Diocese Of Lafayette Opens 8 New Church Parishes Within 3 Years

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Lafayette comprises the historic parishes of southwest Louisiana in which there are 146 church parishes, served by 237 resident priests and 743 visiting priests. Total civil population is 270,501.

Most rapid growth has been in the western end of the diocese, where nine new church parishes have been established since 1955.

In the Lafayette area, growth has been steady. Eight new church parishes, established since 1959, include St. Leo and St. John the Baptist. Bishop Schexnayder has a separate article in this issue for the dedication of a new diocesan school building. Other diocesan works instituted in Lafayette, in 1963, the National Newman Convention, and the newest diocesan office building, the Lafayette Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, a potential secular religious order.

In addition to these developments, Bishop Schexnayder has welcomed 140 deacons, who are married, to the diocese of Lafayette. This was also dedicated in 1961. The third point was a new diocesan office building, presently under construction.

Several considerations of the diocesan development fund will be to expand operations of the diocesan charities office, a possible home for retarded children, other homes for the aged in other sections of the diocesan work within the diocese which Supreme Pontiff Paul VI asked the Diocese of Lafayette to establish. This is the case of the Diocese of Lafayette, Our Lady of the Oaks Elementary School for Negroes in Lafayette. Our Lady of the Oaks is a recent house at Grand Caillou and Holy Rosary Institute, a central high school for Negroes in Lafayette.

Bishop Schexnayder has welcomed several religious orders into the diocese for work other than teaching. These include the Benedictine Sisters of St. Joseph, who staff Immaculate Heart of Mary parish, Crozet; the Oblate Sisters of St. Joseph, in charge of nursing service at Theria Parish Hospital, New Iberia; the Sisters of the Holy Cross, in charge of the Immaculate Conception Hospital; the Oblate Missionaries of St. Mary, who do spiritual work; the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, who do domestic work.

Two new diocesan groups are the Visitation Brothers, lay Brothers dedicated to parish work, and the Bishop's Helpers, a potential secular institute for women.

Newest diocesan committee, with an international purpose, is the Committee on Papal Volunteers for Latin America (PAVLA). Composed of priests, religious and laymen, it is concerned with recruiting, screening and supporting lay volunteers for Latin America.

The Diocese of Lafayette was represented for the first time at a Vatican Council of the Catholic Church by Bishop Schexnayder and Auxiliary Bishop Boudreaux. During their absence, administration of the diocese has been charged to Monsignor Louis M. Boudreaux of Lake Charles.