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Introduction

Patty Crowley was an embodiment of Vatican II's call for "universal holiness." Her everyday sanctity was a rejection of the modern temptation to live in isolation. Too many young adults today, it seems, succumb to the superficial and navigate their way using cliché-ridden conversation. They have hundreds of contacts in their electronic social network, but few abiding friendships. Patty was rich in significant relationships with family members and neighbors. In addition she cultivated a vast network of public friendships, without trying to be everyone's intimate friend. In that sense she was a pioneer in social networking, but she didn't use a computer program. Her favorite networking tool was a coffee cup. As follow-up tools after making the initial personal encounter, she used the post office and the telephone (a land line).

The modern expression of Christianity, especially here in the United States, is heavy on the individual's singular relationship to God—among evangelicals, mainline Protestants and even Catholics. Patty saw things differently. She liked to assert a Catholic Action slogan: "Christians are not saved in isolation."

Patty was not a troublemaker in the sense that she couldn't wait to awaken and stir the pot. Patty was sensitive to institutional insiders. She, along with her husband Patrick Crowley (1911-1974), cared about style, tone, gesture, timing, smoothing the path, checking back after a meeting, getting one more person on board. She avoided taking credit because she knew that many hands were involved. She also knew that each accomplishment was imperfect and in need of the next person to make it better.

On the other hand, Patty didn't expect change to easily come from the inside, particularly inside the church. She knew many bishops, public officials and a few power brokers. She was courteous and respectful to all of them. She never, however, waited for permission to live her Christianity. Baptism gave Patty all the permission she needed. She woke up each day, looked around for friends and allies, and then shouldered her responsibility for her family and her world. Patty lived by the motto: To do nothing is to be nothing.

Cardijn

The communion hymn for Patty's funeral, written by a member of the Christian Family Movement (CFM) and selected by Theresa Crowley, Patty's youngest daughter, has a final verse that reflects a sign of hope. It gives us an entry point to Patty's story—albeit one that involves going back a long way. The verse is: *"CFM emerges. Amen. To spread a simple notion. Amen. Observe, Judge and Act. Amen. Amen."* "Observe, judge, act" is shorthand for the basic method of specialized Catholic Action (capital *C*, capital *A*).

Going back a long way takes us to the Middle Ages when the church and society influenced one another through direct contact between bishops, princes and other leaders. A change occurred with modernity, however. Society's leaders were either hostile to or indifferent to church officials—especially as the church lost its vast property holdings. As Western Europe became urban and industrial, the church faced competition for the allegiance of working people, notably from secularism and, beginning in the 1850s, from communism.

Joseph Leo Cardijn (1882-1967) of Belgium, ordained a priest in 1906 and late in life made a cardinal, devoted his ministry to young adults. His premise differed from some of those in youth and young adult ministry today who desire to bring people to Christianity.

First, a common approach now is to attract young adults *into the church* by way of social events, vibrant liturgy, service projects and more. These popular programs are worthwhile. Cardijn worried, however, that sometimes youth ministry can unwittingly reinforce individualism by isolating the young adult from his or her total environment and conveying the impression that the church is separate from that environment. Instead, Cardijn sought to *bring Christianity* to young workers and to form them in small communities.

Second and with exceptions, youth and young adult ministry today is often primarily something *done for* young people, often with an emphasis on social activities. Devoted youth ministers—professionals and volunteers—patiently craft and execute programs that attract and nourish some young people. With a different point of view Cardijn developed a youth ministry done *by youth* with an emphasis on their

own formation—what he called preparation for life or *a school in life*.

Third, youth and young adult ministry today often measures its success by the eventual involvement of the young people in parish life: its liturgical functions, its outreach programs and even its clubs. Sensitive to the hardships of girls working in shops, of young soldiers, sailors, and of factory workers, Cardijn wanted Catholicism to be meaningful in real life settings, not just inside a parish church.

In 1912 Cardijn began an experiment with about 30 girls who were members of a parish-based social club. He introduced a new focus by grouping the girls in study circles. He invited them to discuss their family and work conditions. Officers were elected and dues collected. More circles were added and a newsletter was published. A new name, Christian Workers League, was adopted. The CWL grew and lasted until 1934.

In those early months Cardijn also formed ten small occupational groups of girls, using the same ideas. Some boys in the area were jealous of the opportunity for girls. (This is a reaction that is repeated in Patty's story, though the genders are reversed.) Eventually, the boys' groups were called League of Pius X.

Cardijn's efforts met with degrees of opposition. (This is another reaction that will recur in Patty's story.)

First, some objected that these young adult groups did not fit into a diocesan flow chart; that attention to the workweek was a distraction from parish-centered activities (which were on the flow chart). Second, his movement was from the ground up, which was a departure from the official church style of influencing the world through contact with individual elite leaders. Third, some said Cardijn's movement was too radical; that it played into the hands of the communists. Finally, some criticized his groups for emphasizing social involvement at the expense of spiritual development.

In a biography of Cardijn, Michael La Bedoyere counters all these objections. Cardijn was aware that communism was gaining adherents because of its commitment to the world of work and the meaning of that world. Communism also had a method for organizing. Thus, borrowing the communist model, Cardijn developed small cells of young workers that could discuss and apply Catholic principles to workaday

life. The groups were an alternative then for Catholic young adults to experience what some found attractive in communism. His famous Inquiry Method (*observe-judge-act*) and his insistence that the best apostles are those closest to the scene drew upon similar insights as the communists.

The Cardijn groups were not negative about parish life, but addressed concerns which parishes could not. And "Cardijn was [never] tempted by his social mission to forget or minimize its spiritual aspect," La Bedoyere writes. Indeed, Cardijn constantly integrated daily work with the spiritual life, particularly the liturgy. As he said: "Without work there is no altar bread, no wine, no paten, no altar, no church, no religion."

The Cardijn groups multiplied under an umbrella called Young Christian Workers. (It is *Jeunesse Ouvriere Chretienne* in French. In English-speaking areas, using the French/Flemish acronym, participants sometimes referred to themselves as *Jocists*.)

In 1925 Pope Pius XI (1876-1939) endorsed Cardijn's Catholic Action movement, which by then had divisions like Working Christian Youth (also known as Young Christian Workers) and Young Christian Students, each with many cells. Eventually, Vatican II in its *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* "earnestly endorse[d]" the movement.

Pius XI described Catholic Action as "participation of the laity in the apostolic mission of the hierarchy." This phrase meant, among other things, that the groups were sanctioned. But, as we will see, this notion eventually caused tension within CFM.

The Catholic Action movement came to the United States in the late 1930s through the efforts of Fr. Louis Putz, CSC (1909-1998) of the University of Notre Dame, who uniquely had direct exposure to the Cardijn movement. Other importers include Fr. Donald Kanaly (1925-2005) of Ponca City, Oklahoma, Msgr. Reynold Hillenbrand (1904-1979) of Chicago's major seminary and Paul Maguire, an Australian lay leader who, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, toured the United States.

In 1940 Putz started a cell with graduate students called Catholic Action Apostles that, among other actions, helped to integrate the great university in South Bend. That same year Hillenbrand, with a

half-dozen priests, formed the Federation of Catholic Action to shepherd a growing number of cells around Chicago. By 1946 there were enough cells that Cardinal Samuel Stritch (1887-1958) appointed two full-time chaplains, Msgr. William Quinn (1915-2004) and Msgr. Jack Egan (1916-2001). Most of the cells were gender specific, but by the early 1950s a small number were mixed-gender.

All of the cells used the Social Inquiry Method, sometimes called *Review of Life*. A set question about ethics or relationships would start the session: **Observe** what is happening. **Judge**. The cell leader, a fellow worker, would gradually turn the conversation: What should be happening at work or in the neighborhood when put in the context of the gospel? **Act**. The dynamic of the meeting is an enabling tension between what participants observe at work and what they believe should happen. The tension evokes an apostolic impulse to improve matters. The action would be reported at the next meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting a chaplain, until then quiet, reflects on some aspect of Scripture or Catholic social doctrine.

The experience of lay people within their families and workplaces is essential to Christian formation and evangelization.

