

# Priest takes agency post in New York

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

PENFIELD — Father James M. Moynihan — a former diocesan chancellor — has resigned the pastorate of St. Joseph's Parish to accept an administrative position with a papal agency headquartered in New York City.

Father Moynihan announced at weekend Masses Feb. 9-10 that he had accepted the post of associate secretary general of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association.

Founded by the Vatican in the 1920s to aid Eastern Rite Catholics suffering from famine in the Soviet Union, Catholic Near East today operates hospitals, orphanages and schools for Catholics and non-Catholics in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. The agency also provides medical services in times of war, earthquakes and other disasters.

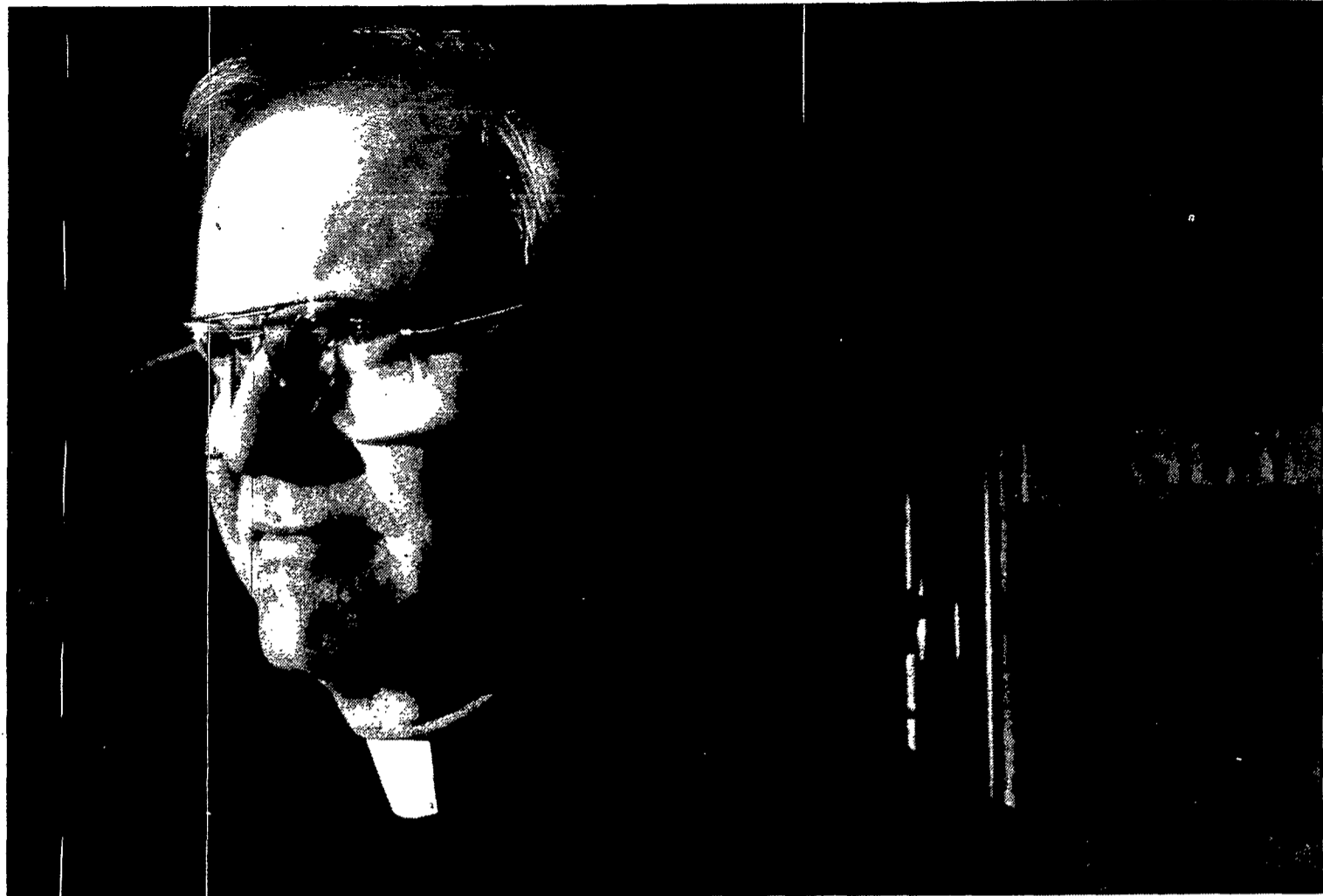
In his new position, Father Moynihan will oversee the agency's day-to-day operations and the work of 61 employees.

