

Pastoral Council discusses diocesan synod

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

NAPLES — Discussion of a possible diocesan synod in 1993, the diocese's 125th anniversary, dominated the Sept. 9 Diocesan Pastoral Council meeting.

In an executive session, DPC members also heard an update about progress in reorganizing Catholic schools in Monroe County, and plans for implementing the Well-Integrated Catechetical Plan in three clusters outside Monroe County — the Finger Lakes, the Southern Tier and the Valley, which includes parishes in Livingston and Steuben counties along the Genesee River. Those plans will be revealed at meetings scheduled for Sept. 20 at Our Lady of Lourdes, Elmira, and St. Patrick's, Seneca Falls.

And during his open forum session, Bishop Matthew H. Clark discussed the

diocesan vocations effort, his attempt to meet with all diocesan priests individually and in regional gatherings, and his desire to make more pastoral visits to parishes throughout the diocese.

The meeting, held at St. Januarius Church hall, Naples, began with a brief presentation about the proposed synod by Father John Mulligan, vicar general and moderator of the pastoral office. Last spring, the diocesan Priests Council proposed a synod, and an exploratory committee was established under the leadership of Father Mulligan.

Intended to help the diocese develop more unified pastoral planning, the synod will not consist of a single event, Father Mulligan noted. "It's a long-term process," he explained. "There will be an event as part of it, but it's in essence a process."

That process will involve grass-roots meetings, the forming of commissions to study synod topics, and a final event to culminate the process. The people involved with the process will represent a cross-section of the diocese, including lay people, priests, and men and women religious, he said.

To help decide whether or not to hold the synod, the exploratory committee has scheduled a series of listening sessions in October and early November, during which time members of the diocese will be invited to provide written or oral testimony.

After the hearings are concluded, the committee will examine this testimony, and will submit a report to Bishop Clark by early December. Father Mulligan noted that if all goes as planned, Bishop Clark will be able to decide in early 1990 whether to undertake a synod.

As part of the exploratory process, DPC members were asked to discuss a series of questions concerning the synod. Those questions involved the nature of a synod, possible topics for a diocesan synod, a time line, and who should be involved.

Among the topics suggested were liturgical issues, a diocesan mission statement, the role of laity, ministerial formation, and parish pastoral planning. DPC members also suggested that as many groups as possible should be involved in the synod, and that even non-Catholic groups be invited to observe it.

Several members also called for greater communication about the synod both during preliminary discussions and — if the bishop decides to proceed with such a plan — during the synod itself. Ted Miskell, a representative from the Livingston region, noted that some parishes have neglected to publish bulletin information about the

synod that had already been sent out.

Lee Chase, a Southeast region representative, suggested that information about the synod be provided through the media, and that videotapes might be produced for distribution to parishes to keep them updated. He also proposed including a prayer campaign similar to that involved in Bishop Clark's Call to Priesthood effort this spring and summer. The vocation prayer campaign involved prayers at Masses and the distribution of more than 60,000 prayer cards to parishioners.

Bishop Clark thanked the DPC members for their input and noted that the synod "has to be seen first and foremost ... as an exercise of and an expression of our faith ... and a way of deepening our faith."

During his open forum session, Bishop Clark reported on the results thus far of his Call to Priesthood campaign. More than 600 names of single men who might make good candidates for the priesthood were submitted to the vocations office by lay people and priests throughout the diocese. Those men were contacted by the office, and approximately 300 responded — of whom 120 expressed interest in exploring the possibility of becoming priests.

Sixty men attended a gathering at St. Dominic's, Shortsville, on Aug. 12. A second such meeting is tentatively scheduled for Dec. 30 for the men unable to attend previously. In addition, the 300 men who did not respond to the invitation from the vocations office will be contacted again and invited to the second gathering. Bishop Clark noted that the office is still receiving names of possible candidates and that those men, too, will be invited to participate in the December gathering and in the various discernment programs the vocations office currently operates.

Diocese of Rochester to offer symposium for Christians in ecumenical marriages

Couples in ecumenical marriages will gather for a day-long symposium entitled "Living the Life," from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 21, at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 350 Chili Ave., Rochester.


Sessions and presenters will be: "Spirituality in the Home and Outside the Home," presented by Deacon Charles Kohlmeier of St. Andrew's Church in Rochester and his wife, Susan, of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Fairport; "Where to Go to Church?" offered by Elaine Weinzler Francesco of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church and her husband, Nick, of St. Augustine's Church; and "Issues Involved in Raising Children in an Ecumenical Family," presented by Deacon Brian McNulty of St. Augustine's Church and his wife,

Deacon Lynne McNulty, of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

The day-long event will include group discussions, personal reflection and time for individual meetings with presenters. It is sponsored by the Roman Catholic Diocesan Commission for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs and the Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical Commission.

Lunch and refreshments will be provided for a donation of \$5 per person. Children are welcome and child care will be provided. The cost of a child's lunch is \$2, with a maximum cost of \$15 per family. Registration deadline is Oct. 13.

For registration and/or information, please contact the McNultys by calling 716/328-4494, or write 28 Gillette St., Rochester, N.Y., 14619.



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Bishop's Office

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

On Sunday, September 17, our diocese will join with dioceses throughout the United States to celebrate Catechetical Sunday. On this day, we especially recognize the people who serve in the ministry of catechetics: the over 3,000 volunteers who work with children in our religious education programs, the Catholic school catechists, the catechists who serve in our RCIA processes, and the men and women to whom we entrust the faith formation of our communities. These dedicated people share their faith with others and foster faith development in others. The gift they share is important for our Church today, and it is important for the Church of tomorrow.

This year's theme, *Know and Share the God of Mercy*, serves as a reminder to all of us that catechesis is not simply concerned with learning God's message, but also that catechesis is a message which must be shared and lived. That message reminds all of us of God's boundless love and that we are called to enliven that love and God's message throughout our lives.

Our catechists, whose ministry we celebrate on Catechetical Sunday, work daily in our parishes to model these truths and to pass on the message of faith to others. Catechists minister so other's faith may be ever more "living, conscious and active." They work to enable people of all ages to grow more and more in the likeness of God who is merciful and compassionate.

I am grateful to these faith-filled ministers. Each of them is critically important in sharing the message of God's mercy. This Sunday we salute these workers in catechetics as they renew their commitment to this ministry of the word. Their ministry is a witness for all of us. Let us pray for them and for one another that we may all know and share the God of mercy.

With every good wish, I remain

Your brother in Christ,

+ *Matthew H. Clark*

+ Matthew H. Clark
Bishop of Rochester

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