

Divinity Schools Library Houses Diocesan Archives St. Bernard's Collections

By Terrance J. Brennan

The Divinity Schools and St. Bernard's Institute will host a coffee hour to familiarize area clergy and lay religious with the resources and to introduce the staff of the school's Ambrose Swasey Library, 8:45 a.m., Friday, March 2.

According to Norman J. Kansfield, director of library services, a brief introduction to the library is scheduled at 9:30 a.m., followed by "specific tours and introductions to the library for those who desire a more thorough orientation."

A goodly part of the Swasey Library is the collection of St. Bernard's Institute.

According to Father Sebastian Falcone, president and dean of SBI, when the institute consolidated with

the Divinity Schools in 1981, 60 percent of the St. Bernard's Seminary collection of 80,000 volumes was transferred to its present location.

"The other 40 percent was considered no longer serviceable for theological studies," Father Falcone said. "Some of it was very dated, no longer very useful. Plus, all duplications were weeded out."

According to Father Falcone, most of the remaining volumes were sold with proceeds going into the St. Bernard's Institute endowment fund.

Father Falcone said the Institute's collection in the Swasey Library can be broken down into three categories: the public collection, special collection (not for public circulation), and a

collection of rare artifacts for use only by qualified scholars and researchers (the Byrne Collection).

In the public collection, Father Falcone said there are more than 40,000 volumes on Scripture, theology, Church history, ministry studies and spirituality. Because of a lack of shelf space, about one-third of these remain in storage.

Also in the public collection are some 160 periodicals to which the Institute subscribes, and more than 1,800 audio cassettes.

In the special collection, Father Falcone said, there is an uncirculating collection of more than 3,000 rare books, the Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Archives, and the diocesan archives.

The Sheen archives include some 2,500 volumes — all of his published books, bound transcripts of his "Catholic Hour" broadcasts, and numerous articles written over five decades in such periodicals as "America," "Commonweal," and "World Mission."

There are also hundreds of tape recordings, kinescopes and films from Sheen's career in radio and television.

The diocesan archives are also kept at SBI. Organized and managed by Father Robert F. McNamara, the archives include historical records dating back to the diocese's inception in the mid-1800s, and all papers and correspondence authorized by now-deceased bishops of Rochester.

"Materials that relate to living people are not turned over by the diocese," Father Falcone said. "We are custodians of the retired diocesan archives."

The Byrne Collection includes some 25-35 archeological artifacts that belonged to the late Father Edward J. Byrne, a professor of Scripture at St. Bernard's



Some of the Institute's public collection.

Seminary from 1906 until his death in 1952.

Father Byrne had spent time in Jerusalem and became involved in some archeological digs. Among his finds were early Egyptian and Assyrian artifacts nearly 4,000 years old.

These included some early clay seals, tablets, lamps, a synagogue scroll and some coins from the biblical period.

