

# Fruits of sabbatical reflection offered at Convocation

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

As I begin this column on Monday morning, I am very conscious that within a few hours, at the Holidome in Rochester, we will begin Convocation '89, the annual gathering of our priests. The theme of this year's convocation, which will conclude Wednesday at noon, is "Priestly Ministry in a Changing World." The theme is rich and timely. The committee that planned the convocation has offered us an excellent program, the fruits of which I am sure, we will be enjoying for some time to come.

I did a lot of thinking about the theme while on sabbatical and, of course, have continued that thinking as I have worked to prepare the remarks I will be offering at different parts of the program: I thought you might be interested in some of those comments, and so I share with you some excerpts from them:

"We face so many issues and find ourselves tested in a variety of ways. It is indeed a changing world. We are inevitably caught up in it and affected by it. Our choice, it seems to me, is not whether we will deal with the issues or not. Our choice is how we will deal with them. My hope is

that we will always face them explicitly and consciously as people who live in the Easter experience ...

"... One of my post sabbatical decisions is to increase the time I spend in pastoral activity around the diocese. That is always a struggle, but John Mulligan's work as moderator of the curia will be of great assistance in that. More specifically, I want to devote more time and energy to you — walking with you and working with you on many of the themes we'll be considering during this time together.

"... In my opinion the achievements of this diocese since Vatican Council II have been extraordinary, and you have been the day-by-day, on-the-scene, key pastoral leaders of that. One day, Bob McNamara or Mark Miller or someone else with their gifts will continue's Bob's history of the diocese. In it the women and men whom we are ordained to serve will have a prominence we could not have imagined 30 years ago and we will all rejoice in that. But ... our author, I have no doubt, will name this presbyterate as the human catalyst of the remarkable post-conciliar development of this local church.

"... Our sense of joy and optimism, our confidence can be weakened. We can lose our sense of humor and begin to take ourselves much too seriously. This happens, I believe, when we lose a sense of proportion and allow the real problems we face to blind us to the good things that are happening all around us. I think it happens also when we forget the incredible wealth of human and material resources at our disposal.

"... In the regional meetings I mentioned earlier today, I want to devote significant attention to vocations to the priesthood. I have asked Tom Valenti to be present for all of those gatherings because I judge it to be very important that we begin this new phase of our efforts with a clear and common understanding of the resources now available to us and with as full and open a sharing of our interest, creativity and imagination as we can possibly manage."

You will find other news of the convocation in other sections of the *Catholic Courier*, and there will be more about our themes in weeks ahead. Thanks for your interest in these matters.



Along The Way

## Buffalo priest seeks aid in canonization process

To the editor:

Just a year ago, on March 17, 1988, your paper kindly informed the people of the Rochester diocese that Bishop Edward D. Head of Buffalo, with the approval of the Holy See, had initiated the cause for the possible canonization of Monsignor Nelson Baker (1841-1936). "Father Baker," as he was commonly called, was noted for the many charitable institutions that he founded or presided over at Lackawanna, New York, as well as for the great shrine-church of Our Lady of Victory that he built in the same place. It was appropriate for the Catholics of the Rochester diocese to learn of this, for Father Baker had served in 1881-1882 as assistant pastor of St. Mary's Church, Corning, now a part of the Rochester diocese.

Thanks largely to that article, those of us in charge of the process of canonization have received from Rochester dioceses many petitions for canonization, as well as a considerable number of recollections that serve our purpose admirably. I thought that your readers might appreciate learning how this laborious inquiry has progressed over the past 12 months.

What we have been looking for primarily is any information from which it can be argued that Father Baker was a man of unusual holiness.

One phase of the investigation is a search for and analysis of, everything that this Servant of God wrote. Thanks to our publicity we have already heard from 50 people who presented to us writings by Father Baker or anecdotes about him. These data were all completely new to us, and therefore most welcome. Some of them were submitted by members of the diocese of Rochester. The committee of Buffalo priests assigned to examine this material has already submitted a report to Bishop Head on their findings.

Early this March, the bishop named a special tribunal or court to interview witnesses who knew Father Baker. They will be asked to testify to their opinion of Father Baker's reputation for holiness. One member of this tribunal, according to church law, holds the post of "promoter of justice." The more popular title of this office is "devil's advocate." His job, in other words, is to raise very frankly any doubts about the genuinity of Monsignor Baker's alleged holiness. A very thorough procedure, you see.

After the testimony has been taken — it is all given confidentially — it will be my duty, as "postulator" or petitioner of the cause, to use it along with the report on Father Baker's writings, as the basis for a historical-critical biography. Then we must send to Rome all three items: the analysis of his writings; the testimony of "witnesses;" and the biography. If the Holy See, after careful study, judges that there is a good case in favor of this Servant of God's heroic sanctity, the cause for canonization will be taken over by the Congregation for

the Causes of Saints. Even when this congregation assumes responsibility, it will be a slow procedure. Eventually, if our opinion is accepted that Father Baker was extraordinarily holy, he will be declared "venerable." Then — if a miracle can be verified as granted through his intercession — he will be proclaimed "blessed." Finally, when another miracle is approved, he will be formally canonized St. Nelson Baker.