The Christian thing to do is unknown at the start of the inquiry. This method contrasts with a top-down attitude by which it is enough to proclaim dogma and moral principles. Specialized Catholic Action is not relativism or situation ethics. However, it strongly asserts that the experience of lay people within their families and workplaces is essential to Christian formation and evangelization. Its special character is simply that it is an apostolate of like-to-like (so-called milieu specialization).

Worthwhile lay formation is difficult, explained Fr. Vincent Giese (1923-2000), a Catholic Action lay leader in Chicago and later a chaplain. "A small group discussion will not train leaders. Minds might be sharpened, but unless the discussion leads to action—unless members themselves begin to accept small responsibilities and carry them out—there will be no training of the will… Any small group which does not build social actions into its programs is incapable of training leaders."

Giese, in books and articles, supplied many examples from youth groups using the method. It is worth paraphrasing one example because understanding the method is crucial to understanding Patty's contribution to lay formation. Let's say the topic one week is "high school clubs." The session begins with a short Scripture reading, followed by what Giese called "bull session." The leader, a fellow student who is prepared, starts with Observe or "What do you see?" The leader asks: "How many informal groups do your friends belong to, cliques or gangs? How many formal school or neighborhood clubs do they belong to?" Then there is Judge. The leader moves the group into "What should it be?": "What is the difference between a clique and a club?" "Are cliques good or bad?" Finally, Act. If all goes as planned an apostolic tension emerges between the world-as-it-is and the world-as-it-could-be. "What can we do?" "Can we talk this week to three people about cliques?" "Can we make a few new people feel welcome at a club meeting?" A reflective report on the action occurs at the next meeting.

This method can start with almost any topic and can be used by any like-to-like group where friendship is valued, including professional people, teachers or, as our story will describe, married couples.

Patty's Life

Patty's parents, Ovidas J. Caron of Rhode Island (though originally from Quebec, Canada) and Marietta Higman of Michigan, were married in Chicago in 1912. Patty, born in 1913, is the oldest of five children (Patty, Richard, Marietta Lombardo, Joan Zintak and John). Her father, (O.J. as he was called) was a yarn salesman until 1915 when he bought a mill in Rochelle, Illinois. It eventually became Caron International Spinning Company, a family business.

The O.J. Caron family began in Chicago and lived at many addresses there. They moved to Hubbard Woods, Illinois, a suburb north of Chicago, and then moved back to the city. All the while O.J. commuted to Rochelle, over 60 miles west of the city—long before there was an Interstate connecting the two.

Patty attended Sacred Heart Convent school, first on Pine Grove Ave. and later on Sheridan Rd. in Chicago. She spent two years at Im-

maculata High School on W. Irving Park Rd. in Chicago. Patty then attended Trinity College in Washington, D.C. where she enrolled in a class on Catholic social doctrine taught by the famous labor priest, Msgr. John A. Ryan (1869-1945) of Minnesota.

While this booklet is about Patty, the story is incomplete without reference to the 37 years she was married to Pat Crowley, the second son of Jerome Crowley of Chicago and Henrietta O'Brien of South Bend, Indiana. The O'Brien family owned a paint and varnish company and Jerome Crowley was a lawyer with several business clients, including the in-law's business.

Pat graduated from University of Notre Dame and then obtained a law degree through night school classes at Loyola University Law School. He spent his entire career with his father's firm.

Pat and Patty first saw each other at a 1934 Good Friday service at Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago, the same church where Pat's funeral was celebrated in November 1974 and Patty's in December 2005. They actually met a few days later at a party. They married on October 16, 1937 at Mount Carmel Church in Chicago.

The Crowleys had five children (Patricia Ann, Mary Ann, Patrick, Catherine Ann and Theresa). There was one infant death and a miscarriage. The Crowleys also were foster parents for more than 14 children, one of whom was Al Augustine who was like a sixth Crowley child. At intervals they hosted over 60 foreign college students studying a semester or more in the Chicago area.

When their first child was two-years old, the Crowleys moved to Wilmette, Illinois, a northern suburb. When their youngest, Theresa, was in her last year of grammar school and all the other children had moved away, the Crowleys moved back to the city, first briefly to a building on Lake Shore Drive and then to the 88th floor of the Hancock Building on Chicago's famed Magnificent Mile.

Fr. Charles Sheedy, CSC (1912-1990), of the University of Notre Dame facilitated a Catholic Action group to which the Crowleys were exposed. Chicago became a hub for the movement thanks in part to Paul Hazard Jr. (1912-1982), an insurance executive. He learned about the movement while a seminarian under Msgr. Reynold Hillenbrand at St. Mary of the Lake. In February 1943 Hazard convened a meet-

ing of seven businessmen to bring their faith to bear upon their work. They met in Pat Crowley's office. In March of that year they invited Father Louis Putz, CSC from Notre Dame to a meeting and in April, Hillenbrand was their guest. (Hazard would later form other groups, including the Catholic Insurance Guild and the National Association of Employers.)

Adaptations in Catholic Action were necessary as it made its way from European origins to the United States. It originally distinguished general social action from specialized Catholic Action. *Generalized* Catholic Action included lay groups like the Legion of Mary or the Holy Name Society. Their members were recruited openly throughout a parish and the organization usually had an office or contact within the Chancery. The goal was social education, charity and fellowship.

Specialized Catholic Action groups (the type which Hazard's friends had in mind) were specific to one occupation and followed the observe-judge-act method. Now, the men meeting in Pat Crowley's office were not occupationally like-to-like because each member was from a different profession—Crowley was a lawyer and Hazard was an insurance executive, for example—yet the men did not want a generalized group, but one using the Cardijn method. So, the Hazard group made an adaptation. The men soon realized that each was a young parent, explains Jeffrey Burns, professor of church history at Franciscan School of Theology. They further *observed* that among their contemporaries some marriages were ending in divorce. Their first action around this topic was to compile a list of family life resources, making it available to churches that might assist couples. In 1944 the men attended a family renewal day at Barat College. They came away determined to promote regular marriage renewal conferences, which came to be called Cana Conferences. Within another year the Cana Conference became a distinct organization, led by some members of the businessmen's group and others.

In October 1946 the Chicago businessmen's group published *Act*, a newsletter that would eventually have a worldwide impact through CFM. Patty later recalled a certain jealousy over the men's group: "It was absolutely ridiculous. These men were never at home and they were talking about marriage."

It was at this time (1944) that Hillenbrand was transferred from the seminary to Sacred Heart parish in Winnetka, Illinois—nearer to the Crowley's home. He encouraged the formation of more men's Catholic Action groups and a few couples' groups. Patty did not join any of them. Then, Patty started one for married women at St. Joseph parish in Wilmette, Illinois. This, writes Burns, was "something of a breakthrough." It likely was the first time women discussed serious issues in a Catholic group.

The Pre-Cana Conference began in Patty's personal experience, moved to an experimental action, and only then to something formal.

Because Patty's sister was engaged the women's group talked about marriage preparation. Their action was an April 1946 day of recollection for engaged couples in Wilmette. From this came the Pre-Cana Conference which, along with its Cana Conference counterpart, became standard in many dioceses around the country. The program began in Patty's personal experience, moved to an experimental action, and only then to something formal. This was a pattern repeated several times in Patty's life, up to her final involvement with women who were homeless.

CFM

The Christian Family Movement, which is still in business although different now in focus and in style, was the most popular movement in the United States of Cardijn-inspired specialized Catholic Action. CFM adapted the standard Catholic Action method to North American culture and later to Vatican II theology. These changes account for its spread and in part for its eventual decline.

In Europe the Catholic Action groups were mainly working-class, as the movement was considered an alternative to the attractions of communism. The context for Pat and Patty's Chicago men's groups, women's groups and couples' groups was middle-class married life. Because of post-World War II prosperity many young Catholic couples

were leaving the urban immigrant style of parochial Catholicism for the promises of suburbia. But while their backyards were larger, their personal connections were often fewer and less satisfying.

CFM at the right time and the right place grew precisely because it afforded couples an alternative to their lack of fulfillment in suburban materialism. CFM pointed couples outward to societal topics or, *inquiries* in CFM jargon—to issues like race relations, poverty amidst plenty, the influence of media and more. At the same time, couples naturally found support for their own marriage and family life in the groups. These two purposes are compatible, although in practice giving each its proper treatment sometimes caused tension.

