



Stadium showdowns

Cardinal Mooney and Bishop Kearney won league contests at Silver Stadium last weekend, setting the stage this week for a key battle between the two baseball powers. Page 12.



Mother's Day

A handful of men and women gathered to conclude the Marian Year with a vespers service honoring the mother who transcends ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic bounds. Page 20.

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Declining number of priests inspires new parish models

By Lee Strong

By the year 2000, the number of active priests in the Diocese of Rochester will have declined to nearly half the current number.

If trends in the numbers of retirements, deaths and ordinations continue, fewer than 100 priests will be available to fill the 144 pastorates currently filled by diocesan priests — potentially producing more than 40 pastorless parishes.

The diocese could look at this growing shortage as a crisis — a time to close parishes and reduce services.

Instead, it has chosen to look at the situation as an opportunity to grow and change. This attitude is exemplified by several diocesan initiatives.

On Tuesday, May 10, the diocese will conduct a ministry day for parish personnel in which two featured speakers — Sister Martha Ann McGinnis, OSF, a pastoral administrator in rural Minnesota, and Father David Baldwin, pastor of a 10-parish cluster in inner-city Chicago — will tell parish personnel about their experiences working in alternative forms of parish administration.

In addition, Dr. David O'Brien of Holy Cross College will describe the ministerial situation in the United States, while Bishop Matthew H. Clark will describe the situation in the Diocese of Rochester. The day was designed to promote awareness and discussion of the situation among parish staffs, and to encourage their input in developing solutions for the diocese.

The Priests' Council, meanwhile, has engaged in ongoing discussion of a tentative job description for the pastoral administrator — a religious brother or sister, deacon or lay person. The description is currently being evaluated by the Development of Ministers and Employees Committee of the Personnel Commission.

"What we're moving into is a new model of the Church," explained Judith Kollar, director of the diocesan Department of Continuing Education. "I believe this is the beginning of a long process of dialogue, consultation and preparation for ensuring the pastoral care of the people."

Kollar, who organized the ministry day, said the diocese's ongoing analysis of the nature of the parish and of parish leadership is, in part,

an attempt to deal with the reality of declining numbers of priests.

"We're not in a crisis situation yet," she noted. "We have the leisure to explore options. We're setting up our ambulance before we have the accident."

The declining numbers of priests also is leading to a new understanding of the priesthood, the laity and parish leadership, Kollar said. "We are a eucharistic people; the priest is essential," she noted. But, at the same time, she said, people must begin to understand "that the experience of the past will not be able to be met in the future."

Members of the diocese have already gained a glimpse of that future through various temporary and permanent staffing initiatives. In the fall of 1986, for example, Sister Rita Heberle, RSM, was appointed temporary pastoral administrator at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Painted Post while the pastor, Father Walter Wainwright, was on sabbatical. Similarly, Sister Julia Norton, RSM, served as the temporary administrator at Our Lady of Mount Carmel from November, 1986, to May, 1987, while Father Jim Hewes was on sabbatical.

Although both appointments were temporary, they provide models for what may become permanent situations in the future. Both sisters had the theological training, experience in parish work, and the proven administrative, counseling and leadership skills that are called for in the proposed criteria for pastoral administrators.

Likewise, both had to rely on priests from outside the parish to perform sacramental functions. Under the proposed criteria a "priest moderator" living outside the parish will fulfill that role — possibly in several parishes.

Sister Heberle had served as pastoral assistant in the Painted Post parish for three years before becoming administrator. Thus, the parishioners knew her beforehand, affording her a certain degree of trust and confidence.

Nevertheless, parishioners did have to make some adjustments — even if only temporarily. Although a priest visited the parish to fulfill sacramental functions, the parish had to function without the constant presence of a



HIKE FOR THE HOMELESS — Dan Deckman, 10, gets a good-luck kiss from another walkathon participant, Otis, the seeing-eye dog owned by Dan's grandmother, Betty Schmitt. Otis earned nearly \$350 in pledges for Dimitri House's Hike for the Homeless, Saturday, April 30. Nearly 150 participants combined to raise \$13,000 through the 10-kilometer hike.

priest.

Sister Heberle speculated that if such appointments become permanent structures, parishioners will need a new understanding of the role priests will play. "The people are going to have to be educated to understand that

there are functions that our pastors do now that are not necessarily things priests have to do," she said. "That's already being proven in parishes with pastoral assistants."

Another model for future parish structures

Continued on Page 16

Priest shortage may alter role of permanent deacons

When the permanent diaconate was restored in the Diocese of Rochester 10 years ago, the shortage of priests was still an ominous cloud on the horizon.

Now, as parishes and dioceses begin to feel the impact of dwindling priestly vocations, they are seeking alternative forms of pastoral leadership.

Deacons are one of the sources helping to fill the void. In addition to diaconal ministry, which they have typically performed on a part-time, volunteer basis, some deacons are serving as full-time paid pastoral assistants or religious educators. And as diocesan officials prepare for the day when the first non-priest is appointed as pastoral administrator, permanent deacons are among those being considered for the job.

"Deacons are very well prepared for that because of their varied background of family, industry and a solid training for ministry," said William Maune, associate director for the diocesan Permanent Diaconate.

Maune cautioned, however, that deacons should not be considered as the only, or even the primary, source for future parish leadership. "We should not only be thinking of deacons (as pastoral administrators)," he explained, "A

person does not have to be ordained to be pastoral."

As the diocese's 67 permanent deacons prepared to celebrate their program's 10th anniversary, some questioned whether the need to compensate for a lack of priests is distorting the role they were ordained to fill.

When the diaconate was restored, its function — as in the early Church — was envisioned as one of service to the poor, the sick, the lonely.

Officially, deacons are asked to minister eight to 10 hours per week. But realistically, ministry has become the equivalent of a second job for many.

As priests have become fewer in number, deacons' liturgical roles have steadily increased. A parish deacon now commonly serves at all of his parish's weekend liturgies. Deacons may also be expected to attend weeknight parish meetings and events in addition to such traditional service roles as visiting hospitals, prisons and nursing homes.

At the same time, Maune observed, the workplace is increasing its demands on employees beyond the 40-hour week. As growing numbers of women enter the workforce, deacons may also face a more demanding role at

home.

"You're on a treadmill — working all day, and then going weeknights and weekends," Maune said. "I'm concerned for the long haul about burnout and family crises."

One means of easing the tension is to make ministry a full-time occupation — an avenue that is attracting permanent deacons faster than organizers of the program originally anticipated.

Some deacons, including Maune, have chosen early retirement from their careers in business and industry in order to devote more time to parish and diocesan assignments. Others combine part-time jobs with paid ministry positions to make ends meet.

Maune believes that deacons' experience in the workplace may help them avoid the pitfalls of burnout and overcommitment to which many priests have fallen victim. "We have learned to delegate to others without abdicating responsibility," Maune said. "Many priests have never been trained in good administration and in how to delegate. We ordain them and people kind of expect they can do all of that."

— Teresa A. Parsons

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