Meanwhile, during this initial stage of the process, I would ask again that any of your readers who have material written by Father Baker submit it to me. Also to transmit any anecdotes about him. I likewise urge that any persons who knew Father Baker come and testify before our tribunal on their impressions. Please inform us if you qualify to bear witness. My address is: Baker Hall, 150 Martin Road, Lackawanna, New York 14218. Telephone: 716/827-9640.

Monsignor Robert C. Wurtz  
Lackawanna

## Group finds commission's mission ironic

To the editor:

Isn't it ironic that the opening statement of the (Bishop's Education) Commission's Review Draft states that "The mission of the church given to her by Christ is to teach all peoples." To us, this is totally untrue and has not been supported by this draft.

Please let it be known that we have some grave concerns about the proposed reorganization plan for Catholic Schools in the Northeast Quadrant. We question whether Mr. (Alan) Taddiken (of the Center for Governmental Research) has any real feel for what we are feeling about our children's education. Does he realize that we're already being financially squeezed by paying tuition on top of public school taxes? Does he realize what we have invested not only financially but emotionally in our schools? Unfortunately, we already know the answers to these questions. Mr. Taddiken could never answer these questions because he and the Diocese of Rochester have never bothered to ask us for our opinions and feelings on the subject. Who ever said that just because you have the word "government" in your title, that this gives you the right to make decisions about our children's future?

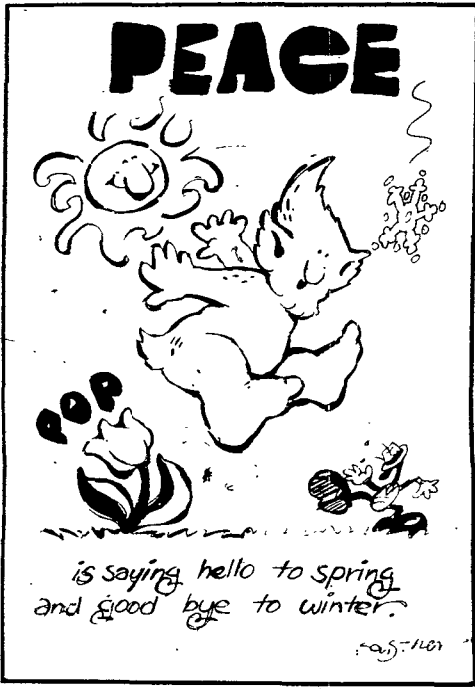
We feel that this was not well thought out and not well researched. You may have looked at all the statistics and projections but you missed the most important item — the parents. Do you realize the feelings of resentment this study has generated?

We feel the Diocese of Rochester has been very unfair to Catholic School parents. They have not demonstrated to us that

they consider Catholic education to be a priority. We don't see this as a viable plan and see it only as a document that has stirred up great resentment, rumors, and hostility. We don't feel that other possible solutions were thoroughly explored and researched. This proposal was obviously compiled purely with a business sense with no emotions considered. Our business sense dictates that if we see our way to send our children to Catholic School that we will be forced to discontinue our weekly parish support as well as our Thanks Giving Appeal donation. Our friends and relatives support us and are willing to also make sacrifices so that our children can continue to attend Catholic School. Collectively, we plan to pursue this and to organize other parents at St. Margaret Mary School and any other concerned parents from other parishes. We do feel that Catholic Education is a priority.

We're not asking for an emotional shouting match but just the common courtesy of listening to those people most affected by the plan. This has been our parish school for many years and we feel a strong allegiance to the school, as well as the parish. This entire process of reorganization has undermined our confidence in the Diocese of Rochester. We feel that they have ignored us and we feel betrayed.

Suzanne M. O'Neil  
Anne Smalline  
Barbara Zimmerman  
and Eileen D'Arienzo  
Rochester



## Holy Father still holds keys to scripture, tradition

To the editor:

Father McBrien has once again overstated his case. Loyalty to the Pope does not make one a Catholic fundamentalist. It just makes one a Catholic. Christ gave the keys to bind and to loose, to Peter, the first Pope, and his successors, with or without the approval of his brother apostles, or bishops. There is nothing blind about obedience — it normally results from being enlightened. Papal teaching is not the only test of orthodoxy, as Father McBrien states; the Church also has Scripture and Tradition — to which the Holy Father still holds the keys!

Kathy Crane  
Martinot Avenue  
Rochester

## Diocesan Appointments

Bishop Matthew H. Clark has announced the following diocesan appointments, which become effective June 27, 1989:

**Father Richard J. Beligotti** from parochial vicar at St. Pius X Church, Chili, to pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Church, Elmira Heights.

**Father David L. Bonin, CPPS**, from temporary administrator of the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus, Greece, to administrator of St. Mary's of the Lake Church, Watkins Glen, and St. Benedict's Chapel, Odessa.

**Father Alexander H. Bradshaw** from parochial vicar at St. John of Rochester Church, Fairport, to pastor of Holy Ghost Church, Rochester.

**Father Daniel P. Tormey** from director of Becket Hall to pastor of St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Scottsville, with continuing responsibilities as director of the Ministry to Priests Program.

**Father William D. Trott** from pastor of St. Augustine Church, Rochester, to pastor of St. Joseph Church, Livonia, and St. William Church, Conesus.

**Father Thomas H. Watts** from pastor of St. Benedict's Chapel, Odessa, to pastor of St. James the Apostle Church, Waverly, with continuing responsibilities as pastor of St. Pius X Church, Van Etten.

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