In Europe Catholic Action was, in Pius XI's phrase, "participation of the laity in the apostolic mission of the hierarchy." CFM (and other groups) anticipated Vatican II's emphasis on the independent responsibility of the laity in virtue of their baptism, not because of attachment to a bishop. The two theologies can be complimentary, but on this point also the difference in emphasis sometimes caused friction, particularly when CFM leaders disagreed with chaplains.

These many introductory paragraphs are meant to situate Patty as a founder of CFM—the role for which, along with her husband Pat, she is best known. She didn't set out to lead a significant movement, nor did she ever claim singular credit for CFM. An individual or one couple "doesn't just start something like this," she accurately reflected. "Rather, these things evolve out of relationships and the way life develops." In fact, as Jeffrey Burns notes, even though CFM is associated with Chicago, it "sprang to life simultaneously in Chicago, South Bend, Indiana and New York, New York."

Nonetheless, Patty is an accurate lens through which to view CFM and it is a significant motif in understanding her life. The Crowleys were constantly on the road for CFM—not giving big lectures but making personal appointments over several years with hundreds of leaders. In one year, shortly after CFM began, they visited 40 cities plus a tour of Canada. The Crowleys (not for lack of money) usually avoided hotels in favor of the homes of local leaders. They wanted to build CFM one personal relationship at a time. In turn, they opened their home to CFM meetings and to hundreds of Catholic Action visi-

tors over the years. The Crowleys, the record shows, paid many CFM bills at crucial times. "More than any other element, the personal contact and efforts of the Crowleys assured the expansion of [CFM and the Catholic Action] movement," says Burns.

Describing the philosophy of Catholic Action, as exemplified in CFM, is worth some paragraphs because this effective model is largely absent from the church today, at least in the United States.

The basic unit of CFM was the small group of about six couples that ideally met twice a month to observe, judge and act. A chaplain was assigned to each small group. The central leaders, the Crowleys and others, provided *how-to* program booklets and the *ACT* newsletter, as guides to the meeting.

Within a short time from its founding (by 1952), CFM numbered 2,500 couples nationwide; it doubled its membership in 1953; reached 16,000 couples in 1955; then partially due to its international scope, doubled its membership again in the next two years; then up to 50,000 couples in 1964. This is remarkable growth for an all-volunteer movement that required each participant to devote six or more hours a month to the meetings and additional time in prayer and action.

The outcome of CFM is what each participant does later in the week and later in life—on the job, around the home, and in the community.

The idea of a couples' movement was percolating in several places in the late 1940s. It all came together in June 1949 when the Crowleys and 48 other leaders plus 12 priests from around the country met at Childerley Retreat Center, a rural facility owned by the Calvert House Foundation at the University of Chicago. Participants represented 11 of the 20 cities that were known to have some manner of Catholic Action for couples.

The organization formed there went by Catholic Family Action in some places and Christian Family Movement in others. Eventually CFM became the official name. Pat Crowley was chosen as a member of the initial executive committee. Shortly thereafter he and Patty became national president couple, a position they held until 1968.

The Childerly meeting also adopted *Act*, the newsletter begun by

the Hazard group, as CFM's publication. It soon had a large mailing list with outstanding editors over the years like Don and Barbara Thorman, Larry Ragan and Bob Senser, among others.

The Childerly meeting also affirmed the chaplaincy of Msgr. Reynold Hillenbrand. His leadership, including his relationship with the Crowleys, is central to CFM's story. Hillenbrand's opening talk to his seminarians at St. Mary of the Lake, where at age 31 he was perhaps the youngest rector in the world, set the outward-looking perspective for all his involvements, including with CFM: Priests of tomorrow must look "beyond their own comfortable lives—to see suffering in the world, to have a heart for the unemployed, not to shy away from misery, but to feel the injustice of inadequate wages."

Had it gone in one direction, the primary purpose of CFM groups could have been mutual support for each family in a given group. The action part of CFM could then have been gestures on behalf of one or another family in the group or something in the group's self-interest, like a neighborhood block party. There is nothing wrong with this general approach and indeed CFM continually had elements of self-help and proximate interests. But Hillenbrand, explains Burns, insisted on a competing vision. His thinking, as supported by the Crowleys, was dominant in CFM publications and at its conventions.

CFM is not "a family or neighborhood movement" per se, preached Hillenbrand. Its purpose is the formation of lay apostles who because of CFM are able to move within their own work and community circles as agents for social justice. In other words, the fruit of CFM is not what occurs within a meeting or even the immediate results of a meeting. The outcome is what each participant does later in the week and later in life—on the job, around the home and in the community. In a word, Hillenbrand insisted, CFM is about "formation."

The Crowleys agreed with an outward thrust. Burns quotes part of a talk they gave together: "We must not limit the family to conjugal communication, but rather communication and education between family and the world."

Thus, Catholic Action formation differs from an adult education talk in a parish hall or from a discussion club based on Scripture or other spiritual reading. "Formation comes through action," Hillen-

brand constantly asserted. And the final purpose of the action is not to achieve some good in the neighborhood (although such improvements are welcome by-products of CFM); the real purpose is to use the action as a classroom for leadership. This is a sophisticated process. CFM leaders understood that it requires patience. Not every group at every meeting entirely implemented CFM's vision. But the creative tension between the real life experience of the groups and the ultimate vision was in itself an example of the CFM genius: observe, judge, act and reflect.

The emphasis on action does not mean activity for activity sake. There is content to each CFM meeting, including a suggested Scripture passage, an annual social theme as given by the coordinating committee, a topic for each meeting as outlined in a booklet, and unique, ongoing focus on liturgy.

Hillenbrand preached that liturgy forms its participants for social action and that it thus plays a decisive role in humanizing society. He "firmly believed that the solution to social problems [is] grounded in a return to the altar," details Fr. Robert Tuzik. Sharing in Trinitarian life at the liturgy will inspire action on behalf of social justice. Conversely, Hillenbrand said people are disposed to celebrate Mass precisely because of their action at work, in the family and in the community.

CFM—and the Crowleys understood this well—was an antidote to individualism. While the 1950s seemed to promise the liberation of people from the unhealthy confides of their old world roots into a broader suburban awareness, those years also initiated the isolation that so many are suffering under to this day. CFM was meant to counter a public life and business ethics that are reduced to the sum total of individual interests. CFM tried to overcome superficiality in private life and people's cliché-ridden conversations. Something like CFM today would be novel to young adults who have many artificial barriers in their relationships, including their habit of texting one another even while sitting knee-to-knee on the train.

CFM held the potential to reconnect people to one another and to a mission on behalf of the world. CFM fostered the organization of like-minded people for improvements on the job and in the community. It likewise stood for active liturgical participation, instead of passive

individualism. More specifically, Hillenbrand said, worship cannot be pietistic in the sense that people confine "redemption to the four walls of the church, as if it had no connection with life itself." Liturgy, he and CFM said, cannot be a backdrop for personal devotion. This is a direct challenge to a model of spirituality often presented after World War II: quiet devotions for the laity and special prayer functions for the clergy. Heaven and the kingdom of God, said CFM should not be relegated to other-worldly realms that can only be glimpsed briefly on the weekend or during a nighttime devotion.

For several years the teamwork of Hillenbrand and the Crowleys (and by extension that of the CFM couples and their chaplains) was a model for lay-clergy collaboration. Burns concludes his thorough study of CFM with praise for Hillenbrand and particularly for the Crowleys:

> *It was Hillenbrand and the Crowleys that made the [specialized Catholic Action] formula a reality. Hillenbrand provided the vision, but it was the extraordinary efforts and gifts of the Crowleys that made the movement a success. The Crowleys' seemingly endless energy spread the movement to all the corners of the earth. They brought together an extraordinary diverse group of people and forged a unity that changed the face of [North] American Catholicism. They had the gift of hope, the gift of enabling people to believe in themselves, and in so doing to accomplish things far beyond what they might have thought possible. [They sincerely believed] that ultimately all things will be restored in Christ.*

Patty's constant companion and her primary tool for empowering other leaders was CFM's "little yellow booklet," the CFM bible. It was published by the CFM coordinating committee in Chicago. Patty was instrumental in its composition and she spent many hours distributing and explaining it all around the country. For several years she always kept a copy or two in her purse and several more in the car. The Crowley's garage served as its warehouse and their dining room table served as CFM's office. The booklet's proper title is *For Happier Families* with alternative subtitles like *An Introduction to CFM* or *How to Start a*

Catholic Family Action Section. It made use of cartoons and included space for notes. The booklet was supplemented by ACT newsletter and other materials, but the 100-page yellow booklet was the singular tool for imparting the CFM philosophy and method. It was received enthusiastically by group leaders and participants, giving just enough structure and confidence to an innovative movement.

