

Laymen Helped Strengthen Faith of the Diocese

Diocesan Buildings and Spiritual Works Attest to Their Sacrifice and Zeal

By HENRY A. ATWELL, Pastor, St. Agnes Church, Avon

Lay people of the Rochester Diocese didn't have to wait for recent Popes or a Council to realize they had more to do for the Church than just pay and pray.

Names like Siegel, Hickey, Yawman, D'Olier, Leo and D'Annunzio are the diocesan counterparts of the ancient Roman list of Cosmas and Damian, John and Paul, Felicity and Perpetua.

And just as the faith at Rome was nurtured by the blood of its heroic martyrs—thousands of them ordinarily lay people—so also the faith of the Rochester Diocese is strong today because it was nurtured by the sacrificial lives of countless ordinary lay people whose names, if listed, would be a lengthy litany of God's holy people in modern times.

For the past century—and even prior to the formal establishment of the Diocese of Rochester in 1868, lay people and



John Leo Auburn

clergy have forged bonds of collaboration to span the spectrum of activity from brick-and-mortar building projects to day-after-day feeding the hungry, and including also such strictly spiritual apostolates as adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and daily Holy Mass.

Certainly the abiding monuments for the lay people of the Diocese are the more than 500 churches, schools, hospitals, orphanages, seminaries, monasteries, convents and other buildings built from the multi-million dollar contributions made penny by penny, dollar by dollar from thousands of generous people in the pews.

And every present-day Catholic lay person is a living monument of the strong faith of parents and grandparents who pioneered the work of faith in this area of God's kingdom on earth.

Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid, founding bishop of the Rochester Diocese, is listed in many Catholic history books as a prelate who ran into difficulties with laymen who were trustees in their parishes and who objected to his policies or clergy appointments—an interesting note for those who think "disloyalty" to a bishop is a post-Pope John phenomenon.



Jeremiah Hickey

Bishop McQuaid, however, recognized his lay people not just as a flock he should guide but as responsible individuals competent in their own vocation in the world and capable of aiding him in many administrative details of his growing young Diocese.

Some of the men who were his special advisers were the manufacturers James Cunningham, Patrick Cox and John Kelly; nurserymen Patrick Barry and his son William C. Barry; journalists Joseph O'Connor and William Purcell; merchants Owen Gaffney, Charles Burke, Charles Fitzsimons, Alexander B. Howe, Walter B. Duffy and Daniel B. Murphy—all of whom lived in the latter parts of the last century, some surviving into the early years of this century.

The initiative of the laity was further spurred by Bishop McQuaid's successor—Bishop, later Archbishop Thomas F. Hickey.

The nation was, at that time, torn between pro-union and anti-union factions much as it is torn today by the racial issue. Pope Leo XIII had written his liberal-oriented encyclical "Rerum Novarum" in the latter years of the nineteenth century and a ferment favorable to un-

(Continued on Page 33A)

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(Continued from Page 32A) ions was at work in several U.S. Catholic circles, notably among Catholics of German descent.

The Catholic Central Verein linked lay people of several parishes in study and action. One of the Verein's most vigorous members was Philip Donnelly, a lawyer and later a Monroe County judge but hardly identifiable as of German descent. When once asked why an Irishman associated with Germans—quite an eyebrow-raising event in those days—he answered, "They listen to me!"

Some of the Verein's more obviously German-descent stalwarts included Frank Hehlein, Joseph Otto, Charles Trott and Lawrence Weider.

Bishop Hickey also raised some eyebrows when he had Mrs. Martha Moore Avery, a former Marxist but a Catholic since 1904, speak at a Central Verein convention in Rochester in 1914.

Many leaders of unions in their turbulent early days were Catholic laymen inspired by Pope Leo's encyclical—such as John Mitchell of Rochester, a vice-president of the nation-



Thomas H. O'Connor

wide American Federation of Labor and John Sibley Whalen, secretary of state for New York State from 1907 to 1909, and later First Deputy State Commissioner of Labor.

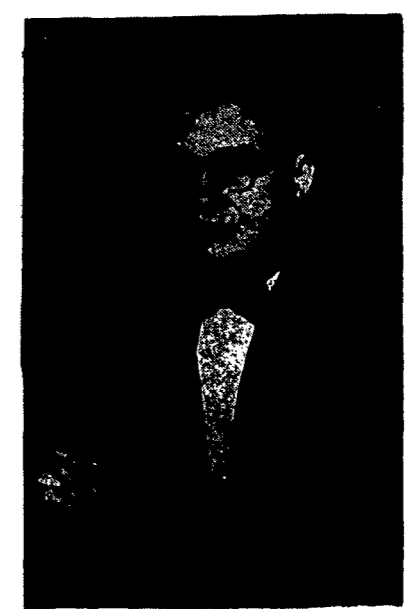
This was also the time of World War I and when the boys went "marching over there" many went by way of the Aerial School of Photography at Eastman Kodak Company. Angelo Newman and Cyril Statt, in a precedent-breaking gesture, joined JYMA officials in setting

up a service center for military men at the school.

Bishop John Francis O'Hern, third Bishop of the Diocese, wanted to give official Church honors to lay people who headed the growing number of Catholic organizations. The first person to receive such an honor was the octogenarian organist Professor F. Eugene Bonn of St. Patrick's Cathedral. The Professor's sons Frank and John Paul loyally and competently carried on their father's tradition of excellence in church music.

Also recipients of the "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice" medals during Bishop O'Hern's tenure were Mrs. Teresa Ganster of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Knights of St. John; Mrs. Cora McParlin of the Ladies Catholic Benevolent Association; Miss Alice P. Kirk of the Rochester Catholic Women's Club; Miss Cecilia M. Yawman of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women and Miss Elizabeth A. Harmon of the Catholic Daughters of America.

Five laymen became Knights of St. Gregory, a papal honor, in 1931—Eugene Dwyer, diocesan attorney; James P. B.



Cornelius Milliken, Elmira

Duffy, prominent department store president and noted for numerous services to his Church; Joseph H. Weis of the Knights of St. John; Walter Wojtczak, owner of a large Polish bakery, and Harry C. D'Annunzio, chief designer at Fashion Park.

Another papal honor, knighthood in the Sovereign Order of Malta, was later given to Mr. Duffy, to Jeremiah Hickey, clothing manufacturer, and to Dr. Joseph P. O'Hern, a cousin

of the Bishop and deputy superintendent of Rochester's public schools.

And then just a month later, in April, 1932, Bishop O'Hern nominated ten laymen to be Knights of the Holy Scripture, a title dating back to the times of the Crusades and reserved today for outstanding lay people. Recipients were Augustine J. Cunningham, Thomas W. Finucane, Frank H. Biel, Frederick J. Weider, Peter Tettlebach and William E. Maloney of Rochester; J. John Hassett and Michael A. Del Papa of Elmira, Frederick F. Pfeiffer of Corning and Frank J. Lesch of Auburn.

Bishop O'Hern was easily thirty years ahead of the Vatican Council and its emphasis on the layman's role in the mass media of communications. He consolidated three lay-edited Catholic weekly newspapers to create the *Catholic Courier and Journal* in 1929.

Laymen who pioneered in the Catholic press included Edward J. Ryan, Thomas H. Donovan, Willard Marakle, Maurice Sam-

(Continued on Page 64A)



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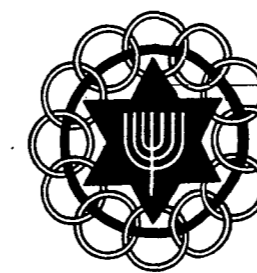
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