



New Officers

New officers of the Chemung County General Education Board met recently. Photographed are (left to right) Curran Sekella, vice president; James Mirando, president; Judy Cruise, secretary; and Sister Deanna Gears SSJ, one of the four principals attending the meeting.

Cenacle Schedules Advent Prayer Days

The Cenacle Renewal Center has slated three days of prayer celebrating Advent during December.

Sisters Arline Brent,

Barbara Kingston and Ellen Frawley will present the program 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 8. The team will also lead the day 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 9.

Sisters Arline, Helen Harber and Jeanne Grasso will lead the third day of prayer, "For the Hurried and the Harried," 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 16.

All of the programs center on Advent themes and include time spent in prayer, listening and celebration of the Eucharist.

Further information and reservations are available through the Cenacle Ministry Office.

Business in Diocese

William J. Nealon, director of finance for St. Joseph's Villa, has been elected vice president of membership for the Rochester Chapter of the National Association of Accountants. He is a graduate of St. John's University and lives with his wife Ann and three children in Rochester.

Spellman Biography a Step Up But Still Only Gets a 'C' Grade

"The American Pope: The Life and Times of Francis Cardinal Spellman," by John Cooney. Times Books (New York, 1984). 364 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by Msgr. George G. Higgins
NC News Service

In 1962 the late Jesuit Father Robert I. Gannon, former president of Fordham University and a celebrated preacher and popular after-dinner speaker, wrote an embarrassingly laudatory biography of Cardinal Francis Spellman, who was archbishop of New York for 28 years.

The book made for interesting reading in spots, but it was basically a "puff" piece and, understandably, was never taken very seriously.

If Father Gannon's book came close to being sycophantic, John Cooney's new biography, "The American Pope: The Life and Times of Francis Cardinal Spellman," comes equally close, by contrast, to being cynical and iconoclastic.

Whereas Father Gannon, for the most part, cosmetically concealed or covered over the cardinal's warts, Cooney, for his part, relentlessly goes to the opposite extreme.

Cooney's personal, political, and ideological animus against Cardinal Spellman is such that one is hard put to find more than a few paragraphs which speak well of the cardinal or credit him with disinterested motives.

The cardinal comes through at every stage of his life as a ruthlessly ambitious, scheming, mean-spirited, vindictive, and power-hungry ecclesiastical politician.

To make matters worse, Cooney, who obviously resents the cardinal's preoccupation with sexual immorality (as, for example, in his public condemnation of several allegedly immoral movies which he himself had never seen), cannot resist suggesting that Cardinal Spellman was at least a "closet" homosexual.

Cooney's "evidence" for this sensational charge, as presented in his widely distributed pre-publication galley sheets, was so flimsy that the directors of The New York Times, of which Times Books is a subsidiary, required him to clean up his text.

Cooney eventually came around, but not all the way. There is still a tantalizing non-committal reference in his book to Cardinal Spellman's alleged homosexual proclivities. In my opinion, Cooney should have eliminated this subject completely from his final text. His failure to do so raises questions in my mind about his professional objectivity.

This having been said, it must be added that Cooney's admittedly irreverent biography of the cardinal is not without substantial merit.

Cooney's strength and, by the same token, his greatest weakness, is his almost obsessive preoccupation with Cardinal Spellman as a secular and ecclesiastical "politician." His detailed coverage of this side of the cardinal's story (including his alleged falling-out with the Vatican after the death of his friend and patron, Pope Pius XII) breaks new ground in some respects and will undoubtedly be helpful to professional historians when they eventually write more scholarly studies of the cardinal's life.

Unfortunately, however, Cooney's overriding preoccupation with Cardinal Spellman's actual and alleged political maneuverings in church and state and his deep-seated ideological distaste for the cardinal's chauvinistic and militaristic form of patriotism prevent him from ever getting around to telling the reader very much about the cardinal's life as the residential archbishop of a major See.

