

**Bishop Topel**

# We Tell Him 'We Love You'

By JOHN DASH

After a friend called him a maverick, he looked up the word in the dictionary and doesn't particularly like the tag. But, the bishop admits, "I've been strange since childhood and getting worse ever since."

He is Bishop Bernard J. Topel of the Diocese of Spokane, Wash., and he was in Rochester last week winding up a three-day retreat he led for priests of the diocese.

At the final session, the priests presented him with a package containing a sign: "We love you, Father Bishop." He says he's going to carry the sign back to Spokane and set it out in his house or his office. "These are the things that really count," he says.

He remembers the time he helped some "hippies" who had come to him, and he just happened to have the exact amount of cash on hand they needed.

When their troubles were resolved, they hung a 30-foot banner next to one of the busiest highways in the city proclaiming "We love you, Bishop Topel." He thinks that kind of reward is "just great." It was the response he got for doing something "because I thought our Lord would do it," he says.

Some years back the bishop earned some "notoriety," as he puts it, when the diocese sold off the bishop's residence in Spokane and he moved into a little four-room house with a vegetable patch on the edge of town.

"I've always lived simply," he says. He has no housekeeper, gardener or the like. "I do it all by myself."

Then the sudden quick aside: "I really don't do things — they just don't get done."

"I take my shoes off at the door. Keeps the floor cleaner," he says.

But not that he's slovenly. "No kidding, I like to scrub the floor, not the physical thing, or because I'm real clean, because I think the money I'm saving instead of having somebody else do it is going to the poor."

He was in Rochester with one big message:

### BISHOP TOPEL

"Prayer, real prayer, real good praying is — if you just stick out praying when the whole thing is a blank."

It's the perseverance "that's proving your love, not just telling it," he says.

"You wanna hear something exciting?"

He says not to name names, but reels off a list of his confreres in the Northwest who have all begun to gather frequently for shared prayer — and who have subsequently all decided to live simply and poorly.

They are "one in an amazing degree. Confidence. Love. Unity. That's terrific."

Bishop Topel, 73 years old, comes from good hardy German stock. He hasn't had a cold or the flu all winter. He keeps the house temperature at 45/50 degrees. He figures that high temperature in a house is conducive to catching colds.

"Besides it saves fuel. It's all part of this poverty binge."

"Whyncha ask me what I think of the future of the Church?"

Well, he has great optimism. It turns out that especially in his diocese priests' morale is especially high. "The clergy is the key," he says. "Mass attendance is steady." "And I would know if it's falling off. Every Sunday I say Mass and preach at all the Masses in a different church in the diocese. And I've still got a good enough memory that I can see if the turnout is down."

It seems further that he has convened his priests several times in recent months for "compulsory" education in the New Rite of Penance. As a result, he sees old divisions among the clergy fading.

He notes "phenomenal" increase in charity giving within the diocese.

But especially back to the clergy being the key, he sees his priests in prayer far more often than he used to.

"The future is really great."

He sees the renewal prompted by the Vatican Council II as finally becoming "interior."

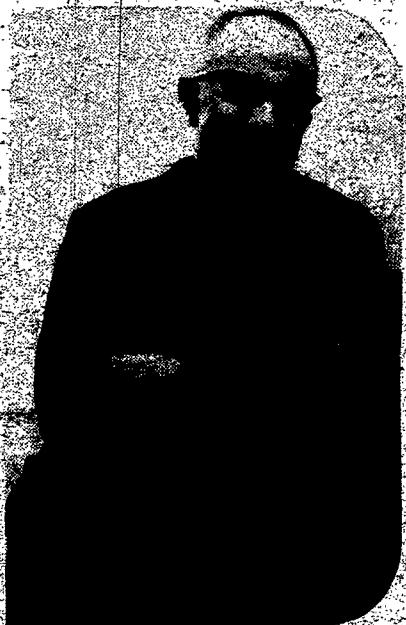
He's got too much asparagus. Seems when he first moved into his house he set out two flats of asparagus seedlings. "It takes three years for asparagus to grow," he says. At the same time a neighbor have him two more flats which he also set out. "Now, I've got more asparagus than I can eat."

And he also eats only what he has on hand.

He likes it, but he hasn't had vinegar in the house for years, so he hasn't eaten any. Bacon fat on bread has become his substitute for margarine. His neighbors will bring over fish heads every now and then and he makes a soup from the bones.

All his vegetables come from his own garden. "I like the outdoors."

The Rochester priests love him. They made a sign to that effect. "You put that into the heart of the story. I think that that's just wonderful."



His Many Moods

## Elmira Knights Elect Officers

Elmira — The Knights of Columbus Council 229 has elected the following officers:

Father Henry Adamski, chaplain; James Howland, grand knight; Charles G. Todd, deputy grand knight; Eldred Pannell, chancellor; Thomas Sullivan, advocate; Clement Knuth, recorder; Joseph McCluskey, treasurer; Frank Beligotti, financial secretary; Ron Lewis, warden; Robert Ryniker, inside guard; and Charles Richardson, outside guard.

Also elected, as trustees, are: Thomas Ritter, Cliff Benedict and Edward Rehwinkle.

## Fisher Library Receives Grant

St. John Fisher College's Lavery Library has received an \$8,000 grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan, for the purchase of computer terminal equipment. The equipment will enable Fisher's library to participate in the Ohio College Library Center's computerized network of information storage and retrieval.

Robert J. Cullo, Fisher library director, said the Ohio system includes member libraries from the eastern and midwestern United States and "provides for the functions of cataloging, technical processing, interlibrary loan, circulation control, and retrieval by subject."

## Regional Highlights

A special effort is being made to implement "minimal" sacramental standards for nursing homes in the region. Residents of these homes are looking for friends who will take an interest in them.

A concerted effort is being made by Father Conrad Sundholm, coordinator, and the rest of the region to have all parishes induct their new parish council members in the month of June. This effort will increase the efficiency of the region and assist future planning.

Anointing of the Sick programs were successfully conducted at St. Thomas the Apostle May 23, and St. Salome's, June 6.

St. Margaret Mary's Parish reported more than 100 people are participating in a weekly adult education program.

The Human Development Committee of St. Stanislaus is assisting one of their families who recently had a very serious home

fire. After hearing this news, St. Andrew's Parish agreed to furnish used clothing and furniture to assist the family.

### KNIGHTS ELECTED

Waterloo — Knights of Columbus Council #464 recently elected the following officers: Guy Altamari, faithful navigator; Eugene VanGorder, captain; Michael Marcheck, pilot; Dino Franceschi, admiral; Richard Catanise, Paul Roser, guards; Paul Altamari, comptroller; and John A. French, Augustine Pagano, Edward Toombs, trustees.

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**Help Yourself**  
The Courier-Journal introduced its new distribution boxes last week. Readers may pick up a copy of the paper from any one of five downtown locations. The boxes are located at the corner of Main and Clinton, in front of McCurdy's, the Four Corners, in front of the Propagation of the Faith Office and the corner of Main and East Avenue.



Photos by Ben Susso