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As a strong advocate of the CCD, Father Bissonnette attended regional meetings with the Lafayette diocese long-time director Msgr. Levasseur and at these meetings first met the future Bishop Frey, then archdiocesan CCD director. “He has become a modern bishop, a Vatican II bishop,” Father Bissonnette says.

Father Bissonnette retired, for reasons of health, in 1973, but successful open heart surgery performed 18 months ago has given him a new lease on life. He helps out on weekends as needed, he even spent three months in Eunice during the absence of the associate pastor.

He is in demand for scripture lessons and talks on prayer.

“It seems they don’t teach young people how to pray,” he says, “but I find young people interested and want to know more about it.” He has been invited back several times to area Catholic schools for his talks on prayer.

Born in Lowell, Mass. in 1910, Father Bissonnette was one of three children. He has one sister still living. His father was a cabinet maker, “and we were a very religious family,” he remembers. “and the priesthood was appealing because of the opportunities to preach and teach and to say Mass.”

After 43 years in the priesthood, he still finds fulfillment in preaching and teaching.

Catholic Relief Services meeting.

“Preaching and teaching,” these have been his greatest satisfactions in the ministry. “The apostles brought the good news, then Christ came and taught,” Father Bissonnette emphasizes.

After seminary studies in Canada, he was ordained in 1938 and spent some time in parish work in Ontario. He went to Georgia while on sick leave and had been there about 18 months when he was sent to New Orleans to attend the