



Villa victories

Winners were everywhere as youths at St. Joseph's Villa in Greece closed out their summer session with the 19th annual Summer Olympics. See Page 6.



House of hospitality

The faces of volunteers and guests at 402 South Avenue are forever changing, but the needs that bring them there remain the same. See page 7.

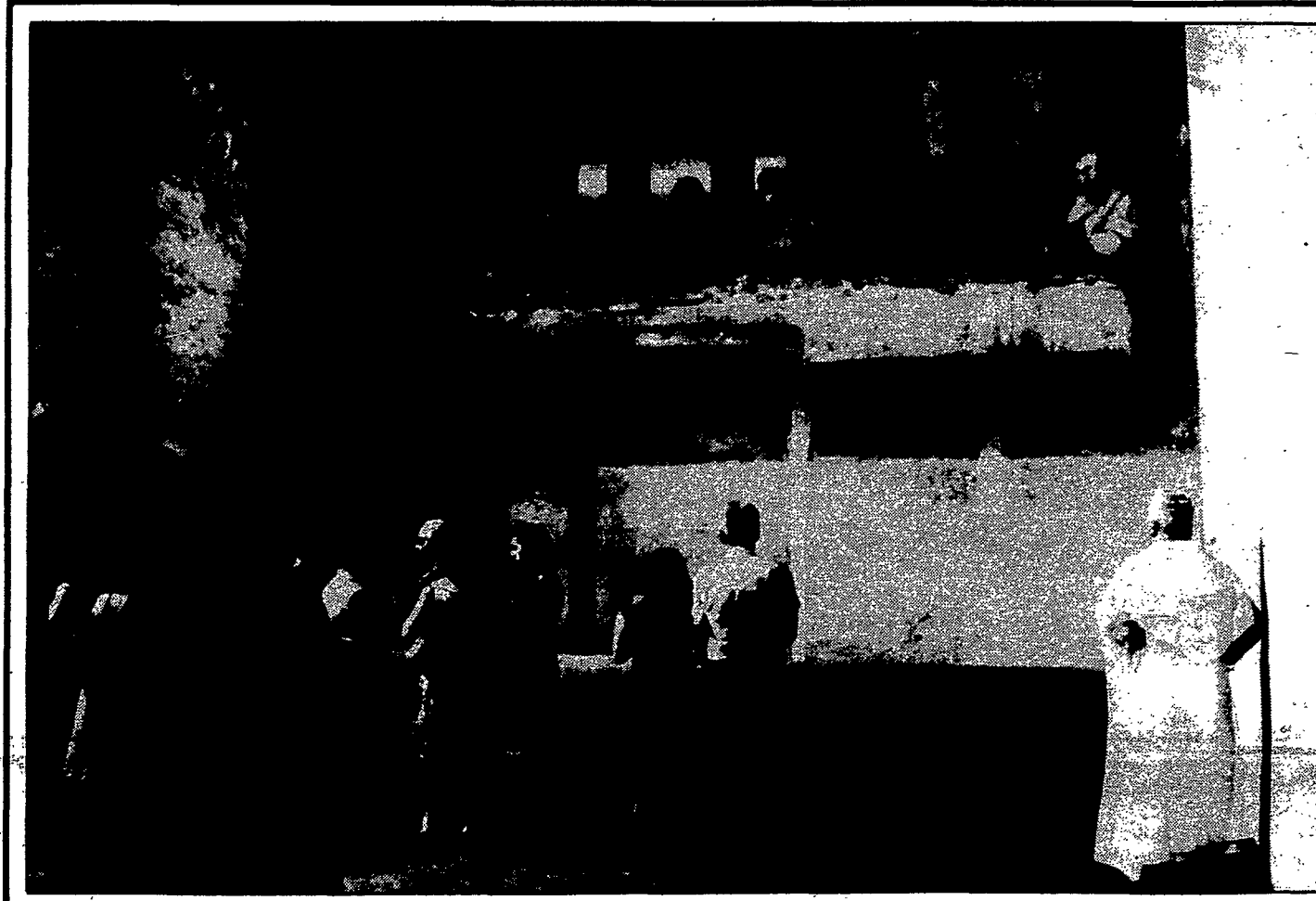
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Famous fresco again open for viewing

Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" in the former rectory of the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy, is open to the public once again. For several months, the public was not admitted to view the famous fresco because vibrations and dampness had damaged it. The room with the painting will now be limited to 15 people at a time and the square in front of the church will be closed to traffic.

KNA/NC News

Diocese adopts standard offering for wedding, funeral rites

By Teresa A. Parsons

The Diocese of Rochester has adopted new guidelines regarding the offerings, or "stole fees," paid to clergymen on the occasions of weddings, funerals and baptisms.

As of July 1, 1987, Bishop Matthew H. Clark has designated \$50 as the standard offering for the celebration of a wedding or funeral. In a June 22 letter to priests, the bishop also stipulated that no offering should be paid for the celebration of the sacrament of baptism.

Traditionally, both the amount and the disposition of stole fees have been left largely to the discretion of individual pastors or celebrants. Some priests have considered all or a portion of the money received as personal remuneration. Others have paid the fees into a parish fund, or have spent the money for charitable purposes. A few have discouraged or even refused payment of any kind in connection with a sacramental celebration.

