

## An Open Letter To Bp. Hogan

My dear father in Christ,

The recent public announcement in Rochester that diocesan financial support for inner city schools would be limited to \$250,000 for fiscal 72-73 brings to public attention a problem which has been festering for months. I am writing to express publicly my assessment of this public problem, and to indicate to you and to the community what I feel is the reason why the church seems always to put her worst foot forward. The lack of adequate support for these schools is a tragedy, but the reason why this support is lacking points to an even greater tragedy.

In October, 1971, the Council of Inner City Parishes brought their needs to the attention of the Priests' Council. The Priests' Council enlisted the help of the Interim Diocesan Education Commission to suggest a plan which would help solve this problem. The Commission spent many hours of work in producing the so-called "Driscoll Plan," calling for an inter-parochial support of the parishes in need by those in better financial condition.

In due course, the Driscoll Plan was submitted to the Council, modified, (the "Driscoll-Marvin Plan") submitted to a group of nine Monroe County pastors for review, and approved as an interim plan. It was neither proposed nor accepted as an ideal or long-term solution to a growing, and most vexing problem—our collective Christian obligation to the educational needs of the poor.

However, disaster struck from another quarter at the April 1972 meeting of the Priests' Council. Father Moynihan appeared to say that this plan was unacceptable because he and his advisors had determined, quite apart from the other groups working on this problem, that funds would be limited to \$250,000 for next fiscal year. I remember this so vividly as disaster, because I pursued Father Moynihan on this point until he stated clearly that \$250,000 would be available because he had determined what the diocese should afford, and had written you on this matter.

I immediately moved that the Priests' Council reaffirm its decision, based upon such consistent advice, to support the

Driscoll-Marvin Plan to supply the CICIP with its full budget request for 72-73. This was done, with the further motion that the Priests' Council hold an open forum in May to discuss its action with concerned priests.

You know the disastrous results of that May meeting. Chief among them were the following:

1. The affirmation by the majority of pastors present that their parochial concerns come first, and that they did not favor an increase in the diocesan tax, for whatever reason.

2. The immediate reversal of the Priests' Council which voted to favor no plan at all for the support of Inner City parishes.

That date and that hour marked the moral bankruptcy of the diocese of Rochester. I could not remain for the Priests' Council meeting that afternoon because I was sick at heart. The announcement on June 5 was anticlimactic. And the problem is not simply lack of money.

The progression of events I have just described is not the real tragedy. Had the plans been approved as recommended, there would still be much work to do, much planning to complete, much money to raise. No, the real tragedy lies in this: in spite of plans, priorities and programs, in the presence of committees, Commissions, and Councils, nothing in the church of Rochester is changed. The power of the church as an institution is exerted behind closed doors where the decisions that count are still made. The decision-making process remains as shadowy and intransigent as ever. Authority remains unaccountable and subsidiarity a myth.

Renewal is still a world away.

I have just read your paper, "The Mission of the Church," where it is stated: "The pages that follow are not filled with ready answers. Instead, they seek out your comments, your suggestions, your ideas, your hopes for the future. The growth of the whole People of God in our diocese is the work of all of us." (p2) If these words are to live, the co-responsibility which they demand must be real. The diocesan Pastoral Council must not be a facade — window dressing to impress a sophisticated world with the appearance of progress. The Priests' Council and the Education Commission have been eviscerated. We pray it won't happen again if we can form a diocesan Pastoral Council. That tragedy would probably be irreversible.

## A Comment by Bishop Hogan

*The Courier-Journal is the official voice of the diocese and the main link in the chain of communication of the bishop with his people. I want our diocesan paper to reflect the variety of prayerful and thoughtful opinion which may be quite divergent from that of the bishop. The management and editorial staff have been so instructed by me. Only recently the Courier published a letter written by a former student opposing my recent trip to Washington. The theme of the letter was: "Too little, too late. I tried to tell you so when I was a supposed adolescent and you were my seminary rector. You did nothing then when it would have counted."*

*Last week during our annual retreat of priests, I expressed my wholehearted gratitude to my priests not only for their positive affirmations of my feeble efforts but for their challenges to my leadership. It is in this same spirit that I accept this present challenge offered by a former student and a beloved fellow priest and co-worker.*

We don't need men of limited vision today whose major concern is to guard the fortress. We do need the best of everyone if Christian community is ever to become a reality. What is to be protected, anyway? Are dollars the precious commodity? Are schools in themselves sacred? What do we value above all? The document says again, "...our world is not simply a prison, to whose natural forces we must conform. It is rather a reality which we must mold, exercising our co-responsibility with Him who made us free." (p3) How do we achieve this freedom? "Jesus preached a self-less freedom of giving to others and a 'domination' accomplished through apparent powerlessness." (p5) And again, "We are part of a church that is attempting to read the 'signs of the times,' to her true nature as 'in pilgrimage', to follow the lead of the Spirit in reflecting the dominion of God in Christ." (p7)

