



Members of the committee in earnest discussion. Beginning with Father Mulligan, in foreground, and proceeding clockwise, Father Miller, Glenn Kist, Hedy McGarry, Father Marvin, Dennis McGuire.

## Selection of Bishops Committee . . . the Background

In a resolution of the Diocesan Pastoral Council on Nov. 20, 1976, it was decided to establish a Selection of Bishops Committee for the diocese of Rochester. There are many similar groups in dioceses throughout the United States following guidelines from Rome and from the Canon Law Society of America. Within New York State, Syracuse, Buffalo and Albany already had established these committees. The Rochester diocesan group, which met initially in January 1978, is a permanent and ongoing committee of the DPC with two specific tasks. These are to determine both current conditions and developing needs of the diocese and thus to specify more clearly what qualities are necessary for diocesan leadership, particularly for the person selected as bishop.

Members of the committee, who serve for a term of four years, although to insure continuity half the group was chosen by lot for two-year terms, represent various groups and regions of the diocese. The composition includes diocesan and order clergy, women religious and lay women and men. Regionally Rochester, Spencerport and Hornell are included. Those serving on the committee are Sister Marie Brown, SSJ, Father Joseph Dorsey, CSB, Edward Gutman, Glenn Kist, Father James Marvin, Hedy McGarry, Dennis McGuire, Father Robert Miller, Anne Minton, Father John Mulligan, Hildreth Smith, Sister Mary Wintish, RSM.

The task of the committee is to determine conditions and needs of the diocese; is seen as a process which includes instruments for collecting information, assessment and evaluation of what is learned and a written report to the bishop. The permanent character of the committee is meant to insure that there will be an up-to-date report on the diocese and the particular gifts and skills needed for diocesan leadership. The committee is not intended simply to function in the event that a new bishop needs to be selected, but rather to continually assess needs in the diocese and leadership skills appropriate to these specific needs.

Committee members are charged with the collection of information and the preparation of a report and thus while they represent some diversity, they are selected mainly to initiate processes and to actively seek information on how the diocese perceives itself. This may take the form of questionnaires, interviews or regional meetings as well as the supplemental use of studies previously undertaken on diocesan needs and specific regional characteristics, economic, social and demographic, among others.

Since the particular needs of each diocese require specific leadership talents and personal gifts, the second part of the committee's task is to judge on the basis of the present condition and future direction of the Rochester diocese, those specific qualities and skills which the bishop should possess to serve this diocese.

## How Our Rochester Bishops Were Selected

BY FATHER ROBERT F. McNAMARA

The apostolic succession of our Catholic bishops is a matter of dogma. The mode of choosing a bishop is a matter of church law. It varies and is far from infallible.

In 1789, the Holy See permitted the passel of American priests to elect their candidate to the new see of Baltimore. This permission was never repeated. Many methods of proposing candidates were adopted thereafter, none very satisfactory. By today's official canon law, American clergy (and, of course, American Catholic "non-clergy") are excluded from any role in presenting episcopal recommendations to the pope. This situation should be changed as a matter of simple justice.

Whatever change is made, the new policy, in my opinion, should still maintain the customary secrecy about names proposed. This may strike Americans as undemocratic, but there are many good reasons for not publishing the names of episcopal candidates. One example: if it became known that the candidate chosen by the Pope in a given instance was ranked third, not first, in preferential order, the man elected might have to begin his difficult new job among a people who had already concluded that he was a "third-rater." That could be both cruel and dangerous.

Sometimes, with the passage of the years, details of nominations have leaked out. We now know that in 1866 when Bishop John Timon of Buffalo proposed cutting off his eight eastern counties as the new diocese of Rochester, he recommended three of his priests as episcopal candidates, in preferential order: James M. Early, V.G., Martin O'Connor, and Joseph McKenna. But Timon had only one vote on the final tern or list of three; and the other bishops of the New York Province favored Father Bernard McQuaid for the first place. McQuaid was vicar general of the Newark Diocese, then a part of the New York Province. Bishop Bayley of Newark told Rome he couldn't spare McQuaid; and McQuaid said he didn't want the job. But Pope Pius IX overruled both. Fortunately, for Rochester.

