

Bishop appoints vicar's council

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — In his recent letter on religious life in the United States, Pope John Paul II urged U.S. bishops to work closely with religious in planning how to carry out the church's mission.

Cooperation between Bishop Matthew H. Clark and men and women religious serving in the Diocese of Rochester was a priority long before the pope's letter, according to Sister Dolores Banick, IHM, diocesan vicar for religious. The latest manifestation of that cooperation is the newly formed Advisory Council for the Vicar for Religious.

In an April 10 letter announcing the formation and membership of the council, Bishop Clark explained that the advisory body is intended to assist Sister Banick in her efforts "to render collaboration and assistance to the Bishop in carrying out his responsibilities to religious," and "to help integrate religious more fully into the pastoral life and activities of the local church."

The 12 members of the new council represent 10 distinct religious orders. This diversity, Sister Banick said, will give "a broader picture of the diversity of (religious orders') charism in the church."

In choosing members for the council, "my purpose was to get representatives from the congregations in the diocese that had a number of people serving (here)," Sister Banick said. The members were selected from nominations submitted by the various orders serving in the diocese.

In addition to representing a range of orders, the group also comprises individuals working in varied ministries, Sister Banick said. Included are men and women serving in hospitals, in schools as teachers and administrators, in parishes, in retreat and counseling centers, and in the legal profession. Because of their diverse backgrounds, Sister Banick said, the members of the council will serve as resources in her efforts to deal with such issues as the retirement fund for women religious, compensation for women religious, and decreasing vocations.

The new council will also likely examine an oversight in its own formation — the fact that it includes no religious brothers. Sister Banick explained that no brothers were appointed to the council because none had been proposed for membership by their orders. The two orders serving in the diocese that include both brothers and priests — the Capuchin Franciscans and the Holy Cross Religious — are represented by priests, Fathers Nelson Rupert, OFM Cap., and Donald Haycock, CSC.

Sister Banick acknowledged concern that no brothers have been appointed thus far, but added that "nothing is carved in stone." The council itself may "be asking whether or not we should have a brother as a brother on the advisory council," she said.

Brother David Turmel, CSC, local director of the Holy Cross Religious who serve at Cardinal Mooney High School, said he is comfortable being represented by Father Haycock, who serves as the brothers' chaplain. He suggested, however, that a brother might be chosen to represent those orders whose local ranks do not include priests.

In addition to considering the appointment of brothers to the council, the advisory body will spend its initial meetings determining its own constitution and how the group will function, Sister Banick said. The council will meet several times a year, with the first meeting scheduled for May 22.

The new council supersedes the now defunct Diocesan Sisters' Council, which voted to dissolve itself in September, 1988. Sisters' council members explained at the time of the vote that the council had fulfilled its two stated purposes: to provide a voice for women religious in the diocese, and to lobby for a woman to serve as vicar

for religious.

The appointment of Sister Muriel Curran, SSND, as vicar in 1981 achieved the second goal. Meanwhile, as the vicar's office began to assume more responsibility for dealing with the concerns of women religious, the sisters' council was gradually supplanted in its role as their primary forum. In addition, the formation of the Intercongregational Council in 1975 provided yet another body dealing with issues of concern to women religious.

At the same time as the sisters' council was being displaced, cooperation between men and women religious was increasing in the diocese — a direction encouraged by Sister Curran. Because men and women religious share a common sense of mission and a vision of the church that extends beyond the diocese, Sister Banick explained, they have grounds for joint discussions.

Unlike the sisters' council — and the still-existing Diocesan Priests Council and Diocesan Pastoral Council — the new organization will not be a consultative body providing advice and input directly to Bishop Clark. Instead, the religious council will advise Sister Banick, who will then represent the concerns of men and women religious to the bishop.

In addition, members of the council are appointed, not elected as they are to the

two consultative bodies. Because of this difference, Sister Jamesine Riley, SSJ, noted, members of new council do not represent the interests of people who elected them. "You're in a different position," she said. "I think some people, even if appointed, keep their ears to the ground, but as appointed members they are there to provide their own opinions."

Since they have not yet met, members of the new council are not sure what they will be called upon to do. They say, however, that the council will fill a need in the diocese.

Sister Jacqueline Demars, RSM, observed, for example, that the makeup of the council allows orders other than the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy — which provide the most religious to the diocese — to participate in diocesan concerns. She remarked that Sister Banick has shown "sensitivity" to these other orders.

Father Rupert, for one, applauds the inclusion of men religious in the council. Their inclusion also gives men religious an opportunity to participate in diocesan operations. He noted that although religious priests are invited to participate in such diocesan events as the annual priests' convocation, they are often asked to "stay behind and mind the fort, and cover for emergencies."

Sister DeMars also pointed out that dio-



cesan priests have a special relationship with the bishop, and can offer him their advice and input. Religious, on the other hand, have a special relationship with their congregations, which gives them a different perspective, she said. The council, she suggested, offers religious a new opportunity to share this perspective with the diocese.

"I feel that as a religious, I can probably offer some valuable insights about the growth of the diocese," Father Haycock acknowledged. "I think they want ... the values, the charisms of religious life being brought into diocesan operation and planning."

Caution keys local retirement funding campaign

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — "You can't raise \$40 million just by passing a hat," Mark Seeberg acknowledges.

Yet \$40 million is approximately how much the Diocese of Rochester and religious orders serving here must raise to close the gap between available resources and the funds required to address the retirement needs of women religious.

Along with members of those orders, Seeberg, as diocesan director of development, must determine how, and even if, that money can be raised.

The outcome of that question will determine the future spending priorities of orders of women religious, according to Sister Elizabeth LeValley, superior general of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester. Because of the retirement funding crunch, she said, religious orders across the country may be forced to choose between "a mission orientation" and simply "maintaining."

Nationally, the retirement fund shortfall is approximately \$3 billion, according to figures compiled by the Tri-Conference Retirement Project, which comprises representatives of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men.

In December, 1988, nearly 150 dioceses throughout the country responded to the shortfall by taking part in the first of 10 annual national collections. December's collection netted more than \$25 million.

Rochester was one of nine dioceses that opted not to participate in the national campaign. This decision was based on a recommendation contained in the Five Year Financial Planning Process Task Force report, released in April, 1987. Because most of the religious women serving in the diocese belong to two locally based congregations, diocesan officials instead announced last fall that they would begin this spring to raise half of the money needed locally. Religious congregations serving in the diocese agreed to try to close the remainder of the retirement funding gap with a subsequent campaign.

However, the diocesan effort isn't likely to begin within the near future, said Seeberg. Nor is the development director prepared to discuss at this point whether the campaign might entail collections or private solicitation since, he said, the necessary background work required for



Sister Catherine Mary Masten, who designs and makes clothing, works on some sewing at the Sisters of St. Joseph infirmary while recovering from an illness.

such a sizeable effort has not been done.

"We know the scope of the need," Seeberg said. "We have not set a campaign goal or a time line and won't until we've spent more time consulting people. Our strategy will evolve from what we hear."

Once this consultation process is completed and the money is collected, diocesan officials may form a retirement planning committee to monitor and distribute the money, and to plan for future needs.

Since January, Seeberg has met several

times — most recently on Tuesday, April 25 — with the Intercongregational Council, which comprises the superior generals and council members of the Sisters of St. Joseph and Sisters of Mercy. During those meetings, he has outlined what he believes will be necessary to mount the campaign.

Both Sister LeValley and Sister Jean Marie Kearse, superior general of the Sisters of Mercy, say they approve the direction Seeberg is taking. "We're definitely

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