

# How Another Diocese Works with Handicapped

By Elizabeth Larson  
Religion Today

Washington — The Catholic Church is opening its doors wider to the disabled, and the Archdiocese of Washington, thanks to the insistence of a group of the handicapped and non-handicapped working together, is leading the way.

Washington Archbishop James A. Hickey next month will appoint a standing committee to assist the diocese's 124 parishes in carrying out improvements designed to encourage and facilitate fuller participation in the liturgy and in parish life by people who are handicapped.

The ad hoc group, headed by Howard "Rocky" Stone,

director of SHHH, Inc. an advocacy group for the deaf, is the thrust behind a two-day archdiocesan conference April 3-4. A group of handicapped and non-handicapped people will gather to proclaim through a Mass, musical presentations, talks and workshops their sense of spiritual unity.

Workshops on the various categories of handicaps will present the many ways disabled and handicapped people can be more fully integrated into the spiritual community life of the Church.

The activity in the archdiocese is in compliance with the spirit of Pope John XXIII's encyclical, "Pacem in Terris" (Peace on Earth): "In an ordered and productive community, it is a fun-



damental principle that every human being is a 'person'... (One) has rights and duties... flowing directly and spontaneously from (one's) very nature. These rights are therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable."

Vice Chairman Eunice Fiorito, special assistant to the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, will speak on physical, communications and social barriers. She is blind.

Stone, publisher of SHHH magazine, will chair the conference. Although himself audiologically deaf, he continues to function in the hearing world. He will present to the conference an "Archdiocesan Profile in Relation to the Bishop's Pastoral Statement on Handicapped People."

Father Charles Kuebler, of Holy Redeemer in nearby Kensington, Md., a blind priest, will open the conference with a Mass and a deaf deacon and a blind lector will assist.

In 1977, the White House Conference on the Handicapped triggered a "Pastoral Statement on Handicapped

People" which led to establishment of the U.S. Catholic Conference's Advisory Committee on Ministry with Handicapped Persons.

Father Thomas F. Cribbin, chairman of the advisory committee, explained the structure. "The advisory committee is part of the U.S. Catholic Conference and the National Conference of Catholic bishops. This enables the committee to relate to the diocese through the bishops."

The pastoral statement says the church should be concerned with the handicapped on a national level, on a diocesan level and on a parochial level.

"The handicapped person should be involved in the Mass and special liturgies insofar that it is possible, in any way the non-handicapped person is involved."

The statement didn't take more than 15 minutes on the floor for the bishops to approve it. They realized their commitment to the disabled and the advisory committee was told it could begin immediately. Progress since then has been relatively slow.

Cribbin feels it is necessary to educate the bishops about the needs of the handicapped so they can disseminate the information to the priests, laity and others interested in working with the disabled.

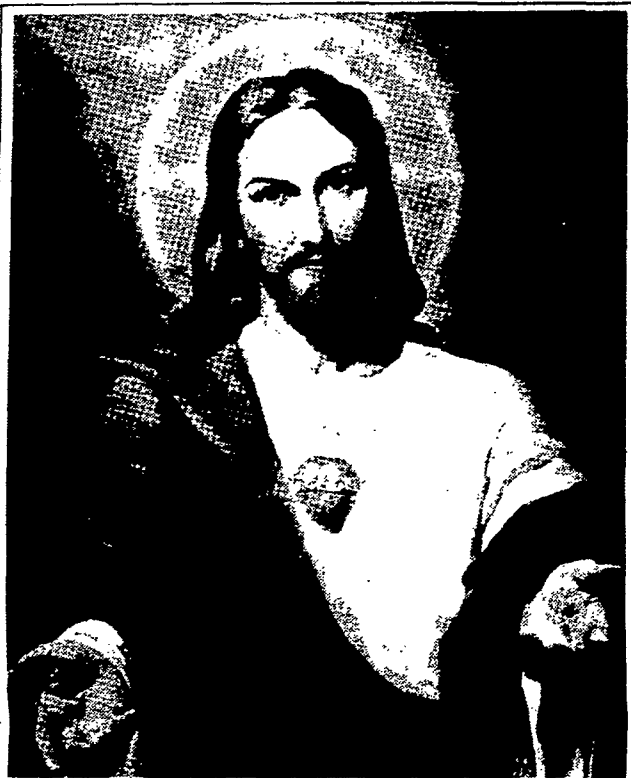
But he knows that to

"really do the job, we need an office for the handicapped within the U.S. Catholic Conference. We need a fullblown office represented by all the major disabilities.

This overall administration would serve as the core from which to produce programs to

be sent to the dioceses. Specialists for each particular disability would give of their expertise.

Hickey's action. Washington Catholics are hoping could be the beginning of the realization of Cribbin's admonition.



## Portrait Available

In conjunction with the International Year of the Disabled Person the Courier Journal has available a limited number of portraits of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The portraits are available to handicapped individuals or their families free of charge.

To order a portrait write to the Courier-Journal, Dept. 19, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

## Interfaith Marriages Discussed

J.C. Wynn, professor of Pastoral Theology at Colgate/Bexley Hall/Crozier Seminaries, will be the keynote speaker at a March 27 conference on ecumenical marriages. The conference sponsored by Rochester Roman Catholic and Episcopal dioceses will be from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Margery S. Nurnberg,

director of the Office of Ecumenism, said the conference was arranged so that clergy can obtain current information about what is and is not possible in interfaith marriages, in terms of canon law, liturgy and pre-marital counseling. It is open to all clergy.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark and Episcopal Bishop Robert Spears will attend the conference.

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