Patty also used the United States Post Office to empower groups. She spent many evening hours responding to a steady stream of letters from around the country and then around the world. Their questions were practical: "Our group is bickering; what should I do?" "Our chaplain is domineering." "The topics don't seem to relate to us." "The group is going well, except no one wants to be in charge." And, most encouraging: "We heard about CFM. How do we get started?"

Again, not every CFM meeting was ideal. Of course, not every CFM group was on track. But highlighting here a few points from *For Happier Families* suggests the genius of CFM at its best and is a testament to the expertise in group dynamics of Patty and other CFM leaders.

Even before the table of contents, the booklet has a page on which to list participants' names, addresses and phone. In other words, real people with real relationships are prior to any program. In its first two pages *For Happier Families* states CFM philosophy and method. A CFM group is not a support group, in the sense that, let's say, four families dealing with a teenager addicted to drugs might find mutual support. Not to say that CFM participants did not help one another in times of crisis. But the starting point here is different. CFM said that an environment—the neighborhood, the city, a workplace or the wider culture—makes it easier or harder for a good family to thrive. A CFM group was meant to train its participants to live out the gospel and improve the world.

The booklet's introduction then continues: A CFM group is not in itself a lobby group; it is a school for confident and competent Christians. Its participants will discuss a social issue, but the group itself will not solve the issue. Instead each couple will act and then report back to the group. Often each couple in the group took on the same action.

A few typical topics from an old yellow booklet suggest the direc-

tion of CFM meetings and of subsequent action: "Your Neighbors," "Television," "Attitude Toward Work," and "Equality in the Community." In addition, Hillenbrand defined seven areas of lay life and each became an overriding topic for one year. Burns provides a list of those major topics for each year during the 1960s, including "Encounters in Politics and Race," "The Family: Center of Social Rebirth," and "Shalom: Peace in the City, in the World, in the Family."

The first of many annual CFM conventions was held in 1950 at Illinois Benedictine University (then called St. Procopius College) in Lisle, Illinois. Several annual conventions followed at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. These events added momentum to the movement and former CFM members still remember their days at Notre Dame as spiritual highpoints. Patty and her team of leaders spent many hours on details, starting at the conclusion of an annual convention all the way to the opening of the subsequent convention. Her team arranged for prominent speakers, publicity and registration of participants and accommodations at Notre Dame.

The movement grew rapidly, topping out at over 50,000 couples in 1964. Then CFM's membership declined, down to only 1,100 couples by 1980 for reasons that will here be considered.

The decline "seemed to come swiftly" to CFM leaders, writes Burns. Actually it was a gradual but steady decline. "By 1967," he details, "membership had dropped [from in excess of 50,000 couples] to 32,000, with a dramatic drop of almost 50% by the end of the following year to 16,600… By 1980 only 1,100 couples remained in the movement." The real problem was not those who left CFM. A turnover was expected and desirable—presuming CFM was fulfilling its formation purpose. "The typical CFM couple stayed in the movement only 3.5 years," says Burns. However, by the mid-to-late 1960s new couples were not joining and the median age of members was increasing. In 1968 only 3% of CFM couples were under age 25.

As early as 1966 a few CFM leaders proposed that the organization disband—to be replaced by a national pro-family lobby or by local groups with a modified focus. Other well-regarded leaders argued that CFM should turn attention to internal church reforms, including more married priests, and even into matters of schism—perhaps wholesale

changes in the Mass, a local base community "ordination" of its own priests and more. In the face of these controversial ideas the Crowleys remained loyal to church tradition, to Hillenbrand and to CFM's original purpose of the formation of lay apostles.

To their credit the Crowleys since the mid-1950s were laying the groundwork for a world-wide CFM. Groups began in Mexico and elsewhere, although not all followed the Catholic Action model of observe-judge-act. In 1965 an International Confederation of Christian Family Movements began. The following year the Crowleys were elected international general secretaries and the ICCFM moved its headquarters to Chicago. There were CFM groups from 50 nations in ICCFM at that time. The Crowleys devoted great energy to the groups in South America and elsewhere, just as CFM was losing momentum in the United States

The Crowleys resigned as CFM lead couple for the United States in 1970. They remained as presidents of the international expression of CFM. In early 1974 they were reelected for the international. Pat died in November of that year, yet Patty carried on as international president until 1977.

Aspects of the Crowleys' leadership in CFM and their part in CFM's decline can legitimately be questioned: Did they remain as president couple too long; failing to advance other talented people? Did their support for ecumenism unwittingly take some of the solid Catholic grounding out from under CFM? Would other topics or other approaches for the groups have been more appealing to young couples in the 1960s?

On the other hand—and every commentator acknowledges this—CFM would not have been successful without the Crowleys. They had the time and the means to devote countless hours to the movement. They also had enough intellect to understand the essence of CFM and enough perseverance and fidelity to maintain its mission. They had enormous inter-personal skills that allowed them to guide novice leaders, raise money, conduct large meetings, attract renowned speakers, and mediate disputes. They had enough political savvy to adequately navigate conflicting interests in the church and the world.

Keep in mind too that the Crowleys, like all CFM leaders, were

volunteers. Further, CFM by its nature was a free-flowing movement. Specifically, CFM was dedicated to local empowerment and so its headquarters was no heavier than necessary. Local variations were generally tolerated, often even welcome. The Crowleys and others knew that CFM needed some elements of organization, including some standard materials and practices. They attended to many structural details but never wanted CFM to be so centralized that it lost its movement flavor. This balancing act, they were aware, meant that not everyone was on the same page at the same pace and that here and there some groups were off the track. There is no evidence, however, that greater regimentation would have forestalled CFM's decline.

The Crowleys never wanted CFM to be so centralized that it lost its movement flavor.

Burns concludes his study of CFM by quoting the Crowleys on their style of leadership:

> *We have taken things as they have come and more or less moved with them… Looking back, we see that all the great things that may have taken place within CFM have done so simply because some CFM leader wanted them to take place. And [those leaders] knew that in CFM [they] possessed the freedom to experiment, to try the untried, and to take a fling at something that may never have worked before. Over these years, we shudder to think of the mistakes that so many of us have made… [But] there was an atmosphere in CFM that said, "Let's go to it. Let us try it." If we played any part in that activity, it was merely to encourage people with ideas to go ahead. So we guess we would say,* no, *we probably would not have done anything differently. Because it wasn't we who did it. Everybody did.*

So why did CFM decline? For the same reasons that all voluntary groups, beginning in about 1960 and continuing today, experienced a precipitous decline in total membership and in hours devoted to the

group by its remaining members. Sociologists, notably Robert Putnam, give overarching reasons for this lack of involvement, including changes in work patterns, new lifestyles and gender roles, a general mistrust for all institutions and the isolating power of television and the Internet.

Burns also puts CFM in the context of religion in general and Catholicism in the United States: fewer priests (and thus few if any chaplains), more dissent over doctrines and disciplines (and thus less amicability among Catholics), fewer Catholic schools (and thus inadequate religious education and standard vocabulary for a faith-based group), and most significantly the lower priority given to the spiritual life by the majority of young adults.