As of July 1, 1988, Bishop Clark has directed that the offerings received from weddings or funerals should be placed in each parish's general treasury. By the same date, priests' salary compensation will be adjusted to reflect the change in income. If a priest offers a funeral or wedding Mass for a special intention, however, he may still collect the traditional stipend of \$5.

Members of the Diocesan Priests' Council discussed and debated the stole fee issue for nearly a year before passing the recommendation that Bishop Clark approved in June.

One of the dilemmas council members faced was semantical in nature. "A fee is always paid, no matter what," explained Father Joseph McCaffrey, one of two priest representatives on the Diocesan Personnel Commission's Salary and Benefits subcommittee. "An offering is something you can give if you want. Somewhere in between an offering and a fee is what is normally expected except in special circumstances. There's no good word for that."

The statement describing the new diocesan policy uses both "offering" and "fee," but the policy's intent seems to fall under Father McCaffrey's third category. To many priests

and parishioners as well, stipulating the amount of a voluntary offering seems a contradiction in terms. On the other hand, custom and rising utility costs seem to weigh heavily in favor of some kind of contribution.

Another sticking point among priests has been the proposed salary adjustment. Whether or not a priest chose to keep the proceeds from wedding and funeral offerings, those funds were considered as part of his earnings. Father McCaffrey and Father Roy Kiggins, a fellow subcommittee member, are now surveying priests and studying options for adjusting priests' salaries next July to fairly represent the range of income those fees represented.

How greatly individual pastors are affected depends on how many weddings or funerals

drives 5,000 (and currently receives the same car allowance)."

The change in diocesan policy regarding wedding and funeral offerings was prompted primarily by revisions in the Code of Canon Law. Several canons are now interpreted as indicating that stole fees ought to be considered the property of the parish rather than of the celebrant, according to Father Kevin McKenna, diocesan vice chancellor.

Canon law appears to recognize the propriety of offerings for sacramental celebrations by the mere mention of them, Father McKenna observed. On the other hand, the law expressly forbids any appearance of "selling" sacramental services. "There is never to be the idea of *quid pro quo* — that you give this amount of

ment of a standard charge, he does not believe it will completely clear up the confusion. He also expects that people will continue to insist on giving money to the priest or celebrant. "People do ask me, 'Does the priest get anything?'" he said. "If it's not included, they're going to give him something extra; it's their way of expressing appreciation."

The custom of offering priests money in appreciation for celebrating a sacrament or a Mass for a special intention probably originated with the early Christians, who brought their own bread and wine to be consecrated and shared as the Eucharist. Later, people began to bring other gifts, which were used for the support of the priests and of the poor.

Stipends, which are offered by a donor to a priest in exchange for his applying the prayers of the Mass to the donor's special intention, have been an established custom within the Church since the 11th century, but they may have been introduced as early as the 4th century. At one time, Mass stipends and stole fees constituted the bulk of a priest's income.

The new \$50 guideline is nearly twice the \$20-\$25 that many priests have asked for or suggested as wedding or funeral offerings. Yet, few pastors report any significant reaction from parishioners to the change, which has been in effect for more than a month.

"When you consider what people spend on videos and flowers and all the rest, it's really not that much," remarked Father L. John Hedges, pastor at St. Helen's Parish in Gates. "The thing to remember is that it's not a cost or a price. It's a suggested amount, so that people have an idea."

One among the ranks of the recently married, Roger Sadler, agreed with Father Hedges. "It seems about right to me," he said. "I think it should be up to the individual though."

Until now, customs regarding baptism offerings appear to have varied between parishes. Some pastors have routinely accepted contributions, while others, such as Father Gramkee, have long discouraged them. "I usually say 'Buy something for the baby for me with that;'"

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'A fee is always paid, no matter what. An offering is something you can give if you want. Somewhere in between an offering and a fee is what is normally expected... There's no good word for that.'

Father Joseph McCaffrey

they customarily perform. At Holy Cross Parish in Ovid, where Father Edwin Wedow typically officiates at no more than six or seven weddings per year, the impact is likely to be minimal. "It's just another necessary evil," Father Wedow said. "Young couples already spend so much for a wedding."

On the other hand, Father David Gramkee may celebrate 40 or more nuptials at St. John the Baptist and St. Cecilia in Elmira during the same period of time. The pastor of a large suburban parish may celebrate the same number within a few months.

"The bedrock issue behind all of this is compensation," Father McCaffrey said. "If we give more money to a pastor for doing 25 weddings instead of only five, then explain to me why we don't give more to a priest who drives 25,000 miles a year as opposed to a priest who

money for this amount of service," he said. "People unable to make an offering can't have a service refused."

Besides recognizing the change in canon law, the new diocesan policy also addresses a problem that has plagued pastors and funeral directors in particular for years — confusion caused by disparity in the size of offerings individual churches suggest, and what costs the offering covers.

Edwin Sulewski of Schauman-Sulewski Funeral Homes, Inc., has encountered church charges ranging from \$25 to \$75. In some cases, those fees have included payment for an organist and possibly a cantor or singer whose services may or may not have been considered as optional. In other cases, those extras have not been included.

While Sulewski appreciates the announce-