



A rare convergence of the Diocese of Rochester's three bishops honored the 10th Anniversary of the Diocesan Pastoral Council at St. Stephen's Church in Geneva. Bishops Dennis W. Hickey, Matthew H. Clark and Joseph L. Hogan concelebrated Mass, assisted by Deacon Kenneth Scarciotta (second from left). At right, the combined choirs of St. Mary's, Waterloo, St. Patrick's, Seneca Falls, and St. Francis DeSales and St. Stephen's, Geneva are directed by John Kubiniec of the Office of Liturgy.

Bruce Wang

Deacon Ken Scarciotta shares the chalice with Father David Simon, regional coordinator for the Tioga County area and pastor of St. Margaret Mary Church in Apalachin.

Diocesan Pastoral Council Anniversary Struggle means growth in 10 years of shared responsibility

By Teresa A. Parsons

Last Friday as members and friends of the Diocesan Pastoral Council gathered to celebrate the council's 10th anniversary, the vision in Chairwoman Pat Defendorf's mind was of an infant, crawling, stretching, struggling to achieve balance and stand on its own feet. "It's a vital, healthy, growth process," she said of the struggle. "Not every diocese is as fortunate. We're blessed because we have a bishop willing to consult with us and hear from people."

Likewise, three bishops gathered to celebrate and give thanks for the dedication evinced by all members, past and present, of this "mini-Church" — a consultative body which includes lay persons from all areas of the diocese, priests and religious — for regional coordinators and for those who served on the council's formation committee. Bishops Matthew H. Clark, Joseph L. Hogan and Dennis W. Hickey concelebrated the anniversary Mass at St. Stephen's Church in Geneva, witnessed the installation of new and renamed members, coordinators and assistant coordinators. About 70 people attended the Mass and reception afterward in DeSales High School, the site of the council's first regular meeting in September, 1975.

Along with Bishops Hogan and Hickey, who were present for that first DPC convocation, faces and reminders of the past were everywhere. Even before she was the council's first executive secretary, Sister Mary Ann Binsack served on the Pastoral Council Formation Committee. Now diocesan director of religious education, she presented the first reading Friday. Several others from the formation committee were scattered throughout the audience. The banner hanging in the DeSales gym was the same one that hung above the makeshift altar at St. John Fisher College's athletic center during the first DPC Installation Mass. And a framed picture of the first installation that graced the front page of the Courier-Journal on Wednesday, June 18, 1975, held a small crowd through most of the evening.

The DPC itself is now a body that incorporates a history with its hopes for the future. "It's a vehicle that has been tested for 10 years and that has made some very significant contributions to the life of the Church," Bishop Clark remarked, noting that the council has provided impetus for such milestones as his pastoral letter on women in the Church, "Fire in the Thornbush," and for the creation of a Diocesan Board of Education. "The consciousness they bring to us is known in leadership circles ... there's such a variety of life there among us that we can only be enriched," he added.

Bishop Hogan, who once termed the council "his fondest hope," is pleased by its implementation so far. "It seems healthy from what I can tell ... I always believed that

prayerful people could come together and make decisions," he said.

As part of the celebration, all those who were unable to attend the Mass and reception in Geneva were asked to identify the greatest challenges and blessings enjoyed by the DPC on a postcard. The cards were then presented to Bishop Clark during the offertory.

Most identified as the DPC's greatest blessing a feeling of ownership of the Church and a broader view of what Church encompasses. The challenges named were more diverse, from influencing pastors on the role of parish councils and working to ensure consistency among parishes, to identifying ways of reaching out to the alienated and more fully incorporating all people into the Church.

A lack of recognition when their dreams and ideas are realized was cited by Judy Kollar as one struggle the council still faces. "We haven't always been associated with the things we're responsible for," she said.

But she values the DPC's "creative possibility. If things are orchestrated, you lose that spontaneity," she pointed out. As an illustration she offered the Bishop's Forum portion of each DPC meeting, when members and Bishop Clark spend an hour of informal discussion together. "I would guess that's virtually unique in the country," Kollar said. "People in the diocese don't realize what access they have to the Bishop through a publically designated meeting."

In her six years as executive secretary of the DPC, Kollar observed a growth in maturity from the council. "There are more people with experience in parish councils now ... And we have a history, which enlivens us," she said.

Impetus for creating the DPC was found in two texts from Vatican II, one of which says: "It is highly desirable that in each diocese a pastoral council be established over which the diocesan bishop himself preside and in which specially chosen clergy, religious and lay people will participate. The function of this council will be to investigate and to weigh matters which bear on pastoral activity and to formulate practical conclusions regarding them."

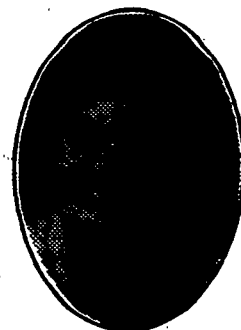
Pope Paul VI clarified the goals of a pastoral council in "Ecclesiae Sanctae" in 1966, confirming the words of Vatican II and writing that the council ought "to encourage conformity of life and actions of the People of God with the Gospel."

But the DPC didn't just spring into being from those statements. In 1970, the Diocesan Priests' Council recommended that a formation committee be founded to plan for the council. For four years, the committee met to establish guidelines for both parish and pastoral councils. As parish-level councils were founded, regions were identified and



Bishops Hogan and Clark cut the anniversary cake at a reception in DeSales High School gym. Behind them hangs the banner that hung above the altar at the DPC's first installation Mass in June, 1975.

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