In 1977 Patty, along with 46 other active Chicago Catholics, issued a controversial statement titled *Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern* that named one other partial reason for the decline of CFM and similar Catholic Action groups. Vatican II (1962-1965) proclaims a pastoral theology that puts the church in service to the modern world and, in the words of this *Chicago Declaration*, Vatican II highlights "the striving of the laity to transform the world of political, economic and social institutions." Yet in the years after Vatican II (at least in the United States) the whole church, somewhat necessarily, turned inward toward liturgical and parish renewal and devoted considerable energy to the development of volunteer lay ministries. Many meetings and documents also turn inward to the role of professional lay Church employees in an institution formerly dominated by clergy. The emphasis on internal renewal and lay ministry in itself, said the *Chicago Declaration*, is "a wholesome and significant movement." Unfortunately, it has eclipsed the mission of the laity in the world, leading to the possible irony that "the era of Vatican II which opened the windows of the church to the world [could] close with a church turned in upon itself."

Birth Control

Conscientious young Catholic couples today are surprised to learn that Catholicism has an opinion on methods of birth control. Because few young adult Catholics are sufficiently educated in their faith the merits

of church thinking on this topic (and several others) are beyond their way of thinking, their vocabulary and their experience.

Young adults are generally humanistic, kind and open-minded. They try to be moral, but they approach decisions based on intuitions and what feels right. In a culture that highlights individual experience they do not always have an objective way to consider God's will. In fact, even the most sensitive young adults (with exceptions) do not have a capacity to grasp an solid standard or shared tradition that bears upon their own interpretation of life. It is not that young adults are so much opposed to Catholic moral teaching. Simply that Catholicism's method of finding God's will through reason, tradition and experience is outside a post-modern young adult's framework—no matter how good intentioned that young adult might be. Thus whatever the church says on any number of topics, it is a non-factor in their life.

By contrast, Catholic leaders during the Crowley's time took the Catholic approach to morality seriously. They had sufficient vocabulary to explain why something was right or wrong, at least in a general way. Good Catholics sometimes disagreed about an application of one or another moral doctrine. But they reached conclusions through full acceptance of God's objective will, the importance of Scripture, the principles of natural law and the Holy Spirit's movement within collective experience. This point is crucial in understanding the events of the 1960s Birth Control Commission, the Crowleys' participation in that Commission and the subsequent controversy.

The so-called *birth control pill* was introduced in 1953. Thereafter some high-level theologians and some bishops independently said that this pill is irrelevant to the integrity of sex and is as "natural" (a theological term) as the rhythm method of birth control, perhaps even preferable in "natural" terminology.

In 1963 Pope Paul VI (1897-1978) invited six people to form the Pontifical Commission for the Study of Population, Family and Births (thereafter popularly called Birth Control Commission) and to evaluate theological comments on the pill and to discuss the issue of population density. Paul VI, for his part, encouraged honest questioning from the Commission whose deliberations were civil, extensive and thorough, as Robert McClory explains.

At intervals Paul VI added members to the Commission and later restructured it. He consistently urged the Commission to hold probing discussions. It, in turn, conducted several sessions, considering a wide range of information and opinion from historians, doctors, theologians, demographers, and eventually married couples.

The Crowleys (and 41 others) were appointed to the Birth Control Commission in December 1964, some months after its initial three sessions. They were surprised by and quite honored by the appointment. They were loyal Catholics who studied and supported papal encyclicals; they certainly were not crusaders against church teaching. Their attitude and that of the Commission was respectful assistance to the pope.

The Crowleys nonetheless made some humorous comments and made a sharp statement or two while in Rome. Pat, for example, upon learning that because of space and in keeping with the Vatican's celibate culture the couples on the Commission would be housed in separate facilities for women and men, commented: "That's certainly one method of birth control."

Patty's most memorable line came during a Commission session after a Spanish Jesuit rhetorically asked: If we change the rules on birth control, "what happens to the millions we have sent to hell" for doing what we then permit? Father, said Patty, "do you really believe God has carried out all your orders?"

The Crowleys, in keeping with the *observe* step in the Catholic Action process, felt their best contribution to the process would be first-hand accounts from married couples on their experience regarding birth control, rather than giving their thoughts on theological concepts. Through the CFM newsletter, *ACT*, and aided by *St. Anthony's Messenger* and other publications, they circulated a questionnaire. They also collected testimony from couples in CFM groups. The survey posed probing questions and it included items about possible side effects from increased use of birth control within marriage, including the possible encouragement of premarital sex.

Telling the Commission of their survey results, the Crowleys said: People "are puzzled [about birth control] but hopeful [that] an expanded theology of marriage will be developed." A comprehensive

theology of marriage, they said, would go beyond "an analysis of the isolated act of intercourse."

The Crowley's survey had tremendous influence on the Commission and on the 16-member bishops' group that later formulated recommendations to the pope. Some demographic studies supplemented the Commission's consideration of theology. But the Crowley's impressive survey was the only experiential information at hand.

The Commission's deliberation turned on technical points:

- *What is natural? What is unnatural?*
- *Is the pill natural or unnatural ("artificial" in the Commission's terminology)?*
- *What are the purposes of marriage? Are some purposes "primary" and others "secondary"? In what sense do the multiple purposes of marriage need to be present in each act of sex?*
- *Is it useful in moral teaching to isolate one or more acts of sex from the overall context of a couple's marriage?*
- *Does one or another method of birth control meet the criteria of intrinsic evil? (This is another technical term, one which does not necessarily mean serious evil. It refers to something that cannot be good, no matter the circumstances.) Does morality hinge entirely on the type of birth control used (a pill instead of a thermometer, for example) or is the moral disposition of the couple relevant, at least in part?*
- *Does one or another type (or even all types) of birth control (regardless of its own merits) have an unintended side effect, like encouraging pre-marital sex?*
- *How does Catholic doctrine develop and who is responsible for that development? Do all parts of a doctrine apply always (*the principle of totality*) or does doctrine consider context (*the principle of charity*)?*

In June 1966 the Commission voted on a final report. By its rules only its bishop members voted. The Commission passed three resolutions for Pope Paul VI's consideration:

- *Contraception is not intrinsically evil*
- *Contraception is in continuity with Christian tradition and with the Magisterium.*
- *The Magisterium should reframe some previous language on birth control and should promulgate the Commission's resolutions.*

Consistently throughout the process some participants voiced an opposing opinion, and so a minority report was also included for consideration.

In 1968, two years and a month after the Commission report, Paul VI issued an encyclical that gave official thinking. His encyclical differs from the Commission's conclusion by saying that all forms of *artificial* birth control (although not the *natural* rhythm method) are prohibited in any act of marital sex.

Some Catholics welcomed or at least accepted the encyclical. In the United States and elsewhere, however, many Church employees and many couples voiced their dissent. Great controversy erupted in some locales. Thereafter and because of the encyclical, say some sociologists, regular Mass attendance declined. In the alarmed opinion of some people, all manner of moral decline overtook the steadfast goodness of Catholicism beginning with opposition to this 1968 encyclical.

The Crowleys did not mount a public campaign for or against the encyclical. They were diplomatic in commenting about their reaction to it. Only late in life did Patty write an outright criticism of the encyclical itself and then she expressed regret that her criticism first appeared in the newsletter of an organization fundamentally opposed to Catholic teaching.

In 1968 and thereafter, however, the Crowleys told many CFM leaders and others about their disappointment in the Commission process and in their private circles they voiced a respectful dissent to the pope's conclusion. Pat often repeated a point he made during Commission deliberations: The birth control issue has "escalated into a position far beyond its importance. War, peace, poverty and social justice seem more urgent…to the work of Christ in the world."

Patty was particularly frustrated that the Commission's results

were not published. Without disclosing specifics of the deliberations (participants were instructed not to do so), she made clear that "the Commission did not *promote* birth control. It simply said that it was not intrinsically evil." As to the encyclical, Patty said at that time: "Pray that somehow [Paul VI's] decision is correct, but continue the discussion [so that] a solution is reached that will accord with reality." The Crowleys also tried to say that their disappointment was not the official CFM position. Meanwhile, however, *ACT* (the CFM newsletter which at the time was not edited by the Crowleys) claimed that the encyclical was not infallible and advised readers to follow their individual conscience.

