the religious rituals and pageantry, all sharpened this sense of identity and served to both symbolize and reinforce it.

The success of the Kansas State Sodality Union during the first five years is attributable to several factors. To begin with, it had the enthusiastic support of the Bishops of the Leavenworth, Concordia, and Wichita dioceses. In a time characterized by clerical domination and control over all lay activities within the Catholic Church, this official sanctioning was essential and prerequisite for any hope of building a successful statewide movement. Generally

speaking, there was little opposition to the formation of sodality units in the individual parishes. Most pastors were eager to receive the educational "services" made available through the sodality. In a few isolated instances, most notably in several rural parishes, there were covert expressions of resentment that "outside" influences (i.e., the Jesuits) were operating within a particular parish, but these rarely led to the sodality being excluded from a school.

A second factor was the presence of a statewide parochial school system staffed by different communities of Sisters to whom the pietistic devotions of the sodality were especially attractive. These women were eager to function as sodality moderators. They served as ardent publicists of sodality ideals and did a great deal of the organizational work at the local level. Their role as a liaison between the Central Office and the students and their work in directing sodality activities was indispensable.

Thirdly, the availability of the administrative help of the scholastics at St. Mary's College provided an invaluable service to Fr. Weisenberg in relieving him of the mountainous load of correspondence resulting from the growing number of sodality affiliations. The presence of the Central Office staff, aside from providing a reservoir of clerical assistance and practical ideas, enabled Fr. Weisenberg to make frequent contact with pastors, moderators, and sodalists

throughout the state by freeing him from the burden of administrative drudgery. In conjunction with the National Sodality Office in St. Louis, and under the careful direction of Fr. Weisenberg, the scholastics at St. Mary's assisted in creating a comprehensive program of Catholic activities within the framework of Catholic Action and sodality goals.

Finally, there was the critical role of Fr. Weisenberg himself. His organizational acumen, his ability to delegate authority yet maintain control over a situation, his zeal and genuine faith in the ability of young people to play an active role in propagating their religious beliefs, all reflected his importance in the KSSU. He judiciously avoided any situation or issues that could have caused conflicts within the union, always stressing the statewide dynamics of the movement. He divorced the touchy issues of financing from sodality affairs. The Bulletin and the costs of holding a convention would remain within the domain of charity and not the financial resources of any particular school, a situation that would have given a marked advantage to the larger schools. He traveled extensively throughout the state, visiting schools, encouraging sodality moderators and directors in their work, and promoting sodality ideals and goals among the Catholics of Kansas. His travel throughout the state on sodality business was so extensive that there were stories about him "catching his mail almost

on the fly as the train he was on passed through St. Mary's."¹

A serious problem encountered in organizing and maintaining the Sodality Union was the tendency for parochial, diocesan interests to preempt the sodality concern for the goals of the Church universal. One illustration of this situation in the years covered in this study was the niggardly acceptance and outright rejection of the "Press Drives" sponsored by the KSSU during Catholic Press Month. The Sodality Union attempted to promote a variety of Catholic publications as a means of promoting the faith. In the Wichita Diocese the program was rejected because of the serious economic difficulties of the diocesan paper, The Advance. As the drive was being organized it became apparent that the diocese did not want "outside" or "foreign" papers in its territory, even if they were Catholic, "when its own paper was selling so dismally. Later the sodalists were accused of reneging on their commitment to a subscription drive for The Advance when, in fact, the most apparent reason the paper would not sell was its poor quality and lack of innovative journalism resulting from strict financial control. Catholics were expected to support a paper, not because it was worthy of the reading public and offered quality journalism, but because it was the "official organ" of the Bishop.

Another example of parochial interests damaging the statewide cohesion of the movement was the withdrawal of

St. Benedict's College from an active role in sodality affairs. The KSSU attempted to operate within the larger goal of working for the good of the Catholic Church in toto. Trying to accomodate the diversity of interests in the numerous schools and colleges and in three different dioceses made this a difficult and demanding task. It would ultimately lead, in part, to the demise of the sodality movement in the state.

There were three distinct features of sodality activities in these early years: they were primarily educational, they were clerically dominated, and they were preoccupied with question of public morality, e.g., birth control, "illicit" films, "obscene" literature, and the promoting of Catholic propaganda through the variety of contests sponsored by the Union and an assortment of publicity campaigns including radio programs and the distribution of Catholic literature pamphlets. Occasionally protests were directed against specific individuals like the effort of the Sacred Heart Junior College Sodalists to get the Catholic Action Committee in Wichita to send a "committee of defense" to the Kansas State Teachers Association Convention in 1935 to challenge the address of a Manhattan High School biology teacher who had "openly expressed his disbelief in God."²

Of all of the activities of the Sodality Union that had political overtones relative to Catholic interests, the protests against the persecution of Catholics in Mexico were

the most numerous and vocal. Catholics in Kansas, and Catholics nationally, viewed the refusal of the American government to denounce the persecution of the Church in Mexico as a direct affront. It served to remind them of their political impotency and second class citizenship.³ The silence was especially irksome because the campaign was waged on the grounds that what the Mexican government was doing to the Catholic Church in Mexico was totally repugnant to the constitutional spirit of religious liberty, as opposed to the idea that it was a program against the Catholic Church per se. In other words, Catholics attempted to gain support for their cause by appealing to American political doctrine and not particular sentiments vis-a-vis the Catholic Church.