The priest told the *Catholic Courier* that he first applied for the position last December and will be leaving Penfield for Manhattan on Feb. 26. As of Monday, Feb. 11, no replacement or interim administrator had been named to replace Father Moynihan, he said.

In a statement released by the agency on Feb. 10, Father Moynihan stated, "I'm excited and eager to assume this ... important work of the church. I hope to absorb a great deal of the culture of the East. People in the East import a great deal of our Western ways and resources, but in the West we haven't absorbed the richness of the East, especially the non-material treasures of values and spirituality, thinking and praying."

Catholic Near East has offices in Jerusalem, Amman, Jordan, and Beirut, Lebanon, Father Moynihan said, pointing out that the agency and Vatican representatives in the Middle East are distressed over the outbreak of war in the region and the effect it is having on civilian lives.

"I'm sure that our 'smart' bombs, no matter how smart, are not so smart that civilians are being spared," Father Moynihan said, referring to laser-guided bombs being used in the allied bombing of Iraq and Kuwait. The priest added that he



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer  
Father James M. Moynihan is leaving the pastorate of St. Joseph's Parish in Penfield to become associate secretary general of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, a papal agency headquartered in New York City.

opposed the war and would rather see the two sides negotiate over their differences.

Father Moynihan leaves behind a legacy of pastoral and administrative work in the Diocese of Rochester. Prior to being named pastor of St. Joseph's in 1976, he had served as a jail and hospital chaplain in the mid-1970s; diocesan chancellor from 1967-74; secretary to Bishop James E. Kearney from 1963-67; and as assistant pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Rochester from 1961-63. Before serving at Mount Carmel, he had pursued graduate studies following ordination in Rome in 1959.

Father Moynihan's parishioners greeted news of his upcoming departure with a mixture of sadness at his leaving and hope for his future.

"I felt like the wind had been knocked out of me at first," remarked Kathy Best, a former president of St. Joseph's parish council. "But then I realized that this is something he wanted to do ..."

Best observed that the pastor was easy to work with because his leadership style em-

bodied a gradual approach to building consensus on issues.

"He had a way of knowing how to get the things that he wanted to do," she said, noting that Father Moynihan continually would push the positive aspects of any cause he espoused, while acknowledging the bad points. Yet, "when the thing would come to the point where you were voting on it, the thing you remembered was all the good points," she said with a chuckle.

Father Moynihan supported several innovations at St. Joseph's Church, parishioners recalled. For example, the pastor was instrumental in persuading the council to ensure that the parish center — which opened in fall of 1989 — was built solidly, she said.

"He never let us do anything other than first-rate," Best said. She explained that Father Moynihan insisted that the council obtain the best building materials and approve the wisest architectural design they could afford, rather than "cut corners." Hence, the center will last for generations, she asserted.

Imparting the faith to the generations that

will use that building was one of his priorities, Father Moynihan told the *Courier*. Although he welcomed Vatican II's emphasis on using Scripture in catechesis, he emphasized the need for the church to educate youngsters on the basic laws and tenets of the church. "The Ten Commandments are as much a part of the Bible as the Beatitudes," he said.

Drew Desmarais, the parish's religious-education director, recalled that Father Moynihan helped reorganize the parish's confirmation program as part of that effort to ensure that students learned their Catholic faith.

"He felt in order for the program to grow, we need to constantly look at it ...," Desmarais said. He recalled that, together with religious education teachers and parents, the pastor helped consolidate the confirmation classes from an 18-month series — interrupted by several months with no sacramental instruction — into a streamlined, one-year program.

"I have to give him credit in the sense that he listened to everybody's comments

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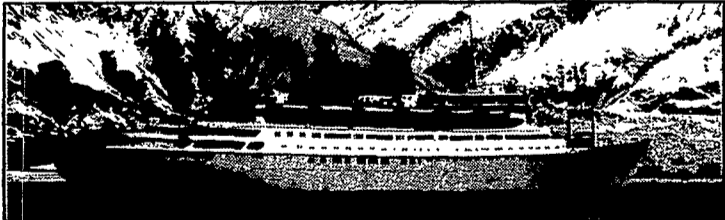


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