It is inaccurate, concludes Jeffrey Burns, to say that the Crowleys' reaction to the encyclical is the cause of defections from CFM or is a factor in declining Mass attendance or that somehow the Crowleys began a moral collapse in our wider culture. The wider culture and religious trends turn on many factors larger than the cautious comments of two lay leaders in Chicago.

Nonetheless, the general controversy over the encyclical and some decisions in CFM left the Crowleys estranged from Msgr. Reynold Hillenbrand. He avoided them from about 1966—that is, even some months before the encyclical. This lasted until Patty summoned him to Pat's deathbed in 1974. Hillenbrand prayed there with his old friends.

One popular interpretation of the frayed relationship is that Hillenbrand fell behind the times. He "had been so progressive liturgically and apostolically during the 1940s and 1950s," writes Burns. But he "seemed undone by the [Second Vatican] Council. What many CFMers saw as Hillenbrand's vindication [at Vatican II], turned out to be Hillenbrand's undoing. By the end of the 1960s most CFMers regarded Hillenbrand as hopelessly out of touch with the movement and with the laity."

The Crowleys, interestingly, did not share this judgment. They recognized him as CFM's official chaplain into the 1970s, even though his influence after the late 1960s was minimal around the movement. Simply, the Crowleys had known Hillenbrand for a long time and appreciated his enormous contributions. They were accustomed to his personality shortcomings and they defended him. In a letter they

wrote: "As far as we're concerned [Hillenbrand] has never made a really serious mistake in judgment." Even later in life Patty frequently praised Hillenbrand. "I still think back on the talks he gave at Notre Dame," she told Thomas O'Gorman in 1990. "They were very inspiring… How incredibly stirring they were."

By another interpretation, the rift between Hillenbrand and CFM is one example of how in losing the support of some clergy and of clergy losing the support of some lay leaders, an element of self-destruction came into local church life. Or by similar interpretation the rift has been seen as one touch point where the whole church lost its bearings in recent years. Perhaps, some have argued, assent to doctrine and practices like Mass attendance would be higher today had lay people in the late 1960s stayed on track with the thinking of Hillenbrand and others like him. Perhaps, perhaps.

Apart from the personalities involved, the relationship between Hillenbrand and the Crowleys is an example of the change in theological method during and after Vatican II. For several centuries before the Council the church taught doctrinal principles derived from Scripture and natural law—mostly from natural law in the years before Vatican II. Those prior principles were then applied to specific cases in theology textbooks and in the confessional. By contrast, theology at the time of the Council put a premium on human experience and from an appreciation of context it worked back to doctrinal principles. The two methods can be complementary, but in the late 1960s and for some years thereafter they seemed often to be at odds.

Thus, even though Hillenbrand taught CFM and many other lay leaders the importance of experience (*observe*), his support for Paul VI's encyclical is not surprising. Hillenbrand's whole approach to lay activism assumed that the teaching Church had a clear and defined answer to many situations. More to the point, writes Fr. Steven Avella in a biographical essay, "the leitmotiv of [Hillenbrand's] life [is] a deep personal attachment to the papacy and papal teaching." In Hillenbrand's own words: "The doctrine of the church [as explained in an encyclical] may not be challenged by a Catholic." The laity are experts in their environments, Hillenbrand firmly believed and consistently preached. But the bishops are experts on doctrine. There is tension and creativity

involved in the laity's application of doctrine, Hillenbrand conceded, but the authority of doctrine is unquestioned.

There is a second way to think about the change in theology represented by Vatican II and as embodied in Patty's later years.

The 1930s Catholic Action model of laity in the world was well-known to participants at Vatican II and in fact was explicitly endorsed in the Council's *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*: "Catholic Action [is] often described as involving the collaboration of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy… [Its participants] exercise an apostolate of great value for our times." And, the *Decree on Bishops' Pastoral Office* says: The laity "should be invited [by the bishops] to join or assist the various works of the lay apostolate, especially Catholic Action."

However, by the time of Vatican II the Catholic Action notion that the laity are active in the world in virtue of the apostolate of the hierarchy gave way to an emphasis on the laity's autonomous role in virtue of their baptism. This shift in the ranking of sacraments—putting baptism, not ordination at the top—has implications for every area of theology. Among other things it means that Catholics can advance the mission of the church within their own normal group settings, not exclusively through parallel Catholic lay groups like a Catholic lawyers' guild or through the Christian Democratic Party as was once the case in some places.

Today an independent laity is essential to the church's self-understanding as articulated at Vatican II.

Vatican II suggests an alternative model that puts laity in the world to exercise their own competent judgment. The new model is admittedly not as fleshed out as the Catholic Action model, but today an independent laity is essential to the church's self-understanding as articulated at Vatican II. The new approach is communicated in theological images like the Pilgrim Church and especially the People of God Church.

Even before Vatican II the Crowleys and other Catholic leaders in Chicago were talking about the primacy of baptism and the laity's own responsibility. These activists were comfortable with the idea that through baptism the laity are a *royal priesthood*—a term later used at

Vatican II. That is, without rejecting the past and while adhering to Catholic Action's observe-judge-act method, the Crowleys and others like them were anticipating and then adopting Vatican II language and theological concepts.

To Patty, the shift from laity as adjuncts to bishops to laity as competent Christians was not initially a matter of abstract theology. She would get a call about interest in CFM from a couple in one or another diocese. Patty and Pat might visit the couple, talk with other couples and some priests only to learn that the local bishop was cool toward CFM. Few bishops opposed it, but many simply didn't see the need. Should Pat and Patty tell the local couples they could not have CFM because it must be an apostolate of the hierarchy? Hardly. They began to articulate the mission of the church in a way that empowered lay people to act in virtue of their baptism, not waiting for direction or permission from the Chancery.

Patty likewise anticipated Vatican II's emphasis on autonomous lay leadership as she considered CFM's relationship to the Chancery. Whenever she was asked to explain CFM's origins or to assess its impact, she always credited Cardinal Samuel Stritch of Chicago for "allowing it to happen." However, she would often then contrast CFM with other Catholic family life programs that "had the official kind of approval," that fit into a diocesan flow chart or were connected to the bishops' conference in Washington. "We always tried to secure the permission of the local bishop," she told O'Gorman. But "CFM was never really recognized as really official." It was an independent lay movement drawing upon the resources of many dedicated chaplains.

Hillenbrand, by contrast, symbolized a pre-Vatican II pastoral theology in which lay people formed apostolic groups precisely because bishops needed them to be the church's agents in secular arenas. In that sense, said Patty, "Hillenbrand was hierarchical." The older Catholic Action model was appropriate and influential at times and in some places, but it seemed regressive to the Crowleys and some other leaders in Chicago as the years went by.

There still are several unresolved areas because of Vatican II's pastoral approach. The Crowleys though were significant scouts along the new terrain.

Take one unresolved issue: ecumenism. In keeping with Vatican II theology, Christians who tackle social problems should ordinarily cooperate ecumenically. There is no need, for example, to have a specifically Catholic group address homelessness in parallel to a Protestant group. CFM was not called Catholic Family Movement because from the beginning it sensed that action in a pluralistic world, like helping those who were homeless, must often be ecumenical or not specifically religious. Also, from the beginning CFM included a few Protestant couples—even though the booklet and the meetings were decidedly Catholic. The Crowleys understood and practiced this kind of practical ecumenism and elemental hospitality well before Vatican II, while at the same time they were advocates of strong Catholic identity.

But what about formation? What about the advisability of Catholic parallel groups when it comes to family life? How important was it for CFM to have an explicit Catholic identity? Should other denominations sponsor their own CFM groups, alongside the Catholic groups or should Protestants, Catholics and others blend into one formation group? (The Cursillo Movement and other formation groups have also struggled with these questions.) The ecumenical approach may be the right thing to do in some circumstances, but it has practical problems in others.

And what about the Eucharist? The Crowley-Hillenbrand split is also a case study in the messiness of sacramental ecumenism. At the outset it is important to note that Patty (along with Pat) was a liturgical person her entire life. She valued the sacraments and was always reverent. Also, the record must note that the Crowleys were no longer CFM officers by the time this issue of the Eucharist reached its climax within CFM.

