

# CORPUS Retrospective



The precise birth of CORPUS is difficult to pin down. To establish a specific beginning, one needs to specify what was begun. In the case of CORPUS, this needs clarification. The beginning of CORPUS as a germinal idea is one thing and the establishment of CORPUS, as a noticeable movement with a developed rationale and philosophy is another.

In the early 1970's, there was a friendly association and communication among priests, active and resigned, in the Chicago area. Informal meetings were held and suppers were hosted in different parts of the city. This amiable contact created an environment of acceptance. Many resigned priests continued to serve their parishes and dioceses in some form of ministerial or apostolic activity. Many pastors in the Chicago area knew they could rely on their old friends even though they had left the active canonical priesthood. The Chicago area of the early 1970's were arable land for sowing the seeds of accepting a married priesthood.

As a seed ready for planting, the idea for CORPUS originated at a restaurant called the Beefsteak Inn on Sheridan Road in the Rogers Park area of Chicago. In December, 1974, Barry Rankin, a married priest, was hosting a dinner meeting of married priests and their wives...one of many he had organized in the Chicago area.

At this dinner Jim Wilbur, a married priest who had been ordained for the Archdiocese of Chicago in 1956, was with two other married priests, William Nemmers and Frank McGrath of the Archdiocese of Chicago and classmates from the ordination class of 1957.

The table discussion that evening focused on the idea of using married priests in the active ministry and apostolate of the Church. What sparked this particular topic was an off-handed remark by Bishop Thomas Grady, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, that referred to married priests: "None of those guys was interested in the Church." Jim Wilbur who had a broad range of personal contacts and information sources, found out about the Bishop's comment. He himself cared about the Church, and he knew many others who cared as deeply. The three friends discussed the fact that each one personally knew priests who had married and were still willing to serve. They knew there was a major resource pool of trained professionals which the Church could tap if it so desired. With Nemmers and McGrath, Wilbur decided on a project to identify 100 resigned, married priests who would be "willing to serve". Thus, CORPUS was born.