The sodality was utilized by the clergy to bring attention to the situation in Mexico; not only in the general public, but among Catholics as well, particularly those whose attitude of indifference was characterized as being like that of "Cain or Pontius Pilate." The sodality campaign of protest, letter writing, collection of money, etc., helped to focus Catholic attention on their persecuted brethren across the river.

One of the most active efforts on behalf of the Mexican cause was undertaken by the sodalists at Sacred Heart Junior College in Wichita. An "International Relations Bureau" with Rev. John H. Lopez, C.S.S.R., as

chairman was organized to keep the sodalists and others "informed." Congressmen and government leaders were bombarded with letters of protest. A letter was sent to Rev. Charles Coughlin asking him to "devote a special radio address to the Mexican cause." Many of the letters sent to prominent national leaders asked that they "form a delegation of religious and civil authority to meet with Mexican officials to plead for some plan of peace."⁴

The end result of the entire situation was that nothing was done by the United States government to alleviate the persecution of Catholics in Mexico, despite the efforts of the clergy, the Catholic press, and organizations like the sodality to win some sign of support. It was difficult for many Catholics to understand why a government that championed religious liberty failed to speak out, especially when the situation arose so near its own border. The episode made Catholics vividly aware of their minority status and political impotency.

The campaign on behalf of Catholics in Mexico continued through 1934-35, but was soon overshadowed by the holocaust that erupted in Spain, where once again Catholics viewed their faith as the innocent victim of the scourge of "atheistic communism." The Kansas Sodalists rigorously promoted the cause of Franco and the Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War, and persecution of the Catholic Church in Mexico soon became a mute issue as succeeding

Mexican governments began to pursue a policy of reconciliation with the Church.

The most salient features of the activities of the Kansas Sodalists, particularly those that involved public protest, was their symbolic nature and the fact that they were more emotional than substantive. Virtually all of the public acts of protest were carefully orchestrated gestures empty of anything that could possibly be construed as political militancy. Use of boycott or any other political weapon that would appear offensive to the dominant cultural group was discouraged. The only instance in which the pressures of an economic boycott were brought to bear in furtherance of Catholic Action was in the case of the Legion of Decency Campaign; and, even in this situation, the admonishment to avoid the movies was based primarily on a moral prohibition against placing oneself in an approximate occasion of sin, and not on use of the boycott as a political means of furthering their aims. The protests of the sodalists, their efforts to promote their ideals and establish a "Christian Social Order" was symbolic, rhetorical gestures, and this, in turn, contributed to their ineffectiveness. It was a reflection of this historical predicament, i.e., the efforts of the Catholic Church to accommodate itself to a society in which it was numerically, culturally, and politically in the minority, and an expression of an obsession with issues of public sexuality, that caused the

campaign against "illicit" books, magazines, and films, to generate far more concern and activity among the Catholics of Kansas than did the flagrant violation of their constitutional rights by public school boards. The issue of censorship at the time was generally supported by most all of the Protestant Churches, and Catholics capitalized on these sentiments. Discrimination against prospective Catholic teachers was not, and Catholics in general avoided aggravating this issue in spite of the fact that its consequences were far more immediate than what was happening in Mexico.

During the period of time covered in this thesis, Catholics in Kansas manifested what appeared to be a subliminal desire to remain socially respectable and politically inoffensive often at the expense of compromising their own interests and overlooking the need for fundamental reform in society. The chagrin at Bishop Tief's remarks at the state convention in the presence of Governor Landon in 1935 concerning the discrimination against Catholic teachers reflected the prevalence of this attitude. In return for what might be described as political passivity, Catholics were allowed to incorporate themselves into the dominant culture while at the same time maintaining their own cultural distinctiveness. Indeed, the principal significance of the activities of the sodalists was the way in which they symbolically allowed Catholics to maintain a

commitment to their religious ideals without jeopardizing their assimilation into American culture. A symbolic act is psychologically significant irrespective of its consequences inasmuch as it provides a situation for social catharsis and creates the illusion that something meaningful is being accomplished.

While the work of the Sodality Union was less than successful in the domain of influencing public opinion on behalf of Catholic interests, it did create a basic unity of spiritual and social values that were important to Catholic ethnocentrism. It also had a high degree of educational value in alerting the Catholic youth of Kansas to the pertinent issues of their times. If the individual sodalist had little influence in changing the public attitude regarding atheism, communism, or the persecution of Catholics in Mexico, he at least learned something about the situation himself.

In spite of their shortcomings, the KSSU was firmly established by the fifth year of its existence in the parochial school system and Catholic colleges throughout the state. It had achieved a national reputation for its enthusiastic work. It had grown rapidly and had begun pioneer work in the training of Catholic lay leaders. In short, the road ahead looked challenging but secure. That situation would soon be altered, but that alteration is beyond the scope of this thesis.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER IX

¹Robert Purcell, S.J., to author, August 21, 1973.

²Sacred Heart Junior College, Kansas Newman College, Wichita, Sodality Union File.

³David O'Brien, Jr., American Catholics and Social Reform (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 80. O'Brien contends that Americans were generally apathetic to the situation in Mexico, but prominent liberals publicly deprecated reports of persecution because of the Church's ties with the aristocracy and counter-revolutionary classes.

⁴Sacred Heart Junior College, Kansas Newman College, Wichita, Sodality Union File.

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