

**Pull-out:** A special supplement presented by the Diocese of Rochester.

# Signs of the Time

## Summary of Findings & Recommendations

"The Diocese of Rochester has a strong spiritual leader and a history of exceptional service in its communities. The initiation of various planning activities is a very positive step in positioning the Diocese to continue its tradition of excellence in the 90's. (The Diocese recognizes) that the environment is changing, that people's needs are different, and that society is groping to find solutions to debilitating social problems, (and it is poised) to be a major change agent in this community. However, in order to raise funds to meet major needs, to increase enrollment in Catholic schools, the Diocese must first articulate a strong mission that the majority of Catholics can buy into, and organize its functions and activities to be seen as effective and relevant in today's social climate."

—The Winters Group, Consolidated Summary, July 1990

## 1. Introduction

The Second Vatican Council instructed that "at all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task. We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live."<sup>\*</sup>

The document speaks of "a real social and cultural transformation whose repercussions are felt too on the religious level. A transformation of this kind brings with it the serious problems associated with any crisis of growth."

The social and spiritual upheaval recognized by the Council continues today, 25 years later. Changes in family and community structure; in attitudes, accepted values, and the practice of religion; in tensions between different cultures and classes; in technology and communications — continue to present practical and spiritual challenges.

As the Church Universal seeks its own ongoing conversion in order to help humanity find in Christ the key to the whole of human history, and to "cooperate in tackling the main problems facing the world today"<sup>\*</sup>, so too the Rochester Church must continually reform itself to carry out its mission here. To help the Diocese plan for the future, the Winters Group, a Rochester-based research consulting firm, was retained to conduct a comprehensive research effort designed to better understand its constituencies and their attitudes. This paper synthesizes Winters' key findings and recommendations, as well as related actions taken or planned to date.

### ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF ROCHESTER

#### MISSION and GOALS

1991-93

*"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; the Lord has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." —Luke 4: 18-19*

We joyfully embrace our baptismal call to worship God, to preach the good news of Christ, to build up the community of faith and hope in the Holy Spirit, and to serve those in need. As pilgrims nourished by the Eucharist for our journey of faith, we work with other churches and with all who seek harmony within our human family to advance the reign of God. Continuing our diocese's century-old tradition of courage and creativity, and responding to the Second Vatican Council's call for the ongoing conversion of the Church, we strive to meet the needs of our community in this time and this place.

Interpreting the signs of the time, we set forth these primary goals for the next two years:

- to convene a broad-based Synod to chart our future course
- to create comprehensive faith development programs for all ages and cultures
- to provide human care services and to advocate for social reform
- to provide well-qualified pastoral ministers to serve our faith communities.