In the early 1960s an Episcopal CFM developed in Chicago, alongside Catholic CFM groups. It used copies of CFM materials, changing very little content. As other Protestants became interested, the side-by-side model made less sense. In 1969 CFM officially called itself ecumenical and printed a new, more inclusive booklet. For example, "Scripture" and "Liturgy" sections became "Reflection" sections, though many of the reflections were from Scripture. This all seemed sensible enough. But "this shift represented a significant change," writes Burns.

Hillenbrand, of course, was steeped in the liturgy. Had he never been involved in social issues or lay formation, he would probably still be counted among the most important liturgical reformers. There was always in CFM, even in the 1950s, questions about the stress on liturgy: Does consideration of the Mass really contribute to family life and community improvement? To these questions, writes Fr. Robert Tuzik, Hillenbrand "repeatedly" insisted "that the basic theology [of CFM and similar] movements was centered in the correct understanding of Mass as a corporate act."

With Hillenbrand's instruction and inspiration CFM anticipated several of the liturgical changes of Vatican II: what Hillenbrand called "dialogue Mass," singing, the vernacular and more. Thus once the changes became official, CFM's groundwork made implementation easier in some places. It is not then too big a leap for some CFM members after Vatican II to conclude that intercommunion with Protestants would be the next change. As more Protestants joined CFM, the Eucharist—a sacrament of unity—became an awkward moment. Some groups on occasion and some regional gatherings practiced intercommunion, others were not sure. In 1971 (with Ray and Dorothy Maldoon now serving as lead couple) the CFM national convention had intercommunion.

This provoked a rebuke from some Catholic bishops, from some Protestant officials and from Hillenbrand. Other previously supportive members, priests and others turned cool toward CFM, soon losing interest.

The disagreements with Hillenbrand, other priests, and bishops left Patty in a new place. A few people faulted her for any and all disruption in the church. Some did so in a civil tone, others were hostile. In 1998, a full 30 years after the birth control encyclical, *The Southern Nebraska Register*, the newspaper of the Diocese of Lincoln, astonishingly called Patty "a very old degenerate who roams about promoting sexual immorality."

Eugene McCarthy

By 1968 the Crowleys had been identified with the Christian Family Movement for nearly 20 years. Although they concentrated most of their volunteer energy on CFM, both Pat and Patty were active on the boards of other organizations, including those dealing with education, race relations, work and more. In 1968—their last year as lead couple for CFM in the United States—the Crowleys gave significant leadership to electoral politics. Their adventure in politics (especially Patty's) went beyond their initial expectations.

Except perhaps for Fr. Robert Drinan, S.J. (1920-2007), no member of Congress has been as fluent in Catholic liturgy and social doctrine as Senator Eugene McCarthy (1916-2005) of Minnesota. He was a 1935 graduate of St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota where he was strongly influenced by Fr. Virgil Michel, O.S.B. (1890-1938), a pioneer in liturgy and Catholic social thought. McCarthy later taught economics, sociology and education at St. John's and at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, as well as at rural high schools.

McCarthy came to national attention by way of Al Lowenstein (1929-1980), a reformer within the Democratic Party, who wanted an end to the Vietnam War. In late 1966 Lowenstein and others devised a plan to run a peace candidate for United States president. His *Dump Johnson* movement, a reference to the current president Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973), seemed a long shot. Lowenstein first asked Senator Robert Kennedy (1925-1968) to be the anti-war candidate. When Kennedy said no, Lowenstein approached several others, including McCarthy. By October 1967 no candidate accepted the idea, even though momentum for it was building. Then at the end of November 1967 McCarthy changed his mind and declared his peace candidacy.

Johnson, the presumed nominee, did not enter the New Hampshire primary of March 1968. Yet he won as a write-in with 49.4% of the vote. Astonishingly though, McCarthy garnered a remarkable 42.2% of the tally, and counting votes from the Republican primary, he trailed the incumbent president by only about 200 votes. Popular opinion called McCarthy the winner.

On March 31, 1968, Johnson gave a televised speech about the

Vietnam War. At its conclusion he said these startling words: "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president." All of a sudden the long shot idea felt plausible: McCarthy could become president. Johnson's decision also brought Kennedy into the race.

The McCarthy campaign was not Patty's first foray into electoral politics. In summer 1960 she started a Democratic Women's Club in Wilmette to promote the presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy (1917-1963). Still, the Crowleys were not prominent in politics; they did not make a habit of backing a candidate; and CFM never endorsed a particular politician or a partisan platform.

The Crowleys decided to host a fundraising party for McCarthy in late March 1968 and within three months Pat had become the chair of McCarthy's campaign in Illinois.

John Kotre's description of Patty's efforts that summer could apply to all her involvements over many years: At McCarthy headquarters "Patty coordinated staff meetings, supervised the dissemination of newsletters, ads, and press releases, directed the distribution of literature, buttons, and bumper stickers, and kept detailed records of expenses and contributions. She offered [appearances by] celebrities… to anyone who would throw a cocktail party… [Or] she suggested a luncheon, an art sale, or a coffee klatch. The ideas were numerous." Patty herself mentions some of the details: "Lots of times I had a buffet… I cheated. I bought frozen… And everybody thought I slaved all day long, and I usually let them think that."

Histories of movements usually concentrate on those who spoke to the crowd or perhaps confronted an official or maybe got arrested. These higher profile people, it often seems, are men. Yet movements require enormous behind-the-scenes activity, including (at least until e-mail) constant stuffing, licking and mailing envelopes. Social change itself does not impose any gender rules; indeed, women sometimes have the bullhorn and men sometimes run the copier. Both roles are essential to a movement and a fair history of a cause like the McCarthy campaign should not neglect leaders like Patty who handled the details.

The infamous Democratic Convention of 1968 was held in Chicago. The decision for the party's presidential candidate came down to

McCarthy or Hubert Humphrey (1911-1978), with Humphrey being the eventual candidate. The story of the convention, however, is not what happened in the convention hall but what occurred on the streets. The confrontations between young adult protesters and law enforcement officials dominated reports from Chicago. The Walker Commission later investigated the events and termed them "a police riot."

Patty, like every other responsible party activist, was unprepared for the turn of events. Her response to the mayhem was to draw upon her Christian and maternal instincts. Beginning on the third evening of the convention and for several days thereafter, the Crowleys sequestered young adult McCarthy volunteers and others fleeing tear gas and police clubs in their large apartment at 1300 N. Lake Shore Dr. Patty fed them and tried to interpret with them what was happening on Chicago's streets while Pat went to the police station to bail out other young people.

This unusual political convention left Patty and especially her daughter Cathy "dispirited," writes John Kotre. The Crowleys had encouraged young adults to get involved in the process, only to experience ugliness.

Pat, on the other hand, never lost faith in McCarthy and thus the Crowleys got involved again in McCarthy's 1972 presidential campaign. This time Patty got embroiled in internal Democratic Party wrangling. The incident serves as an example of her ability to keep idealism and realism in creative tension. A few people, of course, are total realists who seemingly navigate institutions with expertise but often lose touch with other people, with goals and meaning, and over time with themselves. On the other extreme are the pure idealists who have highly attuned moral standards and a passion for change but who are ineffective inside institutions. They too can lose touch with other people and with themselves. Most people carry around conflicted elements of both realism and idealism, muddling through the tradeoffs that are part of normal work and family life.

A few people like Patty are able to creatively push one element against the other in productive fashion. She certainly had an idealistic vision for better family life, for more accountable politics, for an end to poverty and racism, and for a vibrant church. At the same time she was

a realistic master of the mundane. She knew how to draw others into the big picture by complimenting them, inviting them to dinner, and listening to their story. She knew when to compromise and wait for the next opportunity. There was nothing forced or phony about all this. That is, she was a person of hope—which is different from optimism, particularly situational or short-term optimism. Obviously, some events sometimes surpassed her best efforts at juggling the world as it really is with the world as she wanted it to be. This happened in 1968 and again in the 1972 presidential campaign when events overtook her and other principal players.

Patty was a realistic master of the mundane. She knew when to compromise and wait for the next opportunity.

