

Theology Affects Church History...and Vice Versa

The Role of the Laity Will Gain in Importance and Acceptance

By MONSIGNOR WILLIAM H. SHANNON, PH. D., Professor of Theology, Nazareth College

The Roman Catholic Church has a history and it has a theology. It has a history because it has a mission to carry out; it has a theology because it has a faith to live.

Because the Church has a mission, it does things that can be reported on and thus it makes history. Because it has a faith, the Church has a faith-experience that can be reflected on and that reflection makes theology.

History is the story of the outward life of the Church as she fulfills her mission. Theology is the story of the inward life of the Church as she reflects on her experience of faith.

These two—the Church's history and her theology—are closely related. Theology helps to write the Church's history; for she carries out her mission in the light of her understanding of faith. But the converse is likewise true—and perhaps not so readily realized—history helps to write the Church's theology.

For faith is experienced and reflected upon, not in a vacuum, but always in a particular concrete historical situation. The Gospel comes to man as God's answer to man's questions and problems in the existential situation in which man finds himself. Because the questions and problems of one age are not the questions and problems of another, the unchanging message of the Gospel is experienced in different ways by men and women in different periods of history.

For man can only experience the Gospel where he is. He can write his theology only as a being in time and space.

For this reason the theology of the Church, her reflection on her own faith-experience, must always be a dynamic theology, responding to the needs of a particular time and place. This means, therefore, that theology betrays its function, if it simply goes on repeating today what it said yesterday.



The laity at work in the field of theology and philosophy are exemplified by these two couples: Mr. and Mrs. Noel Shuell, left, who teach theology at St. John Fisher and Nazareth College, respectively, and Mr. and Mrs. Bill Carrington, philosophy teachers at Fisher and Nazareth.

The paradox of the whole enterprise of theology is that, if it is to be true to the past, it must not say what the past said; it must say something different, or—to put it another way—it must say the same thing in a different way. Theology, if it is to be true to the Gospel, must always be ready to meet the challenge of history.

The purpose of this contribution to the Diocesan Centennial is to attempt to answer the question: how has theology met the challenge of history in the past hundred years (1868-1968)? How has the Church's theology during these hundred years responded to her historical needs?

An adequate answer to this kind of question would demand a full-length book. Since the Editor, quite mercifully for those who will read this Supplement, has limited my remarks, I have thought it wise to pose a similar, but perhaps less

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Selection of Priests Always of Special Concern

Seminary Changes of Past Augur More in Future

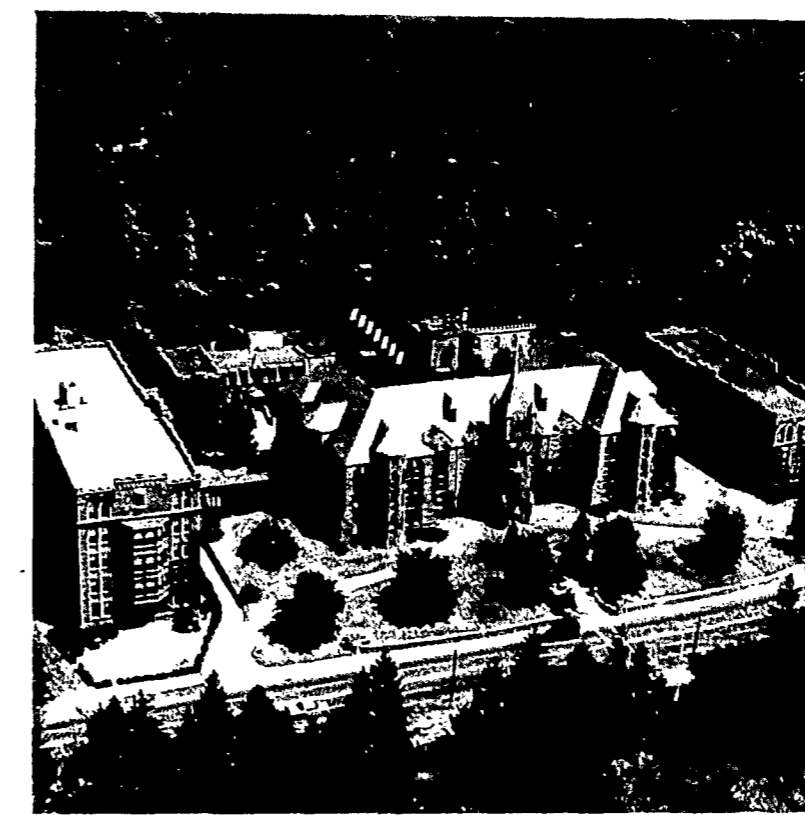
By MONSIGNOR JOSEPH L. HOGAN, S.T.D., Pastor, St. Margaret Mary Church, Rochester

I consider the assignment of appraising our diocesan seminaries and prophesying their future as formidable as any I have ever accepted.

My credentials for the appraisal of the past are eighteen teaching years of my priesthood and nine years of student days spent at St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's Seminaries and three years as Rector of Becket Hall. These years represent more than half of my life.

For the prophetic role, I lay claim to no special endowment. I did have the honor of pioneering in the first radical change in our Seminary structure. But this gives me no special insight into the future. My predictions are only guesses and yours are quite probably as valid as mine.

The story of the founding of St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's has already been well written by the two historians of our Diocese, Dr. Frederick Zwierlein and Father Robert McNamara.



St. Bernard's Theological Seminary

Founded by Bishop McQuaid 75 years ago, it has prepared priests for most of the dioceses of the East. Nearly every priest serving in the Rochester Diocese today was ordained from St. Bernard's. It now is academically united with Colgate-Rochester Divinity School and the Episcopal Bexley Hall.

The former wrote a three-volume work on the "Life and Letters of Bishop McQuaid" which gives a detailed account of the pioneering venture of Bishop McQuaid in seminary training; Father McNamara has reviewed the story and brought it up to the present in his work prepared for the centenary of the Diocese "The Diocese of Rochester—1868 to 1968."

That a diocese the size of Rochester should have a preparatory Seminary when it was but two years of age (1870) and a Major Seminary for its Silver Jubilee (1893) was unheard of in the history of the American Church. The total Seminary system was referred to by the Bishop's contemporaries as "McQuaid's folly." Translated into today's parlance he was surely "a new breeder."

The wisdom, however, of his bold decision is reflected in the noble history of the accomplishments of the two schools. I know

I voice the sentiments of priests numbered in the thousands who graduated from these schools when I say "Thank God for the diocesan seminaries and for the dedication of the men who have staffed them."

On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of St. Bernard's, Father Robert McNamara wrote a brief history of her first fifty years. He concluded his work with these words: "Fifty years is a long life for an institution. What span of life to come, what future success, what destiny God may have in store for St. Bernard's Seminary in her second half-century, He alone knows. He may grant her a great length of years, or He may decide that her work is done much sooner. No purely human organization, even a sacred one, has the gift of immortality. We hope, indeed, and pray that her life may be long and even more fruitful. But since the future is beyond our control, what it may bring is idle conjecture."

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It's a pleasure to add our congratulations on this occasion commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the diocese of Rochester.

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