

'No oath' at Notre Dame, university head says

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The theology department at Notre Dame University won't be taking the Vatican's new fidelity oath and profession of faith, according to Father Edward A. Malloy, Notre Dame president.

Father Malloy, who has led Notre Dame for the last two years, said the status of the oath — issued in March by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith — is still unclear and that introducing it to his theology faculty would serve no purpose.

The university president made the comments in an interview Sunday, June 18, after speaking to the Notre Dame Alumni Club of Rochester and delivering a commencement address to the final graduating class of Cardinal Mooney High School. Mooney has been owned and operated by the Holy Cross Brothers, who also own and operate Notre Dame University.

During commencement exercises last month at the Franciscan-run University of Steubenville, Ohio, seven full-time faculty members — including two friars and the dean of faculty — publicly took the new loyalty oath and profession of faith. The Vatican has said the six-sentence oath and accompanying profession are to be administered to all those who, in accord with Canon Law, must make a profession of faith when they first begin their terms of office.

Among others, Canon Law stipulates that pastors, seminary rectors, professors of theology, rectors of ecclesiastical or Catholic universities, university teachers "who teach disciplines which deal with faith and morals" and superiors in religious institutes make professions of faith before assuming new appointments.

Father Malloy noted, however, that the oath has only appeared once in the Vatican press and that introducing it would be harmful to his theology department. "I have a lot of confidence in our theology department," he said. "There seems to be no purpose in introducing it."

The university president declined to comment, however, on the case of Father Charles E. Curran, who was barred from teaching Catholic theology in at the Catholic University of America in 1987 by the Vatican because of his dissent from church



Notre Dame's theology department won't take the loyalty oath and profession of faith issued by the Vatican in March, Father Malloy said, because taking the oath "would serve no purpose."

teachings. Father Curran subsequently sued the school, claiming CUA violated his contractual guarantees of academic freedom when he was removed.

A District of Columbia judge ruled in February that the university was within its rights to terminate Father Curran's position. The theologian has no plans to appeal the decision.

At the time of the court decision, Father Richard P. McBrien, chairman of Notre Dame's theology department, said that "no Catholic with an independent mind will consider going to Catholic University."

Father Malloy pointed out that the circumstances surrounding Father Curran's case were unique to Catholic University, which has a special relationship to the Vatican as a pontifically chartered institution, whereas Notre Dame has no such relationship to the Holy See.

Father Malloy also said that conservative concerns about what is being taught in Catholic colleges are misplaced. "A university is not a seminary. It is not a catechetical center. It is a place where there ought to be a center of debate," he said. "It's possible to do that in respectful conversation with the Catholic tradition."

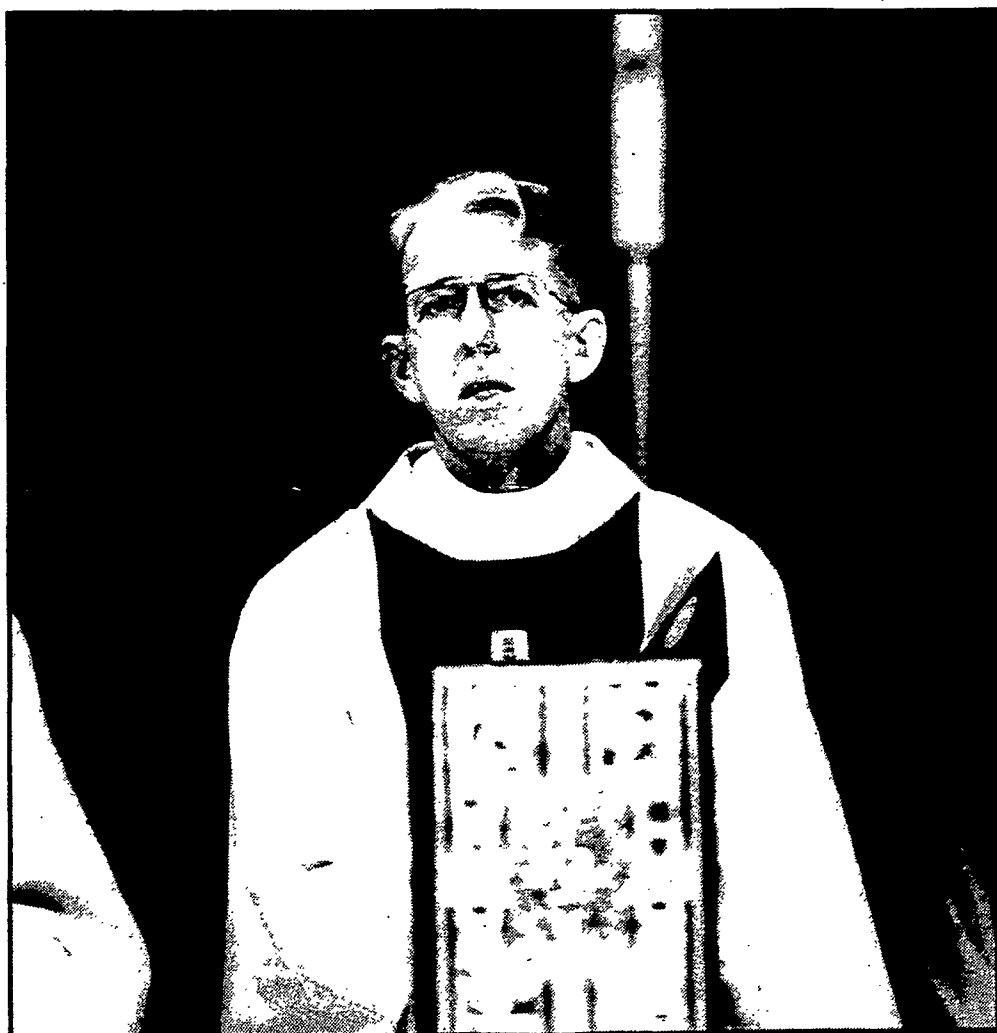
The Catholic tradition of education in the United States is one of the greatest achievements of the church, Father Malloy said, but it is a tradition that is slowly being destroyed by the closing of such Catholic schools as Cardinal Mooney.

"To lose (Catholic education) gradually and by painful disruptions is a sad thing indeed," Father Malloy remarked. "A lot of municipalities are going to discover how expensive it is to educate students who are no longer in a Catholic setting."

The cost of higher education also worries the university president, who said lower middle class students were hurt the most by cutbacks in federal funding to students during the Reagan administration. He disparaged the replacement of student aid with guaranteed student loans, observing that, "People are afraid of the levels of indebtedness after they finish college."

Father Malloy also commented that too much federal funding for university research goes to defense-related projects, and said that the Bush administration has yet shown no sign of shifting gears.

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Father Edward A. Malloy, president of Notre Dame University, celebrates Mass at his inauguration in September, 1987. Father Malloy was in Rochester on Sunday, June 18, to speak at Cardinal Mooney High School's last commencement.

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