In March 1972 McCarthy lost the Illinois primary, signaling the futility of his comeback. That same local election chose 59 convention delegates pledged as "uncommitted," but under the leadership of Mayor Richard J. Daley (1902-1976). Subsequently, Rev. Jesse Jackson, independent alderman William Singer and Patty filed a petition challenging the legitimacy of Daley's slate for the national convention, scheduled for July in Miami Beach. The three petitioners said that, even though they were unelected, they should be seated under new party guidelines that called for minority representation with Patty representing "women." These significant reforms were instituted following the debacle of the 1968 convention. This made for a most unusual convention in 1972 and, with other factors, realigned both parties to this day.

The Singer movement argued its case at boisterous meetings around the city where party regulars and reformers heckled one another. Although she was an original petitioner, Patty (along with daughter Cathy and Cathy's friend Faith Ruffing and Crowley's foster son Al Augustine) was selected only as an alternate delegate. The legality of it all was taken up in local courts, in the U.S. Supreme Court, at a credentials meeting in Washington and eventually on the floor of the convention. Patty and Cathy defied an Illinois court order and walked

onto the convention floor. Dramatically, the party's credentials committee told the Daley delegates to leave the convention.

This convention, along with a 1971 Supreme Court decision allowing mandatory busing as a remedy for segregation in public schools, was a turning point in the alignment of political constituencies. The New Deal coalition of organized labor, ethnic Catholics and urban interests (known as the *machine* in Chicago and in other Atlantic Coast and Great Lakes cities) gave way to seemingly more diversity. In consequence, however, electoral politics grew dependent upon single-issue identity groups. Both political parties then became involved in new cultural topics, particularly abortion and homosexuality.

George McGovern, the 1972 Democratic nominee in Miami, soon saw the underside of the reforms: He lost the general election in a landslide, taking only Massachusetts and District of Columbia. He later commented on the Miami convention: "I opened the doors of the Democratic Party and 20million people walked out."

Patty too soon saw the negatives. She and Cathy went to Miami favoring McCarthy. But Jackson and Singer wanted McGovern and they pressured all of the reform delegates to tow the line. The reformers, writes Kotre, "played politics the way Daley did. The Singer machine had replaced the Daley machine." In the end Cathy, who had moved from alternate status to voting delegate status, cast one of only two convention votes for McCarthy. Patty had misgivings about the entire event, including the physical dismissal of Daley's slate from the hall. "I saw how politicians acted and it was very disillusioning," she told Kotre.

Deborah's Place

After Pat died on November 20, 1974, Patty remarkably continued their fervor for social improvement for over 30 years through several involvements and a variety of ministries, all the while working in a family-owned travel agency in Chicago's John Hancock Building, where she continued to live.

"I found myself very much alone," Patty told Tim Unsworth. "I found that I needed a group." So Patty convened in her home a woman's discussion group with guest speakers, calling it *The Genesis Group*.

Patty's famous hospitality remained too. Several groups, including some archdiocesan agencies and school gatherings, enjoyed the food, the view of the lake and Patty's good cheer while they met there for a strategy session or a holiday party.

During these years Patty was also a Eucharistic Minister at Holy Name Cathedral and a Minister of Care, bringing communion to patients at nearby Northwestern Hospital. With her eldest daughter Patsy (Sr. Patricia Crowley, OSB), she spent nearly every Sunday afternoon for about 30 years visiting inmates at the Metropolitan Correction Center for Women. Patty was also a board member of the Chicago Housing Authority for three years, was very active with the League of Women Voters, assisted the Benedictine Sisters of St. Scholastica in resettling Vietnamese refugees, participated in a pioneering Christian/Jewish dialogue group that she and Pat had earlier helped to form, was an officer at the Woodstock Center, was a regular participant at conventions of Call To Action, plus an honored guest at many functions, and more.

Patty had many disappointments with electoral politics, social movements, and the church. Yet she never quit.

It is worth highlighting Patty's constancy and fidelity at a time when many people participate episodically in civic groups and in the church—if they participate at all. Patty had many disappointments with electoral politics, social movements, and the church. Yet she never quit. She never changed denominations. She never so much as hinted

to any young adult that a take-it-or-leave-it attitude is acceptable.

Patty's primary involvement in her later years was with Deborah's Place, a comprehensive program offering services and housing to women who are homeless.

All of Patty's initiatives began with direct experience, **observe**. Moved to a study phase, **judge**. And then took more formal shape, **act**. Pre-Cana programs and the Cana Conference began because Patty observed her engaged sister. So too Deborah's Place began one day in late 1984 when Patty observed a woman who was homeless in a doorway on Michigan Ave., near Patty's Hancock Building home. "Maybe I can help find you someplace to live," Patty said to the woman. Her offer proved to be more difficult than she imagined. A church on Michigan Ave. "wouldn't take her," Patty recalls. Eventually Patty took the woman to Howard Area Community Center where Patty's eldest daughter was the executive director.

Now with determination, Patty teamed with about five other women and then ten more. In concert with Eighth Day Center and Community Emergency Shelter Organization they studied the situation of women who were homeless in the Loop (Chicago's downtown). By February 1985 the group concluded that a permanent women-only overnight place was necessary. But where? Following years of habit, Patty tore a listing of area churches from the phone book and divided the names among a few volunteers. Only one church took on the challenge, Immaculate Conception on North Park Ave. The name "Deborah's Place" was chosen because, says Patty, "Deborah was a woman in the Bible who was strong in her own right."

Patty served on the original board of Deborah's Place for six years. Because of changes at Immaculate Conception, the shelter was soon homeless. The location moved to a YMCA after-school day care center and then into two different buildings on N. Milwaukee Ave., until Deborah's Place found a building on N. Sedgwick St. where an overnight shelter, a transitional program, and permanent housing were developed. Patty resigned from the board in 1991 when Sr. Patricia Crowley, OSB was named the second director of the shelter. Patty continued to volunteer and, in 2003, one of Deborah's sites, housing 79 women who were formerly homeless, was named The Patty Crowley Apartments.

There were times when events and the consequences of specific decisions outpaced Patty, leaving her disappointed and even disillusioned. It is not accurate to say, however, that Patty was naïve. She certainly was not unsophisticated. It is more that Patty's charity was uncalculating, leaving her vulnerable. That's not a bad quality; in fact, it resonates with the Christian gospel which exhorts people to love freely, to then expect some rejection and even persecution, which in turn makes perfect sense within the promise of resurrection.

Patty had her share of normal faults. She was capable of expressing misgivings and sorrow. She was straightforward, but not so rigid she could not change her mind. She listened to and considered many viewpoints. No matter the obstacle, she was determined. Above all, Patty was hospitable. She brewed coffee, made lunch and served dinner to hundreds of people, first in her suburban home and finally at her 88th floor apartment in Chicago. Many of these people were involved in one or another of her projects, some were exchange students, and some were just friends of friends.

This essay is primarily about Patty's public life in the context of 20th century Roman Catholicism. But Patty was also a businesswoman, a spouse, and a mother to her own children, a foster mother to 14 children and to at least 60 foreign students spent one or more semesters in her home.

Patty was not a militant feminist in the sense that anti-chauvinism was her crusade. She knew that she and her husband were complementary and she instinctively knew that a movement needs the complementary streams of its public face and its activity behind the scenes. Patty grew up in a church dominated by the personalities of its male clergy and so through all her years with CFM and in her reflections on it she delighted in the CFM rule that chaplains only speak at the conclusion of the small group meetings. Patty often emphasized that the rule instructed the chaplains to "be brief." Yet Patty was not anti-clergy. She was friends with many priests in Chicago and elsewhere and was in contact with priests all around the world. Nor did Patty ever believe that the church would be better without an ordained priesthood.

Patty kept scrapbooks aplenty. Lots of family pictures, CFM, travel and group photos hung on every wall of her Hancock Building

apartment. Yet Patty didn't live in the past. She never allowed past controversies, slights or failures to paralyze her. Patty had a bias for action and believed that setting a fast sure pace on the road of holiness wears out the devil, who tends to plod and roam around widely. "You cannot live your life backwards," she told Bob McClory. "You've got to get out of the old phase and get on with the new phase. Otherwise you'll be miserable."

The holy card distributed at Patty's funeral fittingly contains verses from *Matthew 25*: "Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, and comfort the stranger."

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