

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

Convocation Of The Lord's Anointed

[For the benefit of all who were unable to be present for the Chrism Mass in St. Rose's, Lima on March 25, I share my message through this column. I trust it will communicate to you the spirit of the great diocesan celebration which each year offers me such inspiration and encouragement.]

My mind and heart this evening, dear friends, are full of joy and gladness. I am glad we have come together tonight. In the past few years I have grown more and more fond of celebrating this Mass of Chrism amidst the fullness of the Church and I have looked forward to this Holy Week evening with great anticipation. I am glad, too, that we could gather here in this Church of St. Rose, a Church which as you know, holds so many memories for me. It was here in this very parish that I gradually learned the meaning of Church. In fact, as coincidence would have it, the record shows that it was March 26, 1916 — 59 years ago tomorrow — that I was baptized! From then on, from my First Communion to my First Mass, this holy place, with its Pastor, Monsignor Ball (whose presence here tonight is a delight), and the people of this parish were a constant reminder to me that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

You can understand, therefore, why my joy is great as I come back. It is great because once more I see in living color the oneness of God's people, the Body of Christ, the Church. And this is why I was so pleased to hear the words which were sung in the entrance rite: "Behold how good it is and how pleasant, where brothers dwell as one! It is as when the precious oil upon the head runs down over the beard, the beard of Aaron." The Psalmist's description is vivid and lavish. To him, the goodness and joy of unity is like the richness and warming unction of overflowing oil. It is this unity and this unction that we have come here tonight to celebrate.

But let us try to probe a little deeper into the meaning of what we do.

Tonight we celebrate many gifts: the gift of the sacraments, the gift of the ministry, the gift of each Christian person's unique talents. We symbolize these gifts with word and ritual action.

First, we bless three kinds of oil: one that will be used to strengthen and comfort the sick; another that will be used to anoint and purify those about to be baptized; and finally

a third that will preserve and set apart those who are confirmed and ordained. As these oils are used in four of the sacraments, they should symbolize to all who are anointed the "penetrating, enlightening, nourishing, fortifying, relaxing, healing and sanctifying action of the divine Spirit." (Dom Gaspar Lefebvre)

Next, we acknowledge the many gifts of the Spirit, "the due portion of Christ's bounty." Paul's list includes: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Our list today might include bishops and priests, pastoral assistants and deacons, religious educators and parish council members, lectors and ministers of communion, liturgy and human development committee members. But whichever list is used, we know that each of us has his or her gift — and that that gift must be used for the building up of the body of Christ. In a few minutes we will once again renew our commitment to use these gifts in the ministry of service to all of God's people; and we can personally proclaim the words of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon us; therefore he has anointed us... we shall be named priests of the Lord; ministers of our God shall we be called."

Finally, we will take the simple gifts of bread and wine and with words of praise we will give thanks to our God for the many gifts that he has given to us. How great are the many gifts! How great is our God!

But our celebration is now only half complete. We must also celebrate the fact that these many gifts are in **one** Spirit. If we forget this, we have forgotten the essence of our celebration.

In recent years we have become more and more aware that the Church is not just a group of bishops or a clerical society. I am sure that everyone here tonight has felt the pain and anxiety that comes from trying to make all Christians aware of their responsibility for the Church. To ease this pain, there has been a constant need for dialogue between the laity who must take up their role and those in charge who must allow these persons to take their rightful place. But oftentimes, the pain is not eased. In a sense, these years since Vatican II have been years of adolescence for the Church — years of groping and growing, of trying to find new forms of ministry without much experience, of making mistakes in order to learn.

But my fear is that some might come to believe that this is the norm. They might mistakenly say that the Church is a group of individuals, all of whom "do their own

thing." This of course is not the case: one parish, however well organized, is not the Church; one movement, however effective, is not the Church; one ministry, however well done, is not the Church. We must reaffirm very strongly that the reason for many gifts is not to do one's own thing. The reason for many gifts is, as Paul tells us, "so we shall all at last attain the **unity** — the unity inherent in our faith." Our goal, he tells us, is to reach "mature personhood." Let me repeat: "mature personhood — which is measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ."

Be sure, however, not to misunderstand me. I am not longing for a unity that is brought about because the few have power and the many have the virtue of obedience. I do not look for a unified front brought about because the weak use their weakness to manipulate and silence the strong. My hope instead is for a deep harmony brought about because God's people can stand on their feet, open their minds and hearts to the Spirit of God and join their hands in action and praise. I long for men and women of God who can pray and speak and compromise and act and love and gently confront and be true to themselves and to their God. This "mature personhood which is measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ."