Bishop Thomas F. Hickey, as coadjutor bishop of Rochester with right of succession, became second head of the diocese from the moment of Bishop McQuaid's death on January 18, 1909.

Here is how that came about. When 80, McQuaid asked Rome to give him an auxiliary bishop as an aide. Normally the Holy See lets the diocesan bishop who makes such a request propose his own candidate. But in this case, Rome replied that current policy was not to give auxiliaries but only coadjutor bishops with right of immediate succession. This complicated matters. According to the rules on episcopal nominations as they stood in 1905, the diocesan consultors and those priests ranked as "permanent rectors" had to meet in private and vote a slate into being. Of the eight Rochester diocesan priests who received at least one vote, the top three were submitted in order of preference: the Vicar General, Father Thomas F. Hickey; a pastor, Father Augustine M. O'Neill; and the pro-rector of St. Bernard's Seminary, Father James J. Hartley. This tern was communicated to the bishops of the New York Province, who considered it in making up their own list. Father Hickey headed both lists, so The Holy See chose him.

After 1916, the consultors and permanent rectors were unfortunately deprived of their voice in nominating candidates. Now, every other year, the bishops of each province submitted a list of three of their diocesan priests whom they considered of episcopal timber. It is safe to conclude that the Vicar General of Rochester, Father John F. O'Hern, named by the Pope to be third bishop of Rochester in 1929 after the resignation of Bishop Hickey, was one of those recommended earlier by Bishop Hickey. Whom he was "running against" is at present unknown.

Archbishop Edward Mooney became fourth bishop of Rochester in 1933, after the sudden death of Bishop O'Hern. When Mooney was promoted archbishop of Detroit in 1937, Pope Pius XI named the Bishop of Salt Lake City, James E. Kearney, to replace him. Both bishops were non-Rochesterians. In either case, the Pope made the appointment

directly, out of special consideration to the bishops involved. This is, of course, and must remain, the papal prerogative. It is also good to have some bishops who already belong to a diocese and others who come as strangers, bringing a fresh point of view. Archbishop Mooney (1933-1937) and Bishop Kearney (1937-1966) proved to be able and admirable heads of the Diocese.

When Fulton J. Sheen was named successor of Bishop Kearney in 1966, he made the public statement that the Pope had given him his choice of diocese, and he had chosen Rochester as the "best of all." Here, as in the case of both Archbishop Mooney and Bishop Kearney, there is no public knowledge of who were the "also-rans."

But by 1966, the spirit of the recently closed Vatican II was already demanding a greater participation of the whole People of God in church activities. Bishop Sheen was one of the first American bishops to experiment in wider consultation. On Dec. 30, 1966, he wrote all his priests and asked them to submit, in confidence, the names of three priests . . . whom he might "appoint as your leaders." Faithful to his promise, he alone read and tallied the suggestions; so nobody knows for sure who were on the list. But only a month later, he named Msgr. Dennis W. Hickey vicar-general. In 1968, Msgr. Hickey and Msgr. John E. McCafferty were appointed auxiliary bishops; and when Bishop Sheen retired in 1969, Msgr. Joseph L. Hogan was chosen as seventh bishop of Rochester. It is a fair guess that all three of these names were high among those proposed by the diocesan priests in 1966 for "diocesan leadership."

In revising the process of suggesting candidates to the Holy See, it seems to me that two thoughts should be borne in mind. First, that priests are more capable of suggesting definite names, because of their better acquaintance with their fellow priests. Second, the rest of the diocesan membership, or at least groups representing them, are in a good position to draw up a job description for a bishop of their own diocese at a given point of time. If new procedures are devised with both considerations in view, I believe they will be effective and win general acceptance.