

Sister in a pantsuit?

She's changing image of women

By MARGARET MILLER

To encounter Sister Rachelle Harper is to become convinced that the role of religious vocations remains dynamic in the Catholic Church. And that the role of women has to become wider in scope.

Those in St. Edith parish of Livonia had that experience as the associate director of the Detroit Archdiocese's pastoral vocations office visited recently.

As a nun, this Sister of Mercy in a pantsuit presented a new view of the traditional vocation in the church. As a woman, she showed herself part of the liberation movement, interested in putting to the best possible use the particular talents she possesses.

"Women have been shy in using their talents in the church," she said. "But I feel we're all called upon to be holy people, and women are beginning to find within themselves a new self-fulfillment in learning they have special abilities."

Ruth Klug, St. Edith parish member, said those who met Sr. Rachelle were especially impressed with her insistence that "woman's role is to love, and to use our unique capabilities in compassion and gentleness."

"She's a real optimist about woman's role in the church," Mrs. Klug said, "and her enthusiasm makes us optimistic too."

SISTER RACHELLE made her visit as part of a vocations awareness week in St. Edith, a project the three members of the pastoral vocations office are aiming to bring to many Catholic parishes in this area.

Programs led by her or one of the others in the office already are scheduled in the near future in Holy Name, Our Lady of Mercy, St. Ignace, St. Regis and St. Hugo of the Hills parishes in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area and St. Aidan, St. Genevieve, St. Maurice, St. Michael, and St. Francis in Livonia.

Others are planned in St. Kenneth and Our Lady of Good Counsel in Plymouth.

Our Lady of Loretto and St. Agatha in Ford Township, St. Bede, St. Beatrice, St. Ives and St. Michael in Southfield, St. Ber-

nadine of Westland and St. Damian of Garden City.

In these sessions," Sr. Rachelle said, "our purpose is to help people become informed about the vocations in the church, whether full-time or part-time, married or single."

"This is important, because we have the feeling people are more confused about us than ever before."

"I realize this because I don't look like a sister and I live in a home with three other sisters instead of in a convent. One person at St. Edith told me, I know as a compliment, that I not only didn't look like a sister but didn't act like one either."

EXPLAINING the changed lifestyle of many in the religious vocations, Sr. Rachelle said, "Renewal has meant we've tried to go back to the gospel and the beginnings of Christianity, to do what Jesus did and walk the streets with people and let them know we're there to help."

Presenting the religious vocation meant, among other things, meeting with the 1,700 youngsters in the St. Edith parish.

They attend public school, and most had never talked to a sister," she said. "That means that my lifestyle is not an option for them, so I wanted them to be aware of it."

Discussion of vocations, she added, also includes a report on her work with Life

Search, a program in which couples and single adults help alienated young people, and a pastoral development program, in which people in their twenties can spend six months to a year working in the church "to develop a sense of ministry."

Sr. RACHELLE's special contribution to an awareness program is talking with the women of the parish she visits about the situation of women in the Catholic Church.

She said she heard at St. Edith as elsewhere among women, expressions of resentment of the slowness with which moves are made to widen women's roles.

"We talked about angry feelings," she said, "but also what we can do while waiting to be included in sacramental ministry."

"I talked some of my own feelings, and my conviction that a militant manner does not help. I also told them about two married women I know who are leading retreats."

"I wanted them to know there are many opportunities right now for women in addition to mothers' clubs, altar societies and religious education teachers."

This nun is firm in her belief that "it's a

terribly exciting church we're in."

"I've been a sister for 24 years," she added, "and I've seen a lot of changes. I think they are coming because we're all trying to change things together."



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Wires and water: a shocking combination

Much too often we hear about someone being electrocuted in the bathtub because a careless person connected electrical appliance to the water. And much too often it will be a child.

Water is an excellent conductor of electricity, and it is the human body under the right conditions.

While many people know that they may be electrocuted because many electrical appli-

cations use water—coffee percolators, washing machines, dishwashers—to name a few.

These products are designed to be used with water but the important thing is that the electrical energy never comes into contact with the water when the product is used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

PERHAPS the best way to understand how electricity and water can become dangerous is to study an illustration from Underwriters Laboratories.

A connected electrical appliance carelessly placed near water may accidentally fall into the water.

The electrical current will travel through the water to a person's hand in the water. If the person is touching a grounded metallic object, such as a water faucet, she can receive a severe—possibly fatal—electric shock.

UL engineers warn that while some electrical appliances are designed to be used with water, many are not. The user should carefully read and follow instructions and caution markings covering the product's proper use and care.

UNLESS SPECIFICALLY designed and intended for such use, never dip or submerge any electrical product into water. When products are intended to be cleaned with water, be sure to unplug them before cleaning, and follow cleaning instructions.

Do not use electrical appliances in such a manner that they may be accidentally dropped in water in the kitchen, in the bathroom, or the laundry room.

Remember then, while some electrical appliances use water, or are even used in water, most should never be dipped or submerged in water.

CP Ferndale office will close

Consumers Power Co. has announced that its Ferndale office will close permanently at the end of business on Nov. 30.

E. A. Waggoner, metro region general manager, said that in recent years gas customers have paid monthly bills primarily through the mail and that use of the Ferndale office has declined 40 per cent.

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