Even when he does deal with this side of the cardinal's story, Cooney concentrates predictably on some of Cardinal Spellman's intramural political skirmishes as, for example, his bitter and unseemly dispute with the late Archbishop Fulton Sheen over the distribution of Propagation of the Faith funds and his disgraceful and absolutely indefensible breaking of the New York cemetery strike.

Whatever of that, Cooney's coverage of the cardinal as a "politician," however tendentious and uncomplimentary, will be fairly convincing at least to those who share, as I myself do, his strongly stated view that the cardinal was too enamored of political power, both secular and ecclesiastical, much too involved in partisan politics, and almost compulsively chauvinistic.

Cooney has done his homework reasonably well. He has done a fair amount of independent research (for example, in FBI and other restricted government files) and has interviewed on the record a sizable number of Cardinal Spellman's contemporaries, including, among others, knowledgeable politicians, bishops and priests.

Some footnotes are questionable, there are a number of factual errors in the book, and several individuals and organizations are erroneously identified. While, on balance, these are minor blemishes, they are sufficiently numerous to put the reader on guard against taking Cooney's every statement as Gospel truth.

In summary, I would give "The American Pope" a C, or at most a B minus. Despite the flaws referred to above and others that might have been cited, it is a great improvement over Father Gannon's long-forgotten biography. It is not, however, the last word about the cardinal and should be read with that caution in mind.

Bishop's Ministries 1983-84

One of the roles of a bishop is to accept many invitations which give him an opportunity to be with so many of our people throughout the diocese.

For example, one weekend this past September, Bishop Clark traveled to Apalachin, Hornell, Corning and Elmira.

Each of the communities involved had a specific purpose for the invitation.

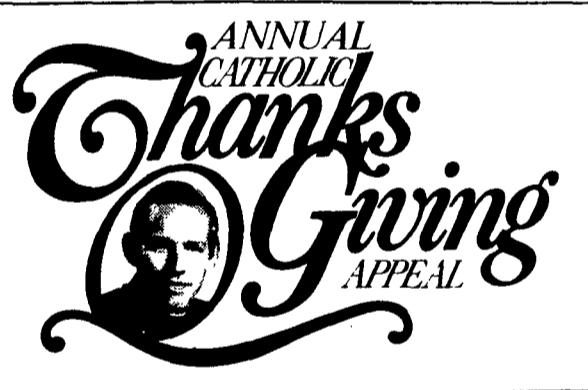
— In Apalachin, there was a very full evening of a shared supper, prayer and discussion on the Bishops' Pastoral: Challenge of Peace.

— In Hornell, he celebrated the Eucharist with the Catholic Daughters.

— In Corning, he celebrated the Feast of St. Vincent DePaul and Communal Anointing.



The Rite of Communal Anointing



— In Elmira, he visited the Elmira Correctional Center.

The Rite of Communal Anointing was a special celebration. It was the parish's celebration of faith -- faith in a healing and compassionate God.

The celebration began with young St. Vincent DePaul (Anthony Caruso, a fifth grader dressed as St. Vincent) greeting the people with a short summary of St. Vincent's life. The community of healers -- nurses, doctors and the chaplain of Corning Hospital were in procession. The theme of "Helping Hands" was central to a symbolic understanding of St. Vincent's mission to the poor. The Human Development Committee asked each person to bring food to the liturgy to be later distributed to the poor.

The young of the parish participated in song, presentation of satin bookmarks engraved with the Praying Hand symbol, helping those who were elderly or infirmed to enter the church and to find proper seating. The children even had "Care Trains" at the five entrances of the church, which contained original ways the children could show they cared during the previous week.

Central to the caring was the anointing itself -- "a sign of healing and care for God's people." The Bishop and the parish priests anointed approximately 100 people of all ages.



Bishop Clark with Anthony Caruso dressed as St. Vincent DePaul.

The anointing dramatically brought forth the realization of our reason for coming together as community -- to continue in a tangible and concrete manner the Ministry of a Compassionate Lord.

Such visits are examples of the person-to-person opportunities for Bishop Clark to walk among the people of our diocese.

Thank you for your generous support to this Thanks Giving Appeal.