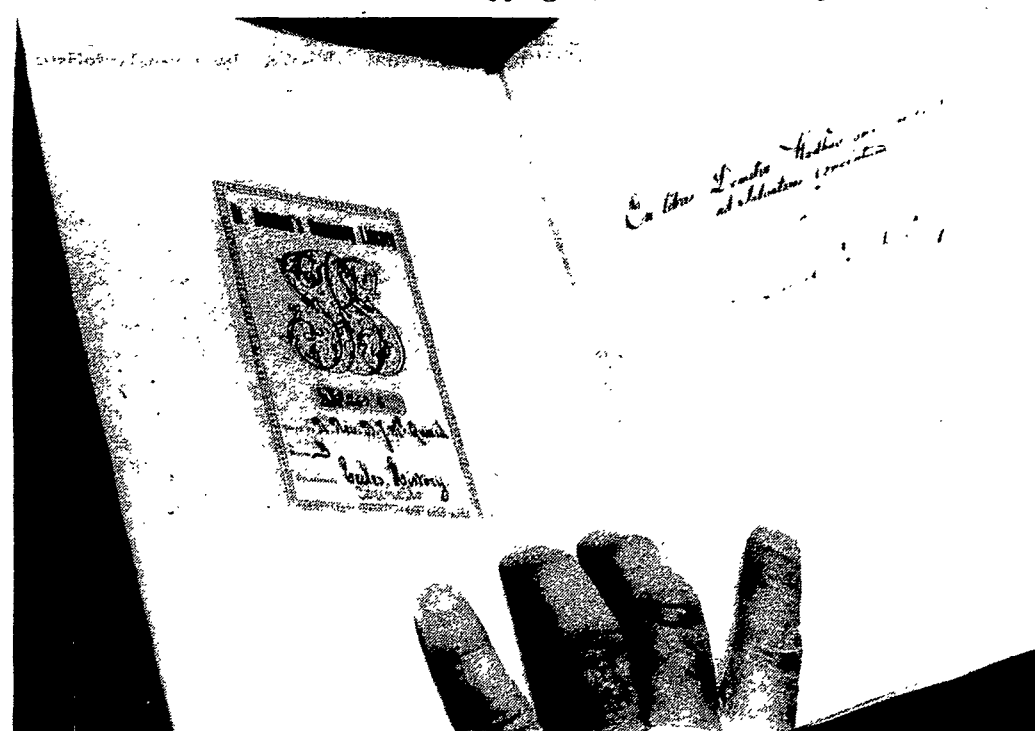
"All of these archival collections were at the seminary where they were maintained by professional, qualified staff people," Father Falcone said. "And since a collection is 90 percent worthless if you cannot recover or retrieve materials readily, it was moved here, to Colgate, where the facilities already existed to maintain them."



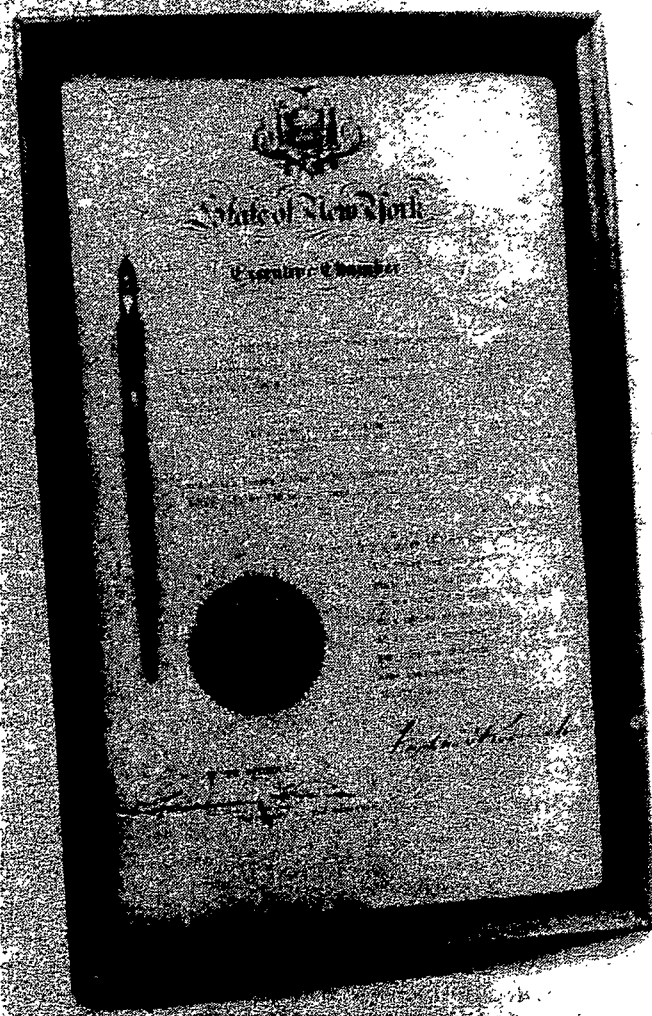
The Sheen Archives include many photographs and framed clippings of the late archbishop.



Father Sebastian Falcone examines a chalice given as a gift by Bishop Bernard McQuaid to his chancellor and former secretary, Father Hippolyte De Regge.



Among the rare books kept here is this one given to the seminary library by Bishop McQuaid.



Among the diocesan archives is this charter signed by then-governor of New York, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, incorporating St. Bernard's Seminary and College on April 22, 1931.



The reading room of the Ambrose Swasey Library.

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