

Feature

Pastor renewed by 'creation-centered' sabbatical

By Teresa A. Parsons

Monsignor William Roche has seldom failed to follow his heart during his 65 years.

As a young man, his love for outdoor adventure led him into mid-air and mid-ocean as an airplane pilot and Navy ensign.

In 1948, he followed his love for the Lord and His church into the seminary, and later, the priesthood.

Now, more than 40 years later, the pastor and former diocesan administrator has rediscovered the passion of those "first loves" in a controversial theological movement that raises concern for the ecological and social health of the earth to the level of spirituality.

Creation-centered spirituality calls for a return to what Dominican Father Matthew Fox, the movement's chief architect and proponent, believes is Christianity's original tradition: stressing the goodness and holiness of all of God's creation rather than focusing on personal, individual sin, and taking a wholistic view of spirituality — incorporating body and soul, art and science, mysticism and social justice.

"What appeals to me about (creation-centered spirituality) is that it gives attention to the whole person ... It leads toward concern for the poor, and included are not only the two-legged, but the four-legged ones and the very earth itself," Monsignor Roche explained. "It also opens us to our creative nature that traditional education doesn't try to develop much. We have a lot of technology in our present society and reverence that, but we have no imagination, and we don't feel the loss of that."

The monsignor first encountered Father Fox's ideas on a library bookshelf at Christ the King Retreat House in Syracuse nine years ago. While randomly seeking a good read, his eye fell upon the word "compassion" in the title of one of the theologian's early books, "A Spirituality named Compassion, and the Healing of the Global Village, Humpty Dumpty, and Us."

"I remember thinking that (compassion) was something I could use more of," he said. "I was impressed by (Father Fox's) view of compassion, not as condescending, but as a labor of life, and built into it is work for justice, which



alone can bring peace."

The book sparked a personal interest that last July led Monsignor Roche to Oakland, Calif., for a six-month sabbatical at Holy Names College's Institute for Culture and Creation-Centered Spirituality, which Father Fox founded and where he serves as director.

During his months at the hillside campus overlooking San Francisco Bay, Monsignor Roche experienced what he calls "a creative breakthrough."

"I began to write poetry again — something I hadn't done in a very long time," he explained. "My exposure to people who were using their right brain as well as their left led me to meditate on the fact that, as human beings, we need to attend to our mystical side. If we do, then we're in danger of being creative ... by which I mean that mystics are often looked upon as eccentric, and sometimes even dangerous."

The risks of mysticism were borne out when, in the midst of Monsignor Roche's stay at the institute, news came of a Vatican censure and Father Fox's subsequent assent to a sabbatical suggested as a compromise measure by his superiors in the Dominican order. Among the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's reported objections to Father Fox's teaching are the theologian's treatment of the doctrine of original sin, his references to God as "Mother" along with other "fervently" feminist views, and the presence on the institute's staff of a woman known as Starhawk, a feminist, social activist and self-proclaimed practitioner of "wicca," or witchcraft, which she reportedly views as a medieval women's movement.

Fellow Dominican theologians, who studied Father Fox's work at the Vatican's request, concluded in May, 1985, that there was not "sufficient reason to prohibit him from speaking and writing." Although they noted that certain of the Church's traditions and doctrines "could be better integrated" within Father Fox's work, he had agreed to work more closely with other theologians and to continue his dialogue with Dominican superiors.

However, in response to continued urging from the Vatican congregation, Father Fox's superiors finally required the theologian to take a sabbatical year beginning in December, 1988, during which he will refrain from teaching and lecturing.

priest, who has been a spokesman for the Community Coalition for Workers' Rights, a group of area churches and organizations that has advocated on behalf of pro-union employees at Kleen Brite, Inc., a Brockport-based company that manufactures household chemicals and cleaning products. The company has been battling efforts to organize by employees who voted last July to join the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union.

Father Reid learned of the coalition through Rebecca Gifford, director of the diocesan division of urban services and former student of Father Reid's during his teaching days in Washington.

Now the priest has come full circle in the social sense — growing up among Dublin's poor, living in the glamorous cities of Washington and Rome, and settling in among the poor of Rochester. His concerns reflect the concerns of the two capitals he lived in, one symbolizing secular politics, the other symbolizing the church

Although Father Fox's views may be regarded as radical by some Catholic traditionalists, Monsignor Roche found nothing that conflicted with beliefs to which he has long been faithful. "(Creation spirituality) confirms what I've always believed — that the universe isn't static," he said. "I was never one that mourned the changes of (the Second Vatican) Council. I rejoiced that the Church wouldn't be static."

"I see this as a continuing part of the development of the Church in the post-Vatican-II era. Attempts to squelch this are attempts to stamp out life, yet we are told by our Church to choose life," he said. "I don't think these repressive measures will succeed."

