

Process would call all to participate in planning

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

At our Diocesan Pastoral Council meeting on Saturday, I spoke with our membership about our need to come together as a diocesan church. I was speaking of a process by which we, as a community, could reflect on our faith, our life together in mission, and our pastoral needs and resources. The purposes of such a gathering would be several. Among the more important ones would be: 1) to reflect on our experience of the church and of our faith in the years since Vatican Council II; 2) to study our present-day and anticipated needs and resources in the light of our faith; and 3) to make some decisions about where to concentrate our united resources.

Several formats could be used for such an event or process. Important components of any format we might choose would be a preparatory phase during which we would determine the subject matter for our consideration and the process we would follow; a time of grass-roots reflection in parish communities and other appropriate groupings; a collection, evaluation and judgment about that information in a consensus-building procedure; and, finally, a celebration and promulgation through a

festive diocesan gathering of our decisions for the future.

I am more and more drawn to form such a process, because I think it would provide an opportunity for all of us to deepen our understanding of the nature of our church and of who we are as a family of faith. It would allow broad-based participation in decisions about our basic pastoral choices and directions. It would have strong unifying and, I believe, healing effects among us. It would honor the vision of the church set forth in Vatican Council II that we are a people of God and that we should participate fully and responsibly in the life of our faith community.

As a result of our discussion about this possibility three years ago, our Diocesan Priests' Council advised that we should instead work to strengthen already existing processes. We have tried to do so, and I think we have had some success. But we have been unable to find ways to invite all to gather at a common starting point with common information and a common set of specific goals.

Before I left on sabbatical, I asked the priests' council to spend a good part of their agenda time this year on a study of

how we could best do pastoral planning for the future. The end result of their research led them to offer the unanimous recommendation to me that we enter into the kind of process about which I am now writing.

In the discussions with both the priests' council and the pastoral council, some good questions and cautions were raised. Members strongly expressed the hope that any such process be carried out slowly and prayerfully. They urged that we not re-do research or other work that has already been done and that this process not be added to the work that we are already doing. All of these, of course, are excellent suggestions that we would need to observe very carefully.

The pastoral council's reactions to the issue were most encouraging. While members had some cautions and questions, I believe they were enthusiastic about the benefits to be gained by such an experience. They will be considering the idea over the summer in preparation for further discussion in September. In the meantime, I'll be thinking more about the possibility.

May I ask you to think about it as well? Peace to all.



Along The Way

Writer poses points to consider following Cardinal Mooney's closing

To the editor:

As Greece taxpayers for over forty years, I feel it is necessary to point out a few things pertaining to the purchase of the Cardinal Mooney facilities by the Greece Central School district. They have already stated that it will not solve the problems of overcrowding, but only help to alleviate them. In other words, it's a "Band-Aid" type of solution, and the problem will still be there after the expenditure. We haven't seen a price at this time, but knowing the conditions at Mooney as we do, we do know that it is worth quite a large amount.

They also stated that there will have to be a lot of things done to the buildings to bring them up to the standards required by the public school system in New York State. This will require further expenditures of Greece Tax monies, and the original problems will still be there.

Now, let's examine the new problems

that will be created by such a purchase. Does anyone remember a law being passed, years ago, that prevented an establishment from dispensing alcoholic beverages within a certain distance of any Greece Public school grounds? I would certainly hate to see my school district have to purchase the bowling alley, with a bar, and possibly the shopping mall, with a liquor store, because someone didn't look into things such as this. The proximity of both of these to the school boundaries can be measured in yards. It could require more money being spent, and certainly places unnecessary temptation in an area where no more is needed, and we are still stuck with the "Band-Aid" solution to our problem!

Another thing to be considered is the way in which this whole thing has been done. I'm glad our forefathers didn't look at things the same way we do now. The

minute things get a little tough, we seem to throw up our hands, and say, "There's nothing we can do." All Catholic schools are faced with the same problems today, and yet they are resistant to change. We have been very close to Mooney over the years, having seen our eight children graduate, and we worked very closely with the Brothers at the start. We were on the original respective boards, and helped to get Mooney off the ground in the beginning. The Brothers are wonderful people, dedicated to the education of our children, but they are not wise businessmen. If we had turned this facility over to a group of people, perhaps wiser in the ways of the world, we may not be going through this trauma today. The Bishop, the clergy, and all the people concerned with Catholic education had better take stock. A family cannot afford to pay thousands for tuition to a grade school, thousands more for tu-

tion to a high school, and pay thousands to the public school district at the same time. Our Bishop says we should love the poor, but there are already enough of them to love. We do not have to create any more!