One could quote on and on, for the document is a mine of hope for those who seek to discover Christ in the world today. But there is a note of caution as well, appropriate to our present concern: "We tend to suspect and even to resist those who would exercise authority over us in a manner reserved to the One whom we revere as Father." (p17)

Lest the weight of an unresponsive institution sink our efforts to see the kingdom in the plans and hopes of the future, we submit the following as essential to our continuing toward a renewal of the church of Rochester:

1. The Bishop must exercise

the role of spiritual father. He must indicate the moral imperatives which guide all our actions. How different the May meeting of pastors would have been if you had said, "I remind you of your moral responsibilities toward the poor. I realize there are no easy solutions, but go, tell your people of their neighbors' need, and look to the good of your brother."

2. There must be an honest attempt to judge need in the light of total resources. The point was made again and again, that education (or any other commitment) involves a minor part of total resources. If the diocesan need for inner city support of education amounts to (say) 5% of taxable parish income, how do we examine the priorities involved in the 95% of income which people contribute? Where does help for the poor come in the total scale of values?

3. Let it be noted that the Priests' Council, the Interim Diocesan Education Commission, and other bodies you may establish are "advisory". But what does an advisory body do if not provide acceptable advice? It ceases to exist. So the title "advisory" is purely in the title. Any group you ask to work long hours on problem solving will tend to expect the reasonable acceptance of reasonable proposals. To accept the back-room advice of un-named "financial advisors" and the disgruntled rumblings of an ad hoc May meeting of several threatened pastors over such working groups discredits the whole process of shared responsibility. Since all the public groups were of one mind about a plan to make sufficient money available, why was a contrary decision made?

From whence in the future will come "advice" to cause you to spurn the reasoned decisions of regularly constituted groups?

4. If a public process of shared decision making cannot produce broad agreement on plans for the future, it must be because of a lack of proper information. Do you or the chancellor know things about the diocese we don't that would change our conclusions? If so, you have an obligation to give us that information. The diocese cannot hope to achieve a maturity necessary to meet Christian obligations by stabbing out in the dark.

5. A genuine renewal of the diocese presupposes a genuine renewal of every unit of the diocese. What are the terms of this renewal? Is it directed at parishes, or are bureaus and commissions included? Again, the moral imperatives must be established by our spiritual father. You must not only corroborate the voice of the Spirit as you discern it coming from your children, but you must be a voice of the Spirit yourself. Moral leadership is risky because it involves the prophetic mission of the church. You are called to the great responsibility of being a prophet among us.

You must be a prophet to your department heads, laying out in bold strokes the Grand Design for the Church of Rochester, then give them the moral support to develop the details.

You must be a prophet to your pastors, living a pastoral life they can imitate (by being visible to them), exhorting, correcting, rebuking, encouraging, supporting them to act in harmony with the needs of the Body of Christ today.

You must be a prophet to your people, cutting through their prejudices, fears, and uncertainty, to strengthen them to the practice of self-sacrifice, and to a public manifestation of the qualities of Jesus so that all men may see that Christ lives in the world.

I pray that you see in the need for a radical reform of the church a unique opportunity for witness. I promise you whatever support and prayers I can muster for that end. That these thoughts could come from one who is so personally un-renewed and filled with faults is no reflection on the sincerity in which they are offered. It is the way the Spirit seems to speak to me.

Your devoted son in Christ,  
Monsignor William M. Roche

## Our New Correspondent In ITHACA



May we introduce readers in the Ithaca area to our new correspondent there, Mrs. Joy Chalone.

Joy and her husband, Fred, live in Trumansburg where he teaches Industrial Arts in the school system. They have three daughters, Amy, 10, retarded and attending school in Ohio; Amber, 8, a student at Immaculate Conception in Ithaca, and Rhonda, 3. They are members of Immaculate Conception parish.

Joy teaches private piano lessons, writes an occasional book review for her local paper, and, come September, will be a part-time student at Elmira College. So if you have news for the Courier-Journal given Mrs. Chalone a call.

MRS. JOY CHALLONE  
Trumansburg, N.Y.

607-387-4752

35 Whig St.

Mrs. Chalone Will Serve These Parishes

Dryden  
Holy Cross

Groton  
St. Anthony's

Odessa  
St. Benedict Chapel

Dundee  
St. Andrews

Ithaca  
Immaculate Conception  
St. Catherine of Siena

Trumansburg  
St. James the Apostle

Penn Yan  
St. Michael's

Ludlowville  
All Saints

Watkins Glen  
St. Mary of the Lake

In Ithaca Call Joy Chalone

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