While Monsignor Roche doubts that the Vat-

Established in 1978, the institute moved five years ago from Mundelein College in Illinois, where Father Fox formerly taught, to Oakland's Holy Names College, a small, four-year, liberal arts institution owned and operated by the Sisters of the Holy Name. The institute currently offers a master's degree in spirituality, earned by completing two semesters of course work and a dissertation.

Among last semester's nearly 80 students were lay people, religious and priests, recent college graduates and mid-life career-changers from all over the world. Included were a dozen men and women who, like Monsignor Roche, were studying for only a single semester. "It was a very warm, open and creative group, a

'I see (creation-centered spirituality) as a continuing part of the development of the church in the post-Vatican-II era. Attempts to squelch this are attempts to stamp out life, yet we are told by our church to choose life. I don't think these repressive measures will succeed.'

Monsignor William Roche

ican's censure will stifle the spread of Father Fox's ideas, he conceded that it will probably have greater impact on the theologian himself. He described the institute's founder, who until December taught several courses there, as a "pleasant, thoughtful man, a scholar whose basic occupation is writing books."

"Prophets are often stoned first and cherished later," Monsignor Roche said. "Matthew Fox had something to say to the prevailing culture that was out of the ordinary. He therefore ran into trouble. That seems to happen whenever someone tries to follow the spirit in his life. 'When I first met and heard him, I went up and said, 'Thank you for the fire,' the monsignor added. "That's one of the things we suffer a lack of. He opens up possibilities that stir up life, and I think we need that kind of influence today."

Because the Oakland institute has a number of other faculty members, and because Father Fox continues as its director, Monsignor Roche said the controversy had little negative impact during his stay. "The institute has received much more public exposure than if (Father Fox) hadn't been silenced," he said.

he serves: Possibly, guests at St. Peter's Kitchen will benefit from the Irish priest's blend of the two cities' power.

Coalition

Continued from page 3

well-being of our Kleen Brite team than the management of Kleen Brite." The statement also noted that the National Labor Relations Board still had not certified the union.

The union's Rochester board filed a complaint against Kleen Brite with the labor board in October. The complaint alleged that the company had engaged in unfair labor practices, including harassment and intimidation of pro-union employees.

The labor board has scheduled a hearing on the complaint for Tuesday, Feb. 7, at 10 a.m. in the council chambers on the third floor of City Hall.

Academic world

Continued from page 3

built up an abhorrence of waste — waste of time and waste of people," he said. "I saw the Reagan years as an incredible waste." Father Reid said the increase of arms spending at the expense of social welfare programs was "the terrible sad legacy of the Reagan years."

Some of that legacy has found its way to the low-income neighborhood of St. Peter and Paul's Parish. But Father Reid is hopeful that with the end of the Reagan era, social activism and awareness will increase. Until then, he keeps his hope in the stories of individual triumph that come out of St. Peter's Kitchen. "Recently, I've been made quite happy by a man who's getting his GED (high school equivalency diploma). I've always been struck by this man's dignity," Father Reid said.

The dignity of workers also concerns the

INVITATION TO REPARATION

MAKE THE FIVE
1st. Saturdays of Reparation

Fr. Albert Shamon, Author, Lecturer, Columnist, invites you to listen to the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ on the following stations every Sunday. WAUB-1590 Auburn, 12:30 p.m.; WSSW-99FM Seneca Falls, 6:15 p.m.; and WGVA-1240 Geneva, 7:45 a.m.

Our Lady of Victory
210 Pleasant St., Downtown Rochester
Rosary & Mass, 10 a.m. - Sacrament of Penance, 11:30 a.m.

St. Alphonsus
95 East Genesee St., Auburn, N.Y.
Sacrament of Penance, 9 a.m. - Rosary & Mass, 10 a.m.

OR MAKE FIVE FIRST SATURDAYS ON YOUR OWN.



Effinger's
German Sausage House

SEAFOOD SPECIALS
Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent

SEAFOOD PLATTER	\$6.75
<small>Scallops, Haddock, Creams Casino, complete w/ french fries, cole slaw and salad bar</small>	
FISH FRY	\$4.75
<small>French fries, cole slaw, bread & butter</small>	
BAKED FISH	\$5.95
<small>French fries, chef salad or cole slaw</small>	
FRIED SHRIMP	\$5.50
<small>French fries, chef salad or cole slaw</small>	

COMPLETE SEAFOOD MENU AVAILABLE

LUNCH SPECIALS:

FRIED FISH SANDWICH	\$3.95
<small>French fries, cole slaw</small>	
SHRIMP IN A BASKET	\$3.95
<small>French fries, cole slaw</small>	

Mention this ad and receive a complimentary glass of wine
LUNCHES 11:30-2:30; DINNERS 5-9:30 Tuesday through Saturday
1582 E Main St — 482-5220