

A Banner Year for the Catholic League

This issue of *Catalyst* marks the end of my first year as president of the Catholic League. Fortunately, there is much good news to report.

The best news is the growth in membership. We have tripled our membership in the past year, hitting a record high of 90,000. We fully expect to top 100,000 before too long. But even that won't be enough. It is our goal to become the biggest force to hit the lay Catholic community that the nation has ever witnessed. We are well on our way to doing that but there is much more that needs to be done.

Financially, the League is solvent. The declining revenues and increasing expenditures that marked the League's performance in the early 1990s has been more than arrested, it's been reversed: we now have increasing revenues and declining expenditures.

We are getting new members from every segment of the population and from every geographic part of the country. Word of mouth is still an important means of garnering new members, and that is where your presence is most valuable. By telling friends and relatives about the Catholic League, you are proving to be our best base of recruitment. There is no substitute for personal solicitation and all of you deserve a special thanks in helping the Catholic League grow by leaps and bounds.

In addition to the personal touch, our direct mail campaigns have also proven to be a major success. We mailed approximately 62,000 pieces of mail in July of 1993 and have increased the amount with each campaign. This summer we will mail almost 1,000,000 pieces. The increase is a direct result

of the fabulous success we have had reaching Catholics with our petitions and surveys. We are now fielding more than ten thousand new members every few months and have every reason to believe that our recent success is no fluke.

Another major area of success is our relationship with the Catholic hierarchy. We have won the support of all the Cardinals and many of the Bishops as well. Our job is to keep the channels of communication open, to allow all Catholics to disseminate their views with as much vigor and with as much respect as is accorded other segments of society. We are here to defend the Church from the scurrilous assaults that have been mounted against it, and we definitely need the support of the hierarchy if we are to get the job done.

One of the major reasons why people are giving is the success the Catholic League has had. We have had a string of victories (some of which are recorded in this issue) and we have also had an unprecedented degree of media coverage. We don't win every fight but our overall record is quite good. Our presence on radio and TV, combined with coverage in newspapers and magazines – both religious and secular – is excellent. We expect that this kind of attention will only grow in the years ahead.

The growth of our volunteer chapters is on schedule. While much of what we do concerns issues of national importance, there is much happening in every region of the nation. If you or someone you know is interested in starting a chapter of the Catholic League in your area, please contact Joe Doyle, our Operations Director, for information (see the last page of *Catalyst* for details).

Finally, we have had a lot of positive feedback regarding *Catalyst*. The move from a newsletter to a journal, complete with a name that conveys the pulse of the organization, has been well received. We are increasingly cited by other publications for the work we are doing and for the quality of

articles that appear in the journal.

Our readers want to see material that is fresh in style and in substance, and we hope to provide both.

And speaking about style. If there is one thing that has helped bolster our ranks more than anything else, it is the style of the Catholic League. Never timid, reticent or afraid of controversy, the Catholic League eschews the idea that the only answer to bigotry is dialogue. Dialogue is a great way to pursue progress with those who, though disagreeable, are nonetheless reasonable. But when reason no longer prevails, talk alone will not succeed. The threat of a lawsuit is the only language that some people understand. The specter of public humiliation is another weapon that must be used.

Petitions and boycotts are helpful. The use of the bully pulpit – via the airwaves – is a most effective strategy. Press conferences can be used to enlighten or, alternatively, to embarrass. We must be prepared on all fronts.

The real heroes in this struggle are the ones reading this column. Without your prayers, kind words of support and financial contributions, we don't exist. The Catholic League is all of us.

I look forward to a strong second half of the year and can't wait to report the day when we top 100,000 members.