And so we continue to investigate new forms of ministry and as we continue with much needed experimentation, we must always have the courage to use this as our evaluative norm. Our goal is maturity in Christ. Nothing else will do! And only those means that bring us to this kind of unity and maturity must be kept. Even in blessing the oil of Chrism which is used as a means of unity, the Church prays: "Most of all, Father, make all of your Church grow until it reaches the fulfillment to which you are calling us, in Christ, our Light and our Life forever."

And so I think you can see why my joy is so great tonight. This celebration is for me a glimpse of the long awaited maturity in Christ. It is a glimmer — if only for a moment — of that goal of unity for which we must continue to work.

And from this celebration I hope we are soothed and warmed and nourished and healed. I hope that because of tonight we can say truly with Isaiah that God has given us the "oil of gladness in place of mourning." In this moment, our goal becomes real, our longing is fulfilled and we enjoy the richness and warming unction of its overflowing oil. "Behold how good it is and how pleasant, where brothers dwell as one! It is as when the precious oil upon the head runs down over the beard, the beard of Aaron."

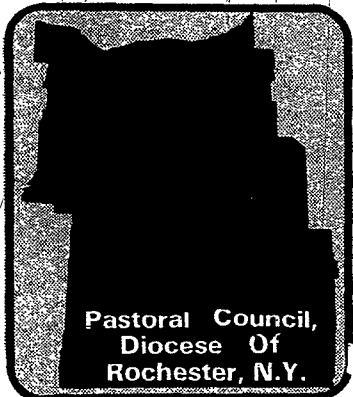
Bishop Regards Pastoral Council as Milestone

[This article is the second in a series prepared by members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council steering committee. It is based on an interview with Bishop Hogan which took place at the Pastoral Office on March 24. In the interview the Bishop answered questions about the Diocesan Pastoral Council which he will convoke on June 13-15.]

Bishop Hogan, the documentation for the Diocesan Pastoral Council came out of the Second Vatican Council. Why have we as a diocese waited so long to form one?

"The challenge from the Second Vatican Council was really not that strong. Three texts specifically refer to it. In the proposed Constitution for the Diocesan Pastoral Council a reference is made to Christus Dominus which states that "it is highly desirable that in every diocese a pastoral council be established over which the bishop will preside."

The Bishop then expressed the fear that many dioceses had rushed into implementation without developing at the grass



roots level. A recently published study shows that more than 60 dioceses have formed pastoral councils. However, the vitality has varied and some have been disbanded, already.

"We have chosen the painful route in establishing the Diocesan Pastoral Council," Bishop Hogan continued. "There has been a lot of moans and groans, but it has paid off. We've done our homework. We haven't finalized what the Diocesan Pastoral Council will be exactly, but we have a very good proposed Constitution. We will

always be looking for improvement and revision."

The Bishop stated that the delay enabled the people to come to understand the meaning of co-responsibility, consensus, and consultative body at the parish level. He believes that they would not understand these ideas working on a diocesan level if they had not had this experience at the grass roots level.

In the diocese of Rochester the growth of parish councils has excelled in the past few years. Most parishes have parish councils or steering committees. The Bishop felt that the Diocesan Pastoral Council and parish councils would be mutually supportive of one another. He quoted one bishop who said "we can't have good parish councils without a strong Diocesan Pastoral Council."

Three years ago you wrote an article for the Catholic Courier-Journal calling the Diocesan Pastoral Council "your fondest hope." Is the Diocesan Pastoral Council still your fondest hope?

"I wouldn't have been bothered with the pain or encouraged others to become involved in the painful process if I didn't look forward to it. However, the phrase 'fondest hope' needs interpretation. It doesn't mean that I couldn't wait until we had a Diocesan Pastoral Council. If that were the case I would have it by decree tomorrow. I felt that when we reached the stage in our history in which we were ready for the Diocesan Pastoral Council we would have achieved a great measure of growth in the Church of Rochester on the parish and regional level. So that's why I call it 'my fondest hope.' I was not restless just to have it for the sake of having it, but restless until the people began to realize that the Church is our common responsibility. It takes time for people to move who for ages have never had the idea that the Church belonged to others than the clergy."

The Bishop then explained how we have gone from an institutional concept of Church

characterized by authority imposed from the top and passivity on the part of the laity to the Second Vatican Council concept which describes the Church as the People of God. This concept states that clergy, religious, and laity are one in co-responsibility in the Church and its mission.

Bishop Hogan further stated that "our challenge is to help people move from passivity to becoming deeply involved in the mission of the Church and to help move those who enjoyed the prestige of authority to one of a position of listening, reflecting on people's insights, and recognizing the diversity of gifts given to each one of us. This takes a lot of training. We have both ends of the spectrum that need a lot of education. It's a painful process, but a worthwhile one."

Next — The interview with Bishop Hogan will conclude. The Bishop will answer specific questions on the Diocesan Pastoral Council.