When the news broke about Mooney's closing, there was a statement made by Brother alluding to a group of businessmen that offered a solution, but it was called "unfeasible." Perhaps, in listening to enough businessmen, a sensible solution to our problems could be found. Certainly, the present method has proved itself to be "unfeasible," and we all should be interested in any new ideas to preserve a good Catholic education. Despite the poor example shown by our Bishop's office, we still consider religion to be an asset in raising the youth of our country.

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Diocesan church must shift to more 'catholic' viewpoint

To the editor:

I have read with interest the articles that have been featured recently in your newspaper on the restructuring of the Catholic schools in Monroe County. In addition, since I am a co-pastor of one of the parishes with a school in the City of Rochester, I have been involved both on a local level and in quadrant meetings on the topic.

One part of the proposed plan calls for the financing of the schools to be shared by all the parishes in Monroe County. This phase of the proposal has been less than warmly received. And the coolness comes from a variety of sources.

My purpose is not to address the reasons for or against this proposal. However, I write to encourage all members of the Diocese to realize that the philosophical issue here is one we all have to grapple with. That issue, I believe, is that many of our parishes and parish ministries can not survive independently of the support, especially financial, of all the parishes of the Diocese.

This is true here in the matter of Catholic schools, but it is also true or will become true, I believe, in other areas of ministry, such as in rural areas of the Diocese. With costs and expenses continuing to escalate, it will become more evident that we will need to support ministries that are distant from ourselves with basic financial assistance.

While we have done this in the past in our support of such ministries as campus ministries and rural outreach workers and



some of our city parishes, it will become necessary in other areas that in the past have been more self-sufficient.

So for me the question is how will this be done in a way that assures basic ministry is offered while continuing to assess and establish priorities for us as a Diocesan Church?

This will be an issue that cuts across the territorial lines of parishes and regions, and will call us to see beyond our own more local concerns to the needs that we all have in the Church community. Our track record on issues such as this has not been always good, and so we will need leadership that is strong and committed to a wider view of the Church.

It is a task that will not be easy, but one that will help us to experience another dimension of our life together as Church.

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Couple questions justice and motives behind Diocese of Rochester's education decisions

To the editor:

The Catholic Church preaches justice and ministry and yet we do not see where the Catholic Church in Rochester practices either in regard to Catholic education. Where is the justice in closing Cardinal Mooney without any concern for the emotional needs of the faculty, parents and students? Most students first heard of the closing on TV April 25. Most students and parents do not choose a high school lightly and to close it without any discussion with them is truly an injustice.

Where is the ministry when the people of the northeast quadrant, Mooney and St. Anne's school beg the diocese to listen, discuss, and to be open to their ideas? One of the Bishop's representatives stated that the church is not a democracy! Obviously, it is also not a ministry either!

'Convenience' mentality causes decline of church

To the editor:

Your two articles from the April 27 front page issue have really been too much. What has happened to our religion when we call the Pope's letter "insignificant"? Does America consider herself better than him? I call it convenience.

We have become a nation of greed, materialism, pro-choice, saying "that Catholics as a group are the best educated, wealthiest groups ... no need ... for religious based schools." I guess when a school closes as great as Cardinal Mooney High School this all fits. Who do we think we are as sons and daughters of Christ? Are we

Our two daughters are looking into Catholic high school. Will there be a Mercy or a Nazareth in two or three years? Or has the Bishop decided that we no longer need a Catholic girls' school? Is there a master plan to eradicate those institutions which do not make a buck? If there is, we would like to know.

All of us, especially those in religious life, are called to be ministers of the Word of God. Jesus said, "let the little children come to Me." He treated all, except the money changers, with kindness, love, and care. Let the Bishop and his representatives read scripture. Do they see themselves as Jesus serving the people or rather are they the money changers?

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better than the Pope, do we really wonder why this country has such a declining role of Catholics? We have made a religion to suit America, to suit our needs, to revolve around us. If we really believe in our "richness" let's have another public fund drive for Mooney now that we know the full truth. If we can raise millions in November for the Thanks Giving Appeal Drive, let's also consider us, the forgotten middle class and our needs for proper Catholic education.

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