

THE GREATER COMMUNITY

About 25 years ago an informal group of Catholics who were interested in supporting the goals of the seminary, as well as fulfilling their own needs as Catholic Christians, began attending Mass at the seminary chapel. The group grew quite rapidly during the early seventies when the Christian Family Movement was popular among young families, and the many Franciscans on the faculty took on the duties of chaplains of C.F.M. chapters as extra ministries in addition to their regular duties. Because St. Anthony's Seminary is not a parish within the structure of the Diocese, the members cannot be called parishioners. So for lack of a better term they are designated as members of the St. Anthony's Seminary Greater Community.

The members are generally serious Catholics, as well as some non-Catholics who actively support various causes including Villa Magella, a home for unwed mothers; an orphanage in Mexico; Transition House, a shelter for homeless; a Franciscan outreach in Guatemala; and help for needy families, among others. For example, a local group called "Aero Medico" flies to Mexico to provide medical care in remote areas. One of the nurses on the team is a member of the Greater Community who asked the group to help a nearly blind boy to come to Santa Barbara for eye surgery. Members provided accommodations and food, making it possible for the boy to undergo the surgery.

This is a relatively small group whose structure is not as rigid as that of a parish; consequently, the members have a feeling of involvement. The impersonal bureaucracy found in most large parishes is not present, so the allegations of sexual abuse at the seminary are all the more appalling to the members because everyone knows one another and has a personal feeling for the victims and their families.