

Holy Sepulchre

Programs Underway To Preserve Beauty

By JOHN DASH

Even the director of Holy Sepulchre Cemetery admits that "people get really uptight and they have every right to be" when it comes to the condition in the Lake Avenue burial ground.

And Bob Vogt is going to change the brickbats that are often thrown his way into bouquets.

Holy Sepulchre has been the source of irritation to many dioceses over the past several years, irritation that ranges from mild complaint to full-scale shouting matches.

By the time Vogt assumed the directorship of the memorial park last summer, "we were about five years behind" in planning and keeping the cemetery in shape.

But now there's a maintenance plan in the works for the cemetery, and major renovation program that Vogt says "will preserve the dignity and the beauty of the cemetery."

"We are aware of the problems," he says, "and our motto is 'We Care.'"

Vogt settles easily in his executive office, discussing his problems and plans for the cemetery. Over his head, hangs a framed revelation. Vogt is a Fleet Admiral for American Airlines. News releases last summer, when he was appointed the first lay director of the 102-year-old cemetery, only disclosed his executive positions with Schuler Foods and Ward Foods.

And just as easily, Vogt dons a hard hat and settles into his role

of grounds work supervisor and tour guide for reporters.

Vogt recently went to Chicago where he discussed cemetery renovation with officials from the archdiocese. It seems the church there consolidated its memorial parks under a central administration and began a massive overhauling campaign. Vogt came back to Rochester with before and after pictures, and a lot of ideas, and a lot of enthusiasm.

"Renovation" is the man's word. He describes it as a program of cemetery maintenance that's "another whole ball of wax."

The last major change in Holy Sepulchre's maintenance came about in 1924, he says, when the cemetery started insisting on single family monuments and low rise individual markers.

The plan now is to extend that rule and to lower, when possible, individual markers to lawn level.

What this will mean to cemetery visitors will be improved grounds appearance, elimination of hazards and lower maintenance costs.

One of the major problems in the cemetery is that in the older sections maintenance costs are higher than in the newer "perpetual care" sections.

This, Vogt says, works to the detriment of the cemetery as a whole.

Maintaining the park without renovation "is doing a disservice to the entire area."



Photos by Dave Witbeck

The east end of the sisters' plot reveals conditions the cemetery is trying to alleviate. Below, work in progress demonstrates the objectives of the new plan.



THE OPEN WINDOW

Father Cyril Hohman

Dear Father Hohman,

In the Mass, may I presume that the "kiss of peace," hand-shaking, etc., is still on trial? We don't know if we must do this. My husband and I are not accustomed to kissing in public or shaking hands with each other. It makes for nerve-racking moments at Mass. I can understand the gesture in convents or monasteries where all are known to each other and can presume their relationship with God. These really are strange times but promising for the future — don't you think so? What are our young people who no longer go to Mass waiting for?

Sincerely,
H. W.

Dear H. W.,

Your problem is by no means uncommon. Yes, the sign of peace is on trial in the sense that we haven't really come upon a sign which fits in our place and time. But the fact of the sign of peace is, I think, very important in helping to bring us back to a sense of community. For too long a time Sunday Mass was simply "me to God and back again" and if the church were empty of people it wouldn't have made much difference. This approach was entirely foreign to Christ's concept "where two or more are gathered in my name." Also, Communion has a horizontal dimension as well as the vertical one — it relates us to

each other as well as to Christ (or is there any real difference?)

The Our Father, which introduces the Communion, speaks only of "us" and "our," never of "me" or "mine." To get a sense of our mutual involvement and the reality of our being a family under God our Father, is the purpose of the sign of peace.

Your statement that it is OK in convents and monasteries because the people know each other should not lead to rejection of the sign of peace elsewhere but rather to the question, "Why don't we as Christians have a sense of being involved with one another?" I think the forms we use now are often inadequate and stilted and a lot of it comes from a heritage of aloofness ("don't touch") and a wariness which builds walls around us.

But that is the starting point. We are all just people, in the same boat, sinful yet redeemed by Christ, brothers and sisters with Christ, having God as our Father. Until we really believe that and therefore become spontaneous about our signs of care for others, the problem will never be solved.

As far as the young people are concerned, for better or worse they are no longer motivated by fear to attend Mass, so we must find a better motivation for them, convey the real, vibrant, dynamic, nourishing experience of the Mass as it really is. I believe it can, and in time, will be done.

"You don't go very far with anchors," he says.

Vogt cites some impressive figures from Chicago. In 1965-66, when the archdiocese started its renovation program, grass cutting alone averaged out to 9.2 hours per acre. Seven years later that number dropped to 2.7 hours per acre.

One of the first areas in Holy Sepulchre under renovation is the old sister's plot, a resting place for nuns, located next to the graceful Norman chapel on the cemetery's east side.

"It's a big job," Vogt says, "but all the nuns are praying for us."

A site foreman ambles over to tell Vogt that he had a couple of passers-by comment on how great the plot looks now that the stones are lowered. "They slow down and take a look, looks a

heck of a lot better," the foreman noted.

Lowering individual markers isn't the whole of a renovation program, however. Also in the works is a massive planting program and, just for this summer, a repaving of more than 30 miles of lanes in the 300-acre park.

Driving through the older sections of the cemetery, Vogt slips into a reflective mood as he passes his own family's plot. "We have to prepare the people of the diocese for these changes," he says. "We can't continue to exist as a beautiful and dignified cemetery unless they're made."

"How much is this going to cost?"

"We've got enough."

But costs are a problem, he

admits later. Maintenance costs for the cemetery in its present shape are skyrocketing. With the renovation program, they will be held in considerable check.

An old woman asks the receptionist to see Vogt. She is a regular. She does not speak English well or softly. She has a problem. Vogt escorts her to his office. He remains patient and calm. From the next room one hears him sort out her problem and softly assure her that her difficulty will be taken care of.

She speaks volubly to no one in particular as she leaves the office, all the way to the bus stop. Vogt emerges, a sad line drawn over his eyes. The problem is imaginary, not able to be resolved, a condition of old age, perhaps.

But the attitude, the motto, is "We care, we really do care."

Anointing Set in Auburn

Auburn — An invitation has been extended to the ill and infirm from parishes throughout the Cayuga/Seneca Region to gather with Bishop Joseph L. Hogan and area priests for a communal anointing celebration Sunday, May 19 at 3 p.m. at St. Alphonsus parish center.

"It will be up to the faithful attending church to help remember the faithful at home and share the news of the anointing service," said Father Edward Palumbos, associate pastor at St. Alphonsus and coordinating committee spokesman.

The invitation form and

bulletin inserts outlining the development and significance of this sacrament of hope and healing were distributed April 28. Homilies will be given as part of the educative process.

"Families and friends of those to be anointed are encouraged to be present," Father Palumbos said. "Persons should meet the love and power of Christ's healing and respond to this moment surrounded by the community."

The committee is concerned that many Catholics have come to associate the anointing of the sick with death when the revised rite clearly indicates this sacrament is designed primarily

for the sick.

The committee said that at a time in the world's history when suffering and death are elements most would prefer to ignore or to handle in a purely clinical and impersonal manner, the Church is trying to emphasize the sacramental nature and the extent of her concern.

The revised rites emphasize the sacrament is celebrated as a sacrament of faith. The communal anointing, situated within the Mass and administered in the presence of the community of the faithful, is one of the four alternative